

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

I found your reasoning in the Editorial of the last issue (Sept/Oct 1991) peculiar. You laud the "Social Democracy" of Europe, the USA and Japan, as against the totalitarian regimes of Stalin and Hitler - nobody could argue with that. But you criticise those people who want th "change it in radical ways."

I find your logic wonky here, because the kind of society we have is in fact not something that arrived out of the heavens. If we have many benefits in our culture, surely it is due to the many people who that struggled for them? For example - the health service, unemployment benefit, sickness benefit, mass free education, universal suffrage - all of these things had to be campaigned and fought for, often in fact by socialists. Indeed the Labour Party was formed to organise and campaign for such issues - whether it still fulfils that role is doubtful.

You also seem to me to get in a bit of a tangle over suffering. You argue that suffering and death are "in the nature of life", and then you say they can be located "in the thoughts and emotions of each and all of us".

This kind of argument seems to almost suggest that there is nothing we can do about suffering except attend to our own hearts and minds. I feel this is an extremism within the spectrum of politics and spirituality, which Nigel Collingwood talks about in the same issue. Surely we must do both - look into ourselves; but also fight for things like the Health Service, which is in great danger at the moment.

You almost get to the point of saying there are no social issues, there are no social struggles, there are no social evils. I don't think using Hitler and Stalin as awful warnings means therefore that all political struggle is doomed - we live amidst the fruits of centuries of political struggle by our ancestors.

Yours sincerely,
Barry Forder