

after the resignation of Eden could have ensured an alternative Government and the victory of the policy of collective security and the Anglo-Soviet Alliance. Thus P.R. might have assisted to prevent the present war.

Then it is argued that P.R. makes for the development of splinter groups and small minority Parties, leading to political instability. This is a myth. Even the Daily Herald notes of P.R. that there is "no record of any tendency to increase groups."

In the present Parliament, under the existing system, there is a greater number of Parties and groups than in many countries with P.R. France used to be the classic home of infinite sub-division of parties and groups; but there was no P.R. in France.

In fact the larger constituencies of P.R. require stronger party machinery with wider mass support to work them, make for the elimination of small, weak unrepresentative groups, and lead to the development of firmly-based larger parties with stable mass support.

But, says Mr. Greenwood, there must be only two parties. No others allowed. By order. If this principle had been followed in the early days of the Labor Party, there would have been no Labor Party. Labor grew up in revolt against the iron fetters of the "two-party sys-

tem," seeking to stifle and prevent the emergence of new political thought and tendencies among the people. "Does Labor, once inside the sacred preserves, now seek to exclude the newcomer? Does Transport House oppose a democratic electoral system in the hope artificially to exclude Communism from its rightful place in the political life of the country?"

The way to a healthy democratic life in this country does not lie through regimenting the electorate, banning sincerely-held opinions, and permitting only one of two rigid official lines of policy. The narrow exclusiveness of Transport House, seeking to maintain an artificial monopoly, refusing even unity of the Labor movement, and frowning on collaboration with other progressive sections, only plays into the hands of reaction and even delays a Labor majority. Reaction has been skilful to play the game of Coalition.

The way forward for the Labor movement is to build strong its own unity, embracing all sections of working class opinion, and to rally round such a united Labor movement the broadest front of progressive opinion, so as to ensure a stable Labor-progressive majority and a stable Government on that basis in the present transitional stage. A consistent democratic reform of the electoral system would assist in the accomplishment of this aim.

## Signs of an "Infantile Disorder" on the Cultural Front ...

(JOHN REED)

Recent Party action in bringing cultural issues into the limelight was such a progressive and desirable step that it received the widest praise and acknowledgement from all those who have been engaged in the past with these very activities. The Communist Party on only established itself on a stable and lasting basis after giving due importance to man's cultural needs and the expression of his creative impulses in the various art forms. It is well-known that this fact has been fully realised in the Soviet Union, and it is not a moment too soon for its full consideration here.

These facts make it all the more deplorable that, at the very outset of this cultural resurgence, there should appear in the Review statements on the subject which can only be categorized as the most appalling bunkum.

When Max Brown, in the January issue, wrote his "Reply to John Reed," his arguments—if they could be dignified with that name—appeared to be so unrelated to the question of painters and paintings with which I had been concerned, that no comment seemed to be called for from me. But with the February issue, another article appears by "H.M." (possibly Herbert McClintock) which, though almost equally irrelevant, probably requires an answer if only because of its inevitable cumulative effect.

Although Max Brown has written at the greater length, I propose to say little about his "Reply," because, in the first place, in a discussion about painting, he admits that he knows "very little about painting"; secondly, because to deal with his "arguments" would mean taking them one by one, and they seem obviously not worth the space which would be required to do this; thirdly, because he entirely misrepresents my own arguments, which anyone who wants to can see for themselves in the December Review, and fourthly, because he ends on a note of such utter imbecility (quite apart from the fact that it has nothing whatever to do with the subject under discussion) that one feels disinclined to bother about him at all. Through what happy piece of inside information has he gleaned the amazing fact that the words of Stalin's battle cry "Forward, for the liberation of mankind!" were "quietly spoken... little words"?

