DISCUSSION:

RURAL MECHANISATION

WHILE useful discussions have been held by some trade unions and one political party (the Communist Party of Australia) about the effects of scientific and technological changes on employment and incomes, these have dealt mainly with the mining, transport (sea and rail), meat, building and several other industries.

This brief study, however, will deal with technical advance in one of Australia's largest rural industries, the growing of sugar cane. What is happening here, together with modern methods of crushing cane and of loading sugar in bulk—the latter has already decimated waterside employment in many coastal towns in Queensland—is an answer to those who say that technological change will not adversely affect employment.

In addition to mechanisation at a three stage level—the canefields, mills and bulk loaders—other radical changes are occurring at what could be called the cane root level in the sugar industry that a few years back could boast of affecting, directly or indirectly, the employment of one sixth of Queensland's workers.

What follows will make it clear that the cane cutter with his big knife and a perpetual ache in his shoulders and back will soon be no more. Whether that is a good or bad thing is superfluous for the canecutter's fate has already been determined.

The number of harvesters has risen five times from 161 to 821 in the last three years, and the amount of cane mechanically harvested increased over the same period from 8.7 per cent. to 39.1 per cent. of the total crop. In terms of tonnage this meant 1.1 million tons mechanically cut in 1962 and 5.3 million tons mechanically cut in 1965.

The fast growing use of mechanical harvesters, most loading also being done by machines, has affected the employment of manual cane cutters to the extent that while 7516 were cutting during the 1963 "peak" period their number has fallen to 5872 in the 1965 "peak".

Canecutters of tomorrow, and there will be far less of them than previously, will be as far removed from those cutters immortalised in book and verse as the wharfies of the future will be from those of today.

For the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (1965 net profit $13 million) which finances, mills and refines much of the sugar crop, as well as setting the home price, several other big millers and some of the bigger farmers, the sugar industry is a highly profitable one.

But profit making, planning of employment (including looking after those displaced from jobs) and utilisation of one industry as the base to develop others, just don't mix except on the odd occasion when such a mixture can bring the like of Colonial Sugar Refining Company new and bigger profits.

The changing nature of the sugar industry has been known for some time to CSR the king pin in it. CSR has been diversifying its operations and, as the saying goes, is in everything but the kitchen sink. For more
on this see Pete Thomas' study of CSR—*The Big Crush*.

But the many people who in one way or another depend on the sugar industry for a livelihood cannot diversify their jobs, much less their homes and families. The situation in this important rural industry, like that in some other industries, makes government control an urgent matter.

There is a very strong case for the nationalisation of CSR as the starting point to bring employment stability and planning of development to the sugar industry. Nationalisation would allow CSR's refineries and mills to operate as public enterprise groups.

CSR is enormous; profits and the high charges made by the company could be ploughed back into a fund to lift standards of the smaller cane farmers and the field and mill workers.

Within such a framework it should be possible to find other employment in the industry for those displaced and to act towards establishing badly needed secondary industries, including those based on cane by-products, in North Queensland.

In any event, a start must be made somewhere to protect the workers in this big rural industry from the double edged threat of displacement, and the growth of the contracting system, with the latter already leading to the worsening of wages and working conditions for those employed by the contractors.

RON BROWN

UNIONISM ON THE CHEAP?

PAT CLANCY'S article in ALR No. 2 gave much to think about. All unions are faced with the problem of surging costs, but we also seem to try to conduct unionism in Australia on the cheap.

In Europe the average unionist pays something like an hour's pay for a week's union dues—about $1 a week, $13 a quarter, or $52 a year. Australian dues for tradesmen are about 30 cents a week, $4 a quarter or $16 a year.

Cheap unionism makes for inefficiency and in the end tells against the workers themselves.

The creation of labor councils, federations within an industry and finally amalgamations, is a recognition of the need for improvement by some form of rationalisation of thought, action, manpower and equipment. Some unions have felt the impact of modern technological development in post-war Australia and have to a limited extent streamlined their business affairs.

*But, by and large, it can be said that the Australian trade unions operate with 1900 vintage, horse-and-buggy methods in a 1966 space age.*

Employers have amalgamated through forms of closer organisation such as employers' federations and chambers of manufactures. They have, as a class of profit makers, combined to face the organisations of the workers with a united front.

