

MOS ON THE NORTH SIDE

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You may be reading this as a mimeographed document, if all goes well. Devra Langsam, a Brooklyn fan, decided for obscure reasons that she had far too many Gestetners lying around the house; she was even talking about throwing some of them out if there was no one willing to take on the burden of ownership. I've always been willing to help out a fan in need, so I now find myself the owner of not one but two (2) Gestetner 260's, purchased for \$30 (and she even drove them to my place from Brooklyn!)

One of them has a burned-out motor, but is supposed to be suitable for hand-cranking, while the other, Devra said, has a crudded-up silk screen. On the other hand, in addition to the mimeos, she threw in three color change kits and some spare silk screens, so I'm sure one completely functional machine, at least, can be constructed out of the conglomeration. The status of supplies such as paper is more obscure. Through the miracle of modern technology, however, I can write this apazine, have my computer type it on stencil, and, if I can't get the mimeography together in time for the deadline, have it re-typed on paper for Xeroxing.

MAILING COMMENTS on #19:

CHUCK: Your comments on the press are interesting -- but I still question whether the mass media are leading or following. That is, are they catering to popular prejudice or indoctrinating the masses? As long as there is a diversity of news sources, a minority opinion has a chance to take hold (as happened with the Vietnam War, in fact). A press that's "slow to respond" is a conservative force, true, but not necessarily an immovable force, and I think that's preferable to one that responds too quickly, blowing up, oh, say a very small Nazi rally into a major event, thereby giving a focus to all the latent (and not-so-latent) forces of bigotry. Fine line between reporting news and causing it, isn't there?

Quote from Tom Stoppard's "Night and Day", which is about freedom of the press:

(Ruth is arguing under the guise of reporting a pretended conversation with her 8-year-old son.) "... 'Allie,' I said, as I spread his Marmite, 'it's absurd to equate the freedom of the millionaires to push their line with the freedom of a basement pamphleteer to challenge them.' 'Oh, mummy,' he said, 'don't be so silly. You are confusing freedom with capability. The Flat Earth News is free to sell a million copies. What it lacks is the capability of finding a million people with fourpence and the conviction that the earth is flat. You see, mummy,' he said, 'people don't buy rich men's papers because the men are rich: the men are rich because people buy their papers.' Honestly, the things they teach them at Ascot Heath!"

DAVID: Ah, I admit Jane is wealthier if she decides not to fly to Boston, but what if she puts her new-found wealth in a bank? Then, through a chain of transactions too complex for even the CIA to follow, her money can find its way into my paycheck without her even knowing it's gone! Sometimes I think money is just a way to trick people into working together ...

Rich: (long overdue) What do you get when you cross an elephant with a grape? Elephant grape sin(theta). (and not worth waiting for)

DENYS: Loved your washing machine story. Unfortunately, just when you've ceased being intimidated by it, they'll come along and transistorize the whole thing so you can't possibly fix it yourself. I can't tell you how helpless I feel when something goes wrong with my computer.

"...the real value of labor has to be greater than the wages paid to working people, because this differential is the only possible source of capital to cover overhead, re-investment, and profit." Are you saying the means of production (overhead) contribute nothing? You also implicitly assume that the labor of managers and distributors is useless, later in the paragraph.

It's because nobody ever seems able to assess the value of labor that I'm so suspicious of the concept as the sole basis of wealth. For instance: Say person A labors for six months and produces a car. He rides around in this for three years after, deriving much pleasure, until the left frammistan breaks for the fourth time and he junks it. Meanwhile, person B labors for the same six months and produces a truck, which she uses to haul tomatoes, lumber, and Twilltone; 20 years later she retires as the millionaire owner of a national trucking company.

Shouldn't any reasonable theory of value distinguish between the two vehicles? I am, however, real open to discussion on the function of rent, which seems inextricably tied up with ownership and inheritance. I rationalize it as a reward in perpetuity given by a society to individuals who have done whatever it took in that society to accumulate the wealth in the first place; since part of the reward is the right to pass the wealth on to descendants, you get assorted fat cat owners who are completely useless aside from some minor symbolic value.

Do I think the American and Canadian governments are inherently shafting people? No, because of the existing dispersion of power. Trudeau, Bennet, and Levesque certainly try to, sometimes for the best motives, and Nixon certainly tried to, for the worst motives. I applaud your motives, and your envisioned Utopia where no one group can get too firm a grip. My gut feeling, however, is that chaos produces dictatorships, and the extermination of a class of people is a poor precedent on which to found a utopia. Your characterization of the bourgeoisie is precisely the way one refers to a faceless enemy at the height of wartime propaganda, not the way one talks about human beings.

That came out harsher than I intended, but I'm out of room. Math lesson next time. Happy Anniversary!