What We Do, and Can Do

The only advantage to be found in modern culture is that you can learn to write nonsense with distinction. This is apparent in a glance at the average cultural medium.

The main point is to prevent you from getting a clear perspective of what is being related. The story is thrown at you in a number of isolated episodes and you are expected to assemble these into a mosaic of your own creation. We have read half a dozen learned interpretations of Hemingway's "Old Man and the Sea." The author never divulged what he meant, and the reviewers mustered the allegories with their lights. If you write about a pig it would never do to refer to him as a hog, or even vice versa. That would be too trite and the reader might get it. How much better, as you are involved, to say that a pig is an omnivorous ungulate, and let it go at that. It is more abstruse, arty, and opportune. Anyone suggesting simplicity is looked upon with customary contempt.

The culture magazines aim to be pretentious and pretentious. They are comprised of half truths, elegant variations, chlorophyll phrases, genteel ornament, and vapid assertion. Don't expose the material so that the reader can see through it. Keep it as opaque as possible and the ends of culture have been obtained.

In the Socialist movement we follow the opposite line. We bring the subject to the reader in terms that the average person can comprehend. We have no desire to make reading as irksome as breaking in a new pair of shoes.

We have two official journals to carry the message. These are The Socialist Standard, and The Western Socialist. Both are written in plain everyday language that can be grasped by any fugitive from school.

Our objective is to present the matter rather than the adornment, the meat rather than the gravy, the wine rather than the bottle. We want others to see the social problems as we see them, and to enlist their services so that we may end it the same way.

There are many interesting and disturbing developments in our domestic economy, as well as in our international relations. Our two journals not only expose these with clarity and precision, but in many cases actually anticipate social and economic events. They provide the news behind the news.

This they can do because they understand the forces that are making history. They are able to analyze the hidden pressures, that presages events.

We read in the conventional press that the Near East is boiling. The Far East is freezing. Europe is frantically seeing in fear. Latin America is roasting in an oven of economic ills and political drives.

But they never supply the real basic reasons for what is going on. They claim to be as impartial as a parking meter. The explanations they leave to us.

This they do, not because they trust that we can handle the situation, but because they realize that they can't. They invariably fail to see the part they play. In their own estimation they are as pure, white, and innocent as a blob of cottage cheese.

In ours they reveal themselves in a darker and dumber aspect.

There are millions of workers in the United States and Canada who never read The Socialist Standard or Western Socialist. Millions who never even heard of them. We try to contact as many as we can but our resources are limited, our propagandists few.

Billy Graham and the Working Class

The Editor "Western People":

Sir—Dr. Billy Graham's recent hot-gospelling campaign in Melbourne and Sydney aroused widespread interest throughout the world. It had the approval of the capitalist press, the sanction of the capitalist state, the firm support of the ruling class and if not the unqualified blessing, no active opposition, from any section of the Church. All the props of capitalism went to his aid. The evangelist and his henchmen were given plenty of publicity by leading newspapers, radio and TV. A large part of the thousands of working class people, victims of mass propaganda and hallyoo, converged on focal points to hear the gospeller's message.

And what did he tell them? The same old story related by pulpitizers in every church on Sunday. Christians must practice the virtues of prayer, sacrifice, reverence, humility, charity, and submission to their God's will, in this vale of tears. Their salvation would come when they died, for the faithful would be assured of everlasting life and happiness in a heavenly paradise. And what did that PROMISE cost Billy Graham and the wealthy capitalists behind his religious crusade? As much as a bishop's blessing or the handshake of a king—nothing. But his listeners apparently did not mind at all; the promise of luxurious living in cloudland, on terms of equality with their kind, was good enough for them; it would be a delightful change from the horrors of capitalist hell in real life below.

Crowds pressed forward in their thousands, converts to Graham's particular creed, presumably to declare themselves prepared to suffer without complaint the trials and tribulations of life for the dazzling prospect of eternal joy after death. And while their minds were preoccupied with the idea, arrogant Federal politicians of three anti-socialist parties went ahead with the Richardson plan to enrich themselves by means of substantial increases in their salaries, allowances, and pensions. They at least were more concerned with the substance of their good living here and now, not with the shadowy abstractions of an imaginary hereafter, and the electors who voted those enterprising gentlemen into office gnashed their teeth with rage.