For some considerable time ahead, and even after industrial unionism is achieved in some industries, the closer organisations of the unions such as labor councils, will be needed to get common thought and action. At present these are by and large represented in their leadership by union officials from the smaller craft unions.

In Melbourne Trades Hall Council 1,000 affiliated members entitle a union to four delegates—the maximum a union can have under current rules.
A bigger union paying affiliations for 6,000 or up to 12,000 financial members, is still represented by only four delegates. Hardly a democratic representation.

One result is that the leadership of the THC reflects in its leading committees the outlook of craft unionism, and a belief in the support of arbitration and legally based wages and working conditions as an assistant to trade unionism’s growth and development.

I see the need to give rights to the smaller unions whilst they precariously exist (modern methods will eventually banish the craft, as with the stonemason and the cooper, and the craft union will wither away).

But I also see the urgent need for the larger, more powerful unions to have a bigger voice in the direction organisations such as labor councils must take to satisfy the workers’ demands. And along with this, I believe, must go higher union dues.

Is the aim of amalgamation to keep unionism cheap and improve the service by rationalisation of manpower and equipment? Or should we also have higher union dues to provide still better quality trade unionism?

Colin Willman

AMALGAMATION AND FRAGMENTATION

Pat Clancy is only one of a number of union officials of late who have expressed opinions on the growing need for a complete re-organisation of the Australian trade union movement.

These views have been expressed by people as widely divergent in their views as Short of the Federated Ironworkers’ Association, a right winger, Egerton of the Queensland Trades and Labor Council, and Clancy a communist. All have stressed the need for amalgamation of smaller unions into larger units.

But mere agglomeration will solve nothing—not even the problem of union administration or economics. The real need is for unions to specialise—not in a narrow craft manner but on an industry wide basis.

It is true that the problem in Pat Clancy’s own industry is the relatively simple one of amalgamation—that is if we just consider the industrial organisation of the construction industry.

If, however, we consider seriously the problem of the building of industrial unions, it is obvious that, along with amalgamation there is a certain amount of what, for want of a better word, we could call “fragmentation”.

For example: if this suggested “industrialisation” of unions is to be a success then it must either start with or include at an early stage the basic and monopoly controlled industries. When we think of basic industries and monopoly control we think automatically of the steel industry. The basic union in this industry is the union at present known as the Federated Ironworkers, and whether we like it or not, whether we like the present leadership and policies of the F.I.A., this is the base from which should be built the future Steelworkers’ Industrial Union of Australia.

If we accept this premise, we must also accept the fact that a considerable number of members of Comrade Clancy’s organisation, that is, all those engaged on maintenance as distinct from those engaged on construction or re-construction, would be then absorbed into such a Steelworkers’
Union, as would all other tradesmen, office workers, canteen staffs, etc., employed in this industry. At the same time those F.I.A. members employed in industries outside the basic steel industries would be absorbed into other industrial unions.

I envisage that ship construction and repair would be organised as one industrial union, forging and heavy engineering as another and right on through the whole gamut of Australian industries.

In some industries where there is not so much overlapping, there would be very little of this fragmentation and it would be a “simple” case of amalgamation.

In practice it is not proving quite so simple. In the modern maritime industry, ships of 50,000 tons are now on the coast with crews of less than 40 men. These crews belong to seven different unions.

To form the maritime industry into one organisation that would cover every worker employed afloat on every ship, tug, barge, dredge, oil rig, launch or boat in every river, harbour, port or wherever the Australian flag is carried on overseas ships, would enhance the collective bargaining power of these workers many times over. But in spite of the obvious advantages of such a cohesive organisation, such a maritime industrial union seems as remote as ever.

Historically, I believe it was the Romans, some 2,000 years ago who formulated the slogan “Divide and Rule”, but no doubt shrewd slave owners were using the tactic long before Romulus and Remus. It is still the basic tenet of bosses today. It is obvious that more on this vital subject is needed.

In this regard Left Review could assist by recounting the historical lessons that are to be learnt from the great struggles to build industrial unionism in the United States in the bloody struggles of the 1930s.

ARTHUR E. WILSON.

A GENERAL MOTORS TOWN PLAN?

