

RAMBLINGS NO. 10

GEE GOLLY, GUYS

--In all the comments on the preceding Mailing in publications in our last envelope, scarcely a kind word was said for this sheet, and plenty of very unkind ones. And while I'm not particularly susceptible to group pressure, enuf of this sort of thing may eventually persuade me to cease publishing Ramblings - after I finish the List. That I do intend to get thru with, regardless how unpopular it may be. Because when those Le Vombiteurs were coming out, and I unable, due to enforced inactivity at the time, to broadcast refutations of the remarks I disagreed with, I promised myself I would someday. And if I go back on myself with that promise, I can derive no comfort from similar deferments into the dim future of other projects I've planned.

AH! NOW TO MILTY'S MAG

First, we want to apologize for using the word "fact" on page 1 of Ramblings#9, even tho it is in a stereotyped phrase, which might exempt it from my ban on its use. I apologize, not because I retract the assertion, but because it's one that is doubtful and not demonstrable one way or the other, and anyway, I had sworn off the word "fact". However, I will excuse myself the use of that word in my discussion on the next page of the idea expressed in *Über die Schönheit*, which involves no greatly emotionalized controversy. No doubt my absolute ban on "fact" is unnecessary, but-- well, enough of this rambling.

The big point of Rothman's case against me is that "Speer is ignorant about labor unions", and shouldn't form any opinion about them. But "ignorant" cannot be used, in the real world, as an absolute term. Speer is not ignorant and Rothman is not not ignorant; Speer is more ignorant than Rothman. (It does not follow that Speer is wrong and Rothman is right). Rothman, in turn, is more ignorant than he might be; he could not be totally unignorant.

How little ignorant should one be before he is allowed to form an opinion? Rothman and I both have opinions on the race question, yet there are things we might do to further familiarize ourselves with the subject, which we have not done. For example, I have never, and I doubt that Rothman has, overnighted in a negro household, and I don't think we ever intend to; but someone who has done so might claim that we have no right to form any opinions about negroes until we have done that. Such a person would be wrong.

How familiar you ought to be with something to form an opinion on it is a matter for individual determination. A person ought to work at acquainting himself with an important controversial subject up to the point of diminishing returns for his time, or where the same amount of time would be better spent in some other pursuit. It usually is not left up to an individual whether he shall form an opinion on something or not, regardless of the state of his ignorance. Opinions must be formed; but they need not be held to fanatically.

Those remarks out of the way, let me go thru Milton's article picking out points as they show up; this is the easiest method, tho not the best for orderly presentation of the subject matter.

Del Rey has remarked on how badly the word "semantics" is being misused now. Rothman employs it in a good many doubtful places in this discussion; but I think I'm on safe ground in asking him to please give me a semantic referent for his phrase "to keep from being swallowed up in the bureaucracy within which he works".

I am a good deal annoyed by Rothman's faulty references to philosophical ideas and to the GWU Philosophy Club. He is infringing on my patent here, in

dealing with something that he has had and failed to use the opportunity to better acquaint himself with. I have a time or two suggested that he come to a philosophy forum, and I know that he would go for it once he attended, but he has had some chemicals to cook, or something.

To tell, the truth, my ego was surprisedly pleased at the length of the reaction my page or so got out of Milt. Of course, I knew he would have some refutation in that Mailing; and that's why my conscience didn't bother me about misleading fans who would, according to Milton, take my opinion for Papal truth if rebuttal were not presented. Free press is great stuff; it leaves you free to express your own opinions.