Billy Graham is not a champion of
working class interests. His object is continued belief in God, the resurrection and immortality, which he and the rest of the clergy present as realities. On the other hand socialists hold (1) that God, heaven, hell, the devil, purgatory, eternal life, ghosts, etc., are merely related ideas belonging to the faculty of imagination; (2) that ideas or beliefs have no existence outside the mind, no reality, no substance, no material form. And socialists ask why worship an idea? Why sacrifice to an Idea? Why pray to an Idea? Why believe that a supreme Idea created the universe and all living things in it, including man? Why indulge in speculation about the mystifications? Why indeed for all that seems to involve a colossal waste of human activity?

Let workers have the reasonable view that there is nothing beyond the grave, and they will ultimately support a movement to make the world they know a paradise for the living. The better the world wither the effort on their part there will be no change, no relief from their distress and exploitation for profit under ruthless capitalism. That system will not collapse until the record and the ruling class will not terminate it in a gesture of good will to their wage-servants.

Billy Graham is no different from any other cleric. His job calls for discretion and the utmost care in every utterance, lest a slip of the tongue cuts short his evangelical career for ever.

Accordingly, he did not declare that the poverty of the international working class is due to their economic exploitation throughout the world; he had nothing to say about the existing maldistribution of wealth and power, nor to the ruling class of capitalists, great landowners and their over-paid executives of State; but a pittance only to millions of producers of that wealth, the workers; he found no fault with the private or state ownership of the means of living, with corresponding enslavement and robbery of the working class; he was silent on the dreadful plight of poor pensioners and the unemployed; he did not condemn the capitalist system of society and its rotten social effects; he never mentioned the facts that bitter rivalry between prosperous national groups of capitalists for world trade and ownership or control of rich oilfields, etc., MUST lead to war, carnage and destruction; he had no common-sense remedy for an appealing cry of our times, for the hydrogen bomb, guided missiles and the prospect of violent death to everyone.

How cowardly the attitude of such a powerful institution as the Church in doing little but preach, promise and moralize on religious topics at a time when "peace-loving" nations, armed to the teeth, go with the idea of following the world to bits in defence of their respective capitalisms. Why isn't the Church conducting a crusade for the abolition of capitalism in favour of a new Social Order? Because religion is, and always was, on the side of the class condition! The Church defends the status quo, the present order of things in which the workers are the slave class of modern society.

And who are the workers? All those people who have to work for a living, be it for wages, salaries or subsistence from their own petty businesses. It is to those workers who want every hour for themselves and their families, during lifetime, that socialists direct their appeal for support.

Christianity has this in common with all religions. It is absolutely hostile to the economic interests of the working class for it will be the historic mission of that class, when enlightened and politically-mature, to emancipate themselves from wage-slavery and the dominion of almighty King Capital. That job will not be done for them by reformist political parties, all of whom represent ruling class interests.

Time is on our side, but workers must speed the day of momentous change. They should not only ignore religious propaganda but join the Socialist Party of Australia for the conquest of political power and the establishment of Socialism — the COMMON ownership of the means of production, with democratic distribution of wealth by reason in the interest of society as a whole.

Good-bye, Billy Graham.

Yours for socialism,
TED POLLOCK

N. B. The Socialist Party of Australia has no connection whatever with the Communist Party, here or elsewhere.

"Western People", Parkes, Australia
May 21, 1959

FELLOW WORKERS!

By marching today, you are paying tribute to a gallant fighter for the betterment of the working class. When James Connolly was executed in 1916, the lower classes of society were indeed an appalling cry of our times, for the hydrogen bomb, guided missiles and the prospect of violent death to everyone.

But workers have to work for a living, be it for wages, salaries or subsistence from their own petty businesses. It is to those workers who want every hour for themselves and their families, during lifetime, that socialists direct their appeal for support.

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