ROY NELSON in “Cities for the Future” (A.L.R. No. 4) contends that forecasting techniques of traffic consultants simply construct a future based on existing trends which, as he says, is “hardly planning”.

He advances the radical alternative method of evolving first a town plan with “maximum accessibility convenience and mobility minimising capital investment in transport networks—while retaining the desired residential densities.” A transportation study on such a basis, he says, would give very different results. So far so good.

Next questions then are: What sort of town plan? What are the “desired densities” of housing?

If we are to minimise transport costs “including time costs” what results will this have on the proportion between transport-on-rails and motor vehicle transport? Citizens as well as experts must answer these questions, but there are experts and experts.

We will use our space for a few thoughts on the “bad” experts who use their skills at the service of big industries so that the obstacles and challenge confronting the “good” ones who genuinely have the interest of the people at heart can be better understood.

Nelson throws interesting doubts on the validity of computer techniques of big American traffic consultant
firms. But there are other even more serious doubts.

Wilbur Smith and Associates, the world-wide U.S. firm of traffic consultants working here in conjunction with an Australian firm, have so far permitted the public to see only a summary of their survey and analysis section of the $850,000 report for Melbourne. The study-manager of this survey is American Marshall M. Rich.

In 1964 Mr. Rich delivered a paper on traffic survey laws to a symposium "Living with the Motor Car" organised by the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, attended not only by Ministers and department heads but international traffic experts.

Mr. Rich's paper was based on a book called *Future Highways and Urban Growth* which had been prepared by his firm of Wilbur Smith under commission from the Automobile Manufacturing Association of USA.

Mr. Rich's 1966 summary for Melbourne forecasts within 20 years "express bus services on freeways" and the new freeway systems are to "vary between 250 and 350 miles in length."

Now "express bus services on freeways" is definitely a General Motors Corporation idea. In fact a film produced by GMC was shown at the RACV symposium soft-selling an elaborate system called "metro-mobility" with bus-trains, "interchange stations" built above the freeways, and special bus-lanes for reversible traffic in the centre of the freeways.

If one wants to see what Australian capital cities will look like in 20 or 30 years time if present trends are allowed to continue, one need only to study Los Angeles, San Francisco or Washington, because such cities are today equivalent in population, high car density and low housing density to the cities our children may live in.

For proof that in such US cities private automobiles even if supplemented by autobuses have long since been shown to be a failure for home-to-work journeys read G. S. Wheeler (*Communist Review*, Jan., 1966). Yet Wilbur Smith and Associates, who must know full well the disastrously extravagant consequences are deliberately forecasting "systems" for Melbourne that have already spelt tragedy in America!

It is hard to escape the conclusion that Wilbur Smith's interests are those of General Motors-Holden and Ford. They don't care what happens to our cities in 20 or 30 years provided, in the meantime, several million more cars are sold.

We cannot trust such "experts" to draw plans for the people's needs. Nor can we trust the Liberal Governments. Last June Victorian Local Government Minister Hamer appointed the chief planner of the Sydney Cumberland County scheme Mr. R. D. L. Frazer as Chairman of the Victorian Town and Country Planning Board.

With a great flourish from the daily press, Hamer ordered Frazer to prepare a scheme for satellite cities for Melbourne. There was talk of 10 such satellites each with a population of 100,000 or so and within 30 miles of Melbourne. To prevent endless suburbia, there was to be a green belt between Melbourne and its satellites.

No matter what efforts were to be made to establish industries in such satellites to make them "independent" they would inevitably turn into mainly "dormitory cities" because they would be too close to Melbourne to overcome the magnet of such a highly diversified industrial and cultural centre. Commuting between the satellites and Melbourne on a mass scale would be inevitable.

Actually, coupled with the Wilbur Smith freeway scheme, the effect
would be to aggravate and multiply all the worst headaches of a genuine town planner, equivalent to pushing the newer outer suburbs some miles further out, thus making the housing density lower still and increasing all development costs — road, transport, reticulation of all services with further deterioration of public transport.

Melbourne’s “sprawl” already near a world record, would be “sprawlier” still! The outer suburbs can be reached effectively only by car, and many a young couple, setting up home are committed to a car-to-work travel for life, condemning many a housewife incidentally to a car-less immobile sterile type of life.