Gregor's assertion that I identify myself with the managing class because I intend to be a lawyer reveals one of the great faults of class thinking in the sociological sphere. The measure of the naturalness of a class is the correlation among members of that class in characteristics other than the one in virtue of which they are all declared to be members of the given class. For example, you might divide all human beings into races on the basis of their height, and the resulting classes would show some correlation in coloration, geographical distribution, economic status, etc; but the correlation would usually be very small. But if you divide them into races on the basis of the texture and color of the hair, the correlations are considerably higher, and probably higher yet when other determinants such as are actually in use are applied. The moral of this is that putting oneself in the managing class by becoming a lawyer does not necessarily make one's interests identical with those of the majority of the "managing class". Let Milton hear the lawyer who says that he thinks law, as well as medicine, should be socialized. Let him remember the lawyer in the story, with whom he was so much impressed, who set himself up in the business of labor organizing, on the theory that he would be more successful as an organizer in the status of a lawyer than in the status of a worker. As long as governments endure, the lawyers will probably stand high among the men who run things, because law and government are so closely related. The legal profession is not tied to the fate of capitalism.

I am somewhat familiar with the New Republic, the Nation, In Fact, PM, and their ilk (familiar enuf with PM's accounts of some things, as contrasted with the results of Government investigations, to greatly doubt the former's reliability). Rather more important than these, I have had some college courses on sociological subjects. I think it is obvious, anyway, from my comments on the war, that I am no blind believer of the advertiser-controlled periodicals.

I am rather amused at the offside remark to beware people who use the word "republican" instead of "democratic". I spent a good deal more time deciding which word to use there than Milton did on his offside remark, and it was hardly a chance slip revealing my true nature. A look at the sentence in which the usage occurs will show that "republican" is definitely a better word to use than "democratic".

"The working class is the majority of the citizenry". Therefore it should follow that labor unions represent the majority of the citizenry. Unfortunately, it happens that they have succeeded in convincing only a few million of our voters that they are good stuff, or getting them into unions without convincing them, thru gangster tactics, the closed shop, usw. Incidentally, Stuart Chase has a most interesting article condensed in the September Reader's Digest.

Milton's paragraph, middle of page 14, invoking the semanticists, seems to me quite unjustified. There is no sense complaining about use of the word "feels"; it is simply a synonym for "believes", used for variety. If he wants a more operational translation of the sentence he quotes, I can give it, but it seems unnecessary. Anyway, here 'tis:

"If labor unions had never been invented, or never risen to any prominence, wage-earners would have found better ways ^{thru political action} to secure their objectives, so that today the purchasing power of the average man would be greater than it now is, without offsetting disadvantages in restricted civil liberties or the like." What was so hard about extracting that?

Milty has a curiously limited idea of what political action may include. Apparently, no other action than lobbying has occurred to him. Has Philadelphia kept him from ever hearing of the more basically republican devices of running the right man and electing him? I had in mind the remark of my economics prof (who is a Leftist, of course) that labor unions in Europe had generally directed their efforts toward political action, whereas American unions preferred direct conflict with their employers; I was thinking too, perhaps, of another remark, that up until about the time of the New Deal, American labor unions had opposed legislation beneficial to the workers, because it seemed to be doing the things for which labor unions existed, and thus perhaps render them unnecessary.

"Whereas strikes and violence ... would never exist at all, were it not for the refusal of employers to make concessions." How nice. Almost any conflict can be avoided if one side will always knuckle under.

Great Britain's Labour Party, another professor has said, is actually a socialist party, and has its present name only to avoid the prejudice that attached to "socialist".

Seems like there was something else I wanted to say on this general subject, but it's slipped my mind. A remark on the first paragraph on page 15 of MM: It should have been obvious from our comment on Milty's IQ joke that we did understand said joke. Our attempted spoiling of it was based on such passages as this in psychology texts --darn; where is that note I made? Milt has both my psych books now, but I copied down a quote from one of them, but can't find it now. Anyway, the substance was that while there are some evidences of increase in intelligence beyond 16, in the case of geniuses even up to about my age, psychologists prefer not to give an IQ for people over 16 because the comparable Mental Age is so hard to determine, but instead state the individual's standing in a percentile scale--how much of the whole population he is smarter than and how much dumber than. When IQs are given for adults, they are based on Mental Age divided by an arbitrary figure for Chronological Age, which may be something like 14; it really needs to be corrected all along, as intelligence is not constant very long for the average of the popu-