H.M.'s arguments are at least more succinctly expressed, even though the "infantile disorder" that gives rise to them may be equally apparent. According to him, the fact that I say "the best artists in Australia are those who

are not generally understood by the people," means that there is something in their work quite unrelated to human needs. This is, in every direction, such a basically false proposition and reveals such a hopelessly inadequate, narrow, limited and, above all, dogmatic approach that its enunciation by one who is, as I imagine, a Party member, is a most deplorable circumstance. It would be as sensible to say that because some complex piece of machinery is not generally understood by the people, therefore it is "quite unrelated to human needs."

It is refreshing to find that H.M., in self-contradiction to the dogmatic spirit of much of his article, does advocate the education of the people towards the appreciation of art; but even this he takes from a purely one-sided point of view and blames the artist for not working with Trade Unions, etc., instead of it occurring to him to lay at least an equal blame on the Trade Unions for not working with the artist.

H.M. entirely misrepresents me when he says I am convinced that artists are doing all that can be done by remaining obscure. Nothing of the sort: I have no desire that the artists should remain obscure, though I did say that obscurity had been forced on the artist under capitalism. The obscurity of the artist is not a desirable thing, quite the contrary, and I believe that the majority of the important artists today are deeply implicated in all that is going on around them. If they are not actually integrated with the Communist Party itself, I would like to offer the suggestion that the Party should seriously consider whether this is not as much its fault as the fault of the artist.

H.M. holds up to use the example of the Soviet artist "because he understands the world he lives in and finds the means of conveying his knowledge to his fellow men." This may, or may not be true, but assuming it is, it is quite irrelevant for our purposes because we are not in the Soviet Union and our conditions are entirely different from theirs. However, I would go further and at least question H.M.'s arbitrary statement that Soviet art is good. Of the grounds H.M. has for saying that I do not know, I only sincerely hope he is right; but I confess that my own admittedly limited contacts with Soviet art have been almost universally discouraging. In the realm of music, Shostakovich appears to have achieved something of concrete validity (I am not qualified to say more), but

in the realm of literature very little has reached us which appears likely to leave any permanent mark, while the limited amount of painting I have seen (mostly through reproduction) I can only sum up as being deplorably dull. I freely admit that in all these spheres I have only limited judgment, and have had only limited access to Soviet art, but what I have seen makes me doubt the wisdom of the bold statement that "Soviet art is good," and in any event, as I have pointed out, our own circumstances and life are so entirely different that it would be merely stupid to expect our artistic expression to take the same form as theirs.

Neither Max Brown nor H.M. fail to note my apparently precarious position in society—"Torn between ruling and working class interests," as Max Brown puts it—and I would be the last to deny the element of truth in this suggestion. The danger lies, in my opinion, in the tendency to draw erroneous conclusions from it, the most common being the essentially undialectical one that because of a certain contradiction in a man's make-up he

is incapable of arriving at any valid conclusions—or at any rate that he only does so when he happens to agree with you, otherwise he is just torn, etc. Now this, to me, is a vicious form of argument which is only too common, but is productive of entirely barren results: it makes a fore-judging without any real attempt to arrive at objective values. The constructive point is whether my natural sensibilities have in fact been developed through the educational and leisure facilities I have been fortunate enough to receive by reason of my favored position. If so there is a positive gain which should be availed of and which can possibly help to shorten the hard road of the working class towards a new and more vital culture.

Arbitrary and provocative statements about bourgeois "cultural" and "art" experts, such as appeared in the "Guardian" recently, only tend to widen the gap between the so-called "intelligentsia" and the working class and to breed mutual mistrust and suspicion in place of a desire for co-operation and a recognition of common ideals.

## A Further Reply to John Reed's Views

(H.M.)

In February "Review," I criticised John Reed's views on the relation of Art to Society. Now, John Reed claims that my article is almost irrelevant to the question of painters and paintings. That can only mean that Art has almost no relation to painters and paintings.

It is instructive to note that John Reed puts forward nothing constructive. This is not to be wondered at when we find him admitting that the basis of his arguments are his natural sensibilities.