Every worker should be entitled to a family car, but its main purpose should be visiting, recreation, camping, maybe some shopping, but not hometo-work journeys.

A free-way based, 30-mile-away satellite system would only compound and congeal the problem. Already in Melbourne a radial freeway system, the most pernicious traffic-tangler of all, with its spokes all penetrating to the heart of the city, is taking shape; the Tullamarine freeway, the southeastern freeway, the St. Kilda freeway-Kingsway complex and now a projected Yarra-Valley freeway.

It is no good protesting that it is not “us” who are making such mistakes. In reality, by remaining silent in the face of present trends, we are allowing the car monopolies, the oil monopolies, the steel monopolies, the rubber monopolies and others to “plan” for us. What is needed is not just any plan, but a plan, satisfactory to the labor movement, and in which progressive citizens and experts combine.

MAURIE CROW

COMMUNISTS AND ART

RALPH GIBSON’S article “Art and the Battle of Ideas” is a welcome, if long overdue, nascent awakening on the part of communists to the problems of literature and art. This despite its doctrinaire and possessive approach.

Art, or society will never be the possession of Communists to pass judgment upon; even the type of benevolent judgment which Mr. Gibson apparently would give.

Like many communists, Mr. Gibson has not grasped some apparent facts: socialism in the USSR is of the primordial type and not on the eve of communism by any means; marxism has been understood by the preponderance of communists in a warped or infantine manner.

There is no proof that “a widespread understanding of marxism” is a good foundation for “creative work and for sound critical judgments”, in the realm of art. History thus far has not demonstrated this point. One can only hope that it will do so.

Certainly “we should not seek to establish a single trend in art as was attempted in the days of Stalin.” But it is not clear to this reader that USSR leading circles have “moved away from this idea” to any significant degree.

Unfortunately in the first land of socialism “the door” is not “wide open for all with artistic talents”. It has closed behind Sinyavsky and Daniel with a clang. Yevtushenko and Solzhenitsin and some others are regarded with at least scepticism and suspicion by high authority. The prose works of Pasternak have not been published. These are names well known because their talents broke barriers or repressive actions against
them helped make their fame. What of others?

Nor is it clear that “as a general rule it should be our aim to help art workers to become good communists, or at any rate to become humane and progressive people, then help them to follow their own artistic courses.”

Further articles on these matters together with discussion of the mysterious trend “socialist realism” may appeal to many readers.

I hope sincerely that Mr. Gibson and your magazine will not take offence at these pretentious and perhaps blasphemous remarks. Congratulations on producing an improved and improving journal.

K.L.

PILOTS’ STRIKE

JUST at the time when progressive people were licking their election inflicted wounds and sounds of despair were heard across the country, an intense and long-standing conflict flared to a climax as the Qantas pilots decided to strike.

The importance of this struggle between a small group of highly skilled, comparatively well paid, key personnel and the Federal Government, for this is what it amounted to, has not received the recognition that it deserves from the political left in our country.

It will be remembered that although the pilots were fighting for higher pay and greater safety precautions, the kernel of the dispute and the most important factor politically was the demand that the pilots should have some say in the conduct of their industry.

The Federal Government was very much aware of this, hence the threats of dire penalties which, in the circumstances, they were powerless to carry out.

So, we saw a small well-favored section of the community demanding and obtaining, at least in principle, a tiny piece of our socialist objective.

The possibilities opened up by the successful outcome of this strike are thrilling. The threatened resignations at Concord Repatriation Hospital were feelers in the same direction and can we not visualise academics, who in the past we have not counted on to any extent in the struggle for socialism, coming to the conclusion that they must take militant action not only to preserve their threatened economic security but to maintain educational standards?

Others, too, will sometimes unconsciously, as I believe to be so in the case of the pilots, find their own way to a limited socialist objective.

And what may be learnt from all this?

1 Unsaid, but inferred by the pilots’ claim, was the belief that the Department of Civil Aviation cannot be as effective on safety issues as it should be when the private sector of our airlines is in a position to influence the Government and thereby departmental aviation policy. Example: the Winston air crash inquiry which the Minister promised has not yet taken place.

2 The solidarity of the pilots must make us wary of using such terms as “vacillating middle class”. The workers have been set an example.