Oh, yeah; I was going to say somewhere that since the issues cannot be settled statistically, debate on them degenerates into recitations of anecdotes, which prove nothing except that the field covered by the anecdote is not completely bare; thus one instance of law enforcement officers cracking strikers' skulls proves that this does happen, but a hundred instances prove nothing more. To show that all the evidence is not on Milton's side, I do want to call your attention to the "Union Defense Force" which operated in the labor war over the trucking unions in the Minneapolis-StPaul area. This consisted of approximately 500 far Left laborites who owned their own weapons, including guns, and were organized into units of four to an automobile and cruised around the cities in the best Capone manner. Of course, they were just operating in a dispute between the AFL and the CIO, and no such force would ever be used against management in an employer-employee dispute --would it, Milty?

LIST OF LIES, MISSTATEMENTS, AND HALF-TRUTHS APPEARING IN LE VOMBITEUR
IN ITS NONE TOO BRIEF EXISTENCE--again continued

46. "The gentleman referred to by Mr. Speer is John Strachey, eminent literateur, historian, and authority on contemporary culture from the Marxist viewpoint, whose disgraceful treatment by US Immigration authorities last year brought protests from progressive and intellectual groups all over the country." ¹/₂T. The half of this that is true is that the person referred to is John Strachey, that he was unfavorably treated by immigration officials, and that there were protests.

47. "...whose books have been termed 'subversive' by the same type of critics who heiled Hitler's representatives..." ¹/₂T. The idea that Doc is trying to sneak across here is that anyone who calls Strachey subversive is a Nazi.

48. "...people like Speer, who are so careful to keep 'uncontaminated' by Nazi-condemned books..." L.

49. "...would 'answer' specific charges with lofty quibbling, philosophical evasion, and vilification of personalities." L. Here again is that word "philosophical" used in a sense about as applicable as Kornbluth's reference to a ladder's lowest rung as an "extinguished thing". It is scarcely quibbling to say that the other is worshiping labels, damning things to which bad labels are applied without reference to the thing in itself; and this would be evasion only if I had nowhere else entered positive arguments in the debate. There may be some basis for the charge of vilification of personalities; I used the term "Screwball Strachey" because I liked its alliteration.

50. "...the selections of 'science-fiction' therein r filled with 'fascist' and reactionary undertones." L. Here is an imaginary quotation from the Daily Worker of 2239, which in its first few sentences describes as much in doubt the question whether there was a period of reaction between the Russian Revolution and the final victory of Communism, and then a few lines later blithely and facilely applies the dear old 1939 labels to the contents of Amazing Stories. Doc cannot even project himself into the future without carrying along his curious set of ideas, and his labels. It is, as Josef would say, symptomatic.

51. "'Horror's Head' which is nothing more than a thinly-concealed series of falsifications about the first Soviet Directory." L.

52. "...th and intellectually dishonest replies of the Journal-Chief thereafter." I were bound to call him "evasive" and "intellectually dishonest" if he r agree with them.

53. "'Wollheim' was associated with a small but powerful g of intellectuals within the 'science-fiction' movement." L.

Lowndes, quite understandably, doesn't like this department. He is willing to admit that Le Vombiteur had its faults--this does not set him apart from the mass of humanity--but naturally he is unwilling to admit that it was as obnoxious as it actually was. And his stand that Levy never did anybody any harm is refuted by statements of Chauvenot and others.

Possibly Doc has a mistaken idea of the purpose of my List. I have never set myself the task of refuting all the lies, misstatements, and half-truths that have appeared in fandom; even if I wanted to undertake such an impossible task, a lot of it would be repetitious. The Wollheimists have done an all too complete job of watching and answering and attacking those associated with Fantasy News; why should I spend my good time on that? (Save for occasional protests that I have registered, when the known-biased accounts of the Futurians might have been discounted, and the truth not believed.) But Le Vombiteur is a field that has been largely left to me. Jack F Speer 346 Nampton/Dc