Take the first point wherein J. R. finds my argument "basically false," "hopelessly inadequate," "narrow," "limited" and "dogmatic." I said: "Reed's contention that the best artists in Australia are those who are not understood by the people, amounts to saying there is something in their work quite unrelated to human needs." John Reed replies, "It would be as sensible to say that because some complex piece of machinery is not generally understood by the people, therefore it is quite unrelated to human needs."

It is true that the bread I eat is made by a machine I don't understand, but I do get the bread. I get nothing from the picture I can't understand, except a conviction that the artist who painted it is not functioning as he should in society.

Take the argument which John Reed finds so one-sided. I said, "Those who have nothing to fear from creative work must see that they themselves become the patrons of art. If the education of the people is one-sided and inadequate, then the people, including the artists, must be given a balanced and adequate education. It is a co-operative affair. It can be undertaken best by trade unions and associations who know how to co-operate in the interests of human welfare. It is with these people the artist will work if he wants to be understood or if he wants to learn how to say something worth saying."

John Reed replies, "Even this (education) he takes from a purely one-sided point of view and blames the artist for not working with trade unions, etc., instead of it occurring to him to lay at least equal blame on the trade unions for not working with the artist." I leave it to the reader to decide who is one-sided. In any case capitalism is to blame. It is not a question of blaming the artist or the workers but to finding a way of bringing the two together.

Next J. R. charges me with misrepresenting him. I said, "J. R. is convinced that artists are doing all that can be done by remaining obscure." In December "Review" J. R. wrote: "It is indeed true that the future of the artist is with the people, but it is a great mistake to assume that this result will be achieved by the artist setting to

work to paint pictures which people will understand. What can such a statement mean? Does it not tell artists they would be making a great mistake if they ceased being obscure? Now, J. R. says: "I have no desire that the artist should remain obscure."

Because he has changed his mind on this point since December it is hardly fair of him to say I misrepresented him in my last article.

J. R. goes on to say that my remarks on Soviet Art are irrelevant because we are discussing Australian conditions. My point was that Soviet Art is good—in the light of the responses it arouses in the Soviet people—"because it is helping to build the unbreakable morals of the Soviet people." I went on to point out that in Australia, too, the anti-fascist war determines the content for those who lay claim to a "dynamic and penetrating vision." The fact that J. R. finds all this irrelevant simply proves that Australia's obscure artists have not made J. R. conscious of the People's War. I maintain that art which has inspired both the Soviet soldiers at the front and the men and women in the rear to feats of heroism is good art. J. R. who asks for objectivity judges it merely by the fact that he personally finds it "deplorably dull."

I criticised J. R.'s views on this basis:

1. The response which Art arouses in human beings is the main thing and not some intrinsic value in art itself.
2. For art to be vital and creative it must arouse responses which strengthen the progressive forces in society.
3. This is nothing more than applying to art the idea that everything created by man should contribute to his well being.

John Reed finds this approach "appalling bunkum" and the worst kind of "narrow," "dogmatic" and "undialectical" thinking.

So much appalling bunkum comes out of John Reed's subjective approach through his "natural sensibilities" that he could have read no more than the front cover of "Left wing Communism" to get the phrase "infantile disorder." Lenin says (chapter 4): "It is not yet sufficiently known abroad that Bolshevism grew, took shape and became steered in long years of struggle against petty-bourgeois revolutionism.—The instability of such revolutionism, its barrenness, its ability to become swiftly transformed into submission, apathy, phantasy and even into a "mad" infatuation with one or another bourgeois fad—all this is a matter of common knowledge."

That is hardly a plea for the revision of objective truth, to accommodate the ideas of everyone who has received education and leisure by reason of a favored position in society.

No doubt certain individual Party members at certain times are sectarian in their approach to art, but I see

nothing "leftist" in the broad generalisation, that art must serve man's needs. If J. R. accepts this as his ideal he will get co-operation. Otherwise the gap between himself and the working class will be a desirable thing.

(Note: H. M. does NOT stand for Herbert McClintock in this instance.)