3 We are repeatedly told that in the fight for socialism the “workers” are the most important section of the community. In the light of unceasing change and swift technological advances what does “worker” mean?
We must be prepared to give much more positive and ungrudging support to the struggles of others whom the “workers” at present do not feel to be part of the main effort to achieve a better distribution of our country’s production.

A deep study of the proposals for the 21st Congress of the Communist Party is necessary.

H. Clements.

EYL ANNIVERSARY

Dialogue among the politically aware is becoming an important and stimulating part of Australian life, just as the word itself is becoming part of a new jargon of the left (disturbing the more elderly jargonists, who surely have little right to complain!)

In particular, friendly debate is a crying necessity among the many breeds of socialist-inclined Australians hitherto frequently separated by ultimately groundless prejudices, fears and misunderstandings as well as by real differences of approach, method and principle.

A small piece of history was made in Melbourne last December when a platform of committed socialists of various approaches addressed a gathering of 75 (mainly) young people on the subject “Have Socialist Ideas a Future with Young Australians?”

The occasion was organised by the Eureka Youth League as part of its 25th anniversary celebrations.

Main speakers were Dr. Ian Turner, senior lecturer in History at Monash University; Mrs. Audrey Blake, foundation secretary of the EYL; Mr. Paul Marriott, co-editor of the Monash Student newspaper Lot’s Wife; Mr. John Halfpenny, prominent member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union; Mrs. Mavis Robertson, national secretary of the EYL; and Mr. Douglas Kirsner, a member of the Melbourne University’s Students’ Representative Council.

Listening to the informed and lively discussion one felt assured that socialist ideas do have a future among young Australians.

Major points of agreement appeared to be: socialists have the alternative to the ills of capitalist society and to be successful Australian socialists have to remould their thinking and attitudes to conform with the realities of contemporary life. This latter point was given great emphasis by Mr. Marriott who said that socialist ideas in their old form had little future with young Australians but they could become influential if socialists refused to rest on the laurels of yesterday’s victories.

Points of probable disagreement, and subjects which certainly warrant further substantial discussion and argument among the left were the following views expressed in one form or another in at least three of the papers presented.

1 Economic and material problems for the great mass of people in the “western” world have largely been solved, and these factors would no longer provide motive forces for the development of the socialist movement; on the contrary, spiritual and moral issues of liberty, equality and fraternity, man’s alienation from control over the power levers which determine things in our society, would form the basis of winning adherents for social revolution.

2 With the advent of the new technological revolution the industrial working class is disappearing or dissolving and hence will not be the main social force for socialist trans-
Some brief comments on these points.

I strongly agree that moral issues are relatively more important in this connection than previously. My argument is with those who say, or infer, that economic and material problems are vanishing or minimal in our present society.

The appendices to the Communist Party's National Congress documents disclose from taxation returns in 1963-64, that 91% of all taxpayers earned under $4,000 a year and 64% under $2,400!

John Stubbs in his book The Hidden People: Poverty in Australia reveals that 500,000 Australians are definitely living in poverty and suggests that the real figure may be closer to one million. There are 150,000 families with an income of less than $35 a week — numbering in all 600,000 people.

The late President Kennedy indicated that in the most advanced capitalist country, the USA, 17 million people went to bed hungry every night, while 30-40 million are classed as poor.

In the USA today, in the midst of so-called affluence, depressed areas, poverty and unemployment are great problems.

Some years ago US Secretary of Labor, Wirtz, warned of the danger of millions upon millions being permanently excluded from the production process as a result of the widespread introduction of automatic systems.

Therefore economic and material questions loom rather large and, in reality, give no sign of diminishing in importance as motivations for social action.

In capitalist countries today tremendous numbers engage in strike or stop-work action for higher wages or shorter hours, including white collar and professional workers, e.g., bank officers, nurses, teachers, pilots.

However, it is true that no Chinese wall separates economic and moral issues, as evidenced by the actions and demands of the Qantas pilots, Victorian teachers, Mt. Isa and GMH strikers. It is also interesting to note that in the movements of Northern Territory Aboriginal stockmen and the US Negro civil rights movement, economic aspects are well to the fore and form a natural part of the campaign for equality, often giving rise to it.

It is evident that economic and material issues, linked with moral issues, issues of alienation, etc., will go on being a big fount of struggle and will play an integral part in mass movements leading to the development of the socialist movement.

Furthermore there is no doubt that white collar sections are growing faster proportionately than industrial workers in this country. There is no doubt also that intellectuals, technicians and university students are assuming greater political weight and that there will be no socialist transformation without the majority of these sections taking a socialist stand.

The appendices to the CP of A. Congress documents show that at the 1961 Census there were 2.3 million industrial workers and 1.3 million under the general heading of white collar workers. They show also that in the US in 1964, 48% of the work force were white collar and 52% blue collar workers and that US Government sources estimate that in ten years time 48% will still be blue collar workers.
So that even in the USA, where automation is considerably more developed than in Australia, the industrial working class is still the predominant section of the community and the position will be only slightly different in 1975.

My contention is that the foreseeable future holds the prospect of the industrial working class remaining the biggest section of the population numerically, over a very long period of time, despite technological changes. I contend also that the industrial working class will remain that section of the work force most pulled towards struggle and social change on both economic and moral issues, notwithstanding the accelerated emergence of intellectuals and professionals into the political arena. The future of both industrial workers and professionals is indissolubly linked.

Scepticism and prejudices on both sides must be broken down.

The conception of an intellectual elite leading the way to socialism with a passive unenlightened mob trailing behind is just as ludicrous as that of the industrial working class making the endeavour without intellectuals, technicians and students.

Such matters are of vital importance for socialists to thrash out. A good beginning was made at the EYL symposium.

Let there be more and more of it. The young are again showing the way.

JOHN SENDY

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM

"CHANGES in Modern Capitalism", by B. Taft, appearing in the first issue of Left Review, is surely deserving more serious criticism than the adjective "good" appearing in the second issue and the discussion of it appearing in the third. That is, of course, if Left Review is to be considered seriously as a marxist journal.

As though any analysis of a marxist nature can be made without taking into account the process of change, Mr. Taft commences his investigation of changes in modern capitalism as if it were a great discovery. He chides those he calls "marxists" for their failure to note these changes and considers this deficiency as being due to a "certain stagnation in marxist thinking in the forties and fifties".

If this estimation were true, we would certainly consider it due for much stronger condemnation. However, argument would be wasted, because people who leave out of their calculations the subject of change can be discounted as marxists.

Of far greater importance is the writer's immediate follow-up in the nature of a rebuke, denoting the slowness in their ability "to examine new phenomena, free from dogma and preconceived ideas", for this causes Mr. Taft's condemnation to recoil with double violence directly upon his own head! By this assumption Mr. Taft indicates that his investigation is to be made with entire neglect of the marxian dialectic reasoning, the relation of facts to their vast interconnection, which, of course, includes "preconceived ideas". That is, his intentions are to keep his findings strictly to his observations, free from everything. In other words, he is to use the metaphysical approach instead of that of the marxist dialectic!

As though this were not bad enough, Taft has the temerity to attempt to equate his terms for investigation to Marx himself. "Marx", he says, "placed economics on scientific foundations and was characterised by a challenging attitude free from preconceived and blinding class prejudices".
As though Marx would waste his great intellect to make a science of bourgeois economics!

It is absurd to even suggest that Marx's discoveries, such as surplus value, falling rate of profit and wages as robbery, to mention but a few, were unrelated to class prejudices or preconceived ideas. Any socialist knows that Marx's analysis of capitalism was for the purpose of making a science of socialism.

Marx never considered crises in themselves as capable of destroying capitalism, rather did he view such periods for intensifying the class struggle and thus helping to fulfill the dialectic of workers' victory over capitalism. The low ebb of class struggle at this juncture necessitates one who views it free from preconceived ideas, as something to go along with and frame one's tactics accordingly. But in the dialectic sense it would appear as a passing phase in which a high level of class struggle would inevitably appear again.

In fact, is not this the position now! The deep crisis of British capitalism and the monetary crisis in America which is assuming world-wide proportions: Does this not demand intensified class struggle? And if it were coupled with a change of the policy of the Soviet Union of peaceful coexistence with America which has done nothing else but provide encouragement to America's escalation of the war in Vietnam, if the Soviet Union were to say: "Not a step further—or else!" is there any doubt that the intensity of the class struggle could be raised to the highest yet known in history, placing socialist victory on the order of the day? This at least appears to be apprehended by capitalism, who fall over themselves in frantic efforts to obtain the Soviet's peaceful intervention in Vietnam.

Commenting on new changing features of capitalism, Mr. Taft says the problems are neither solved nor are being solved: not that they cannot be solved within capitalism. On automation, a definite impossibility of solution within capitalism, he contented himself with the assertion that it demands a different social framework for its solution. The growth of monopolies is seen as "a great menace to peace and liberty and restricts the effectiveness of political democracy". As though the workers should be interested in bourgeois peace and liberty beyond the realm of its assistance in ending capitalism!

Mr. Taft is also in error when he says "periodic crises occurred every 8-12 years" up to World War Two, and that this was in accordance with Marx's analysis. There was no crisis for over two decades since 1873, and it was this that led to rejection of Marx's theory of crises by Bernstein in his revisionist proposals published in 1898. Marx made no assumption regarding the appearance of crises every 8-12 years. The fact that they appeared to repeat themselves this way was purely an exterior fact, a matter of chance. Crises may repeat themselves every five, 10 or 20 years; they commence in periods of high development, although Taft appears to think differently.

When Bernstein rejected the marxian theory of crises in 1898, a profound general crisis broke out in 1900. Mr. Taft, stating his additions necessary for the understanding of new features in capitalist crises which would do away with general crises, sees a crisis within Europe which contains all the features for a general crisis, but for the saving graces to capitalism of the British Labor Party.

One is left wondering why this dry connection of facts ever saw the light of day? So uninspiring is it that the writer himself appears to see the
necessity for the question: "Does all this mean that the case for socialism is less powerful or compelling in western countries than it was in the thirties?"

But it is of no avail to rescue him from his anti-marxist course. His deduction: "There is a growing gap and contradiction between what capitalist society could provide and what it does provide," leaves Mr. Taft with two courses: as this is a perfect statement of reformism, he could enter the Labor Party with honors. As, also, it was part of Bernstein's revisionism that capitalism could provide, etc., he would be welcome there also. Certain it is he takes his departure from Marx, who viewed capitalism as a class society absolutely incapable of providing anything for the solution of human problems.

In the third issue of Left Review, Alf Watt considers crisis to be near. Discarding the marxian dialectic, however, he makes the astounding conclusion for a revolutionary party that, "We must formulate a comprehensive policy to correct the instability and avert the crisis". Does this mean anything else than that marxism should be dressed up to appear respectable? Is this the intention behind the article in 1 and the discussion in 3 of Left Review? If it is, it can bring nothing but ridicule, scorn and contempt on those who attempt it.

Those who desire to remain marxists should take heed of Engels' quote from Hegel in his thesis on Feuerbach: "One believes one is saying something great if one says that 'man is naturally good'. But one forgets that one says something far greater when one says 'man is naturally evil'." Commenting on this, Engels says: "This contains the twofold meaning that, on the one hand, each new advance necessarily appears as a sacrilege against things hallowed, as a rebellion against conditions, though old and moribund, yet sanctified by custom; and that, on the other hand, it is precisely the wicked passions of man—greed and lust for power—which, since the emergence of class antagonisms, serves as levers of historical development..."

KEN CARR,
Victorian Labor College Student.

WORLD MEETING OF MARXIST ECONOMISTS

WITH proposals for a conference of the world's Communist Parties again being considered, it is timely to suggest that a meeting of leading marxist economists also be held. Such a gathering is, in my opinion, necessary to analyse the present situation and trends in the capitalist and the "third" worlds.

A collective examination is needed, because the information available to the economists of each country is not necessarily comprehensive, and because economic data is more easily interpreted if there is a familiarity with the country concerned. Even the Soviet economists, who have access to very comprehensive data, would be handicapped by this lack of "touch" with many countries.

There are many of us who believe, and not without reason, that the next decade and more will not be a simple repetition of the last. To label this viewpoint and its protagonists as dogmatists will not help throw light on the vital questions involved. Nor would it help if the protagonists of this view yielded to the temptation of replying in similar vein.

It is because the truth about a complex situation is urgently required that I make the above proposal.

ALF WATT