

X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X
X "DELIRIUM TREMENS". X This sheet edited and stencilled by
X Road, HIGH WYCOMBE, Bucks., and duplicated
X by Michael Rosenblum, for which we
X Number 11. August 1943. X continue to be thankful....
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

No time for even right-hand margins this issue, fellows. Sorry !! D.T.

" C O U N T E R - A T T A C K " by Julian F. Parr.

What is the essence of Roy Johnson's criticism? I find three points; the first a sensible (though faulty) argument, the other two either evidence of Roy's vastly superior knowledge and deep insight, or evidence of just that prejudiced, illogical attitude in Roy that he ascribes (quite excusably) to the masses. Judge for yourselves but bear in mind he may disclaim this present attitude, which is merely a reply to my article.... His points are:-

(A) An oligarchy of intellectuals, while desirable, is, because of the complexity of social classes, the opposition of the masses and the passive disunity of the intellectuals, quite unattainable.

(B) That only the U.S.S.R. is even partly socially organised -- and that it has a system "so mechanical that a race of robots would fit in much better than Men; for emotions are a factor in human life."

(C) That all progress is due to an élite of geniuses, intellectuals and higher technicians. Masses have contributed only labour power which could have been supplied just as well by "a reasonably efficient robot, if one existed". This being so, and the masses being ignorant, unintelligent, childish, apathetic, scornful of serious thought -- he concludes that they are valueless and not worth helping survive.

And, closing, he asks "Who would be of most value to an honest revolution, the Average Man or the Average Fan?"

A By implying that the desirable society would be composed of two classes, the Labourers (supplying the power) and the Intellectuals (directing the power), Roy seems to think that there is a clear distinction between "intelligent" and "unintelligent" persons. This is obviously not so; there are persons with varying degrees of intelligence; and they could be allotted duties of varying complexity and importance. There is also the important factor of inclination; some "Intellectuals" will refuse responsible government duties but will prefer to influence society with their individual efforts; some will be disinterested in social science but will prefer self-expression in art or literature; many will prefer scientific research or industrial organisation---these will help to supply the power, not to direct it.... The resistance from the masses will not be spontaneous, but will to a great extent be promoted by a minority of property-owners, and others interested in the present system of social status based upon wealth and it is their influence over the masses that will have to be fought. The extent of this influence is shown by these figures:- Five financial groups between them own (and influence the readers of) 16 London newspapers, with a daily net sale of 11,500,000 (weekdays) and 8,000,000 (Sundays) and a corresponding circulation in the provinces. -- The passive disunity of the intellectuals to-day is widespread, and it is one of the biggest problems we have to solve.

B When I spoke of "socially organised" mankind I meant "organised in a social manner". I claim that any group of people which provides communal services and pays taxes is socially organised -- to a certain degree; as opposed to the isolation and self-support of individuals (or families) seen in the animal world. The only justification for Roy's

strange idea that "only the U.S.S.R. is even partly organised" is that Roy means, by "socially organised", -- "organised for the social good". This would explain his otherwise suspicious disregard of the Fascist "Corporate State" -- but would not account for his contradictory suggestion that emotions are disregarded in the Soviet social system; this is another peculiar idea for which I would like to see evidence or authority. J.G.Crowther, in "Soviet Science", differs: -- "...in the conditions of the modern world, the most superb heroism, the highest public morale and spiritual elevation are inspired by societies that are scientifically organised." -- It is, surely, accepted that music, art and literature -- which fulfill human emotional needs -- are flourishing in the Soviet Union; if necessary I can quote Upton Sinclair, John Barbirolli, Alexander Kaun, Alan Bush, and others, from the few books I have with me, verifying this. Why, in certain respects, in my opinion, the Soviet authorities are pandering too much to emotion of a rationalistic (or "patriotic") nature -- how much of this is necessary owing to the crisis of war it is difficult to judge.

/C/ While not accepting the theory that all progress came from an intellectual élite, (for this implies that all progress is conscious, which assuredly it is not, -- and were not the parents of some of the members of this élite -- maybe most unimaginative specimens of homo stultus -- necessary?), I must ask -- you admit that the masses can produce labour power (without which we, if we survived an infantile mortality of say 200 in the 1,000 births and an expectation of life of, say 15 years, -- would be living in wooden and wattle huts, without drainage, power, lighting or communications systems; we would not travel, we would read, say, three books in a lifetime and write, say, one, all on parchment, -- all this before wood fires and amid overbearing natural forces.) and you suggest that robots could supply it better. But, man! -- where are the robots! Until we get them, the only alternative is to educate the intelligent, train the masses in mechanical production, reduce the ratio between human labour and mechanical production -- and rid society of parasites who neither think nor work !!

The Average Fan, Roy, that's why I continue my activity within Fandom rather than without....

FURTHER COUNTER-ATTACK by Ron Lane.

"The only socially organised community in the world is the U.S.S.R." -- It depends what you mean (damn Joad, that phrase only raises a laugh nowadays) by social organisation. I most certainly maintain that this country is thus organised, and America, less so perhaps, and others. I can't see what Roy means by his phrase, if he is referring to social organisation -- he says so, anyhow! And as for the Soviet system being mechanised, I'd say "fluid" is the word. Yet a Government must be a machine nowadays, so in a limited sense Roy's right, but the Soviet machine is not, as I presume he means, unadaptable, nor does it neglect the human side of life; and robots would not fit in. (The remarks re "a race of robots" would seem to imply the Russians are an unimaginative and uncaring people, -- the people who can point to a record of achievement unrivalled by any other country in modern times, achievements attained through the medium of the Homo Stultus whom Roy so derides, -- a medium filled with ideals, and now fighting for the ideals and their resultant offspring, whereas we fight for promises that we fought for once before, and that had no offspring.)

Who is responsible for 'Man's' achievements? "A few geniuses and technicians"; correct, yes, from a normal materialistic viewpoint.

Yet Roy refers only to Man's mechanised progress; well, I'll deal with that, and then the political and cultural side, which Roy neglects. What he says has been right in the past -- but now the technicians, yes, and the geniuses too, arise from the masses which are so useless ! And no doubt but that the masses of the past had their geniuses and technicians, but there was no means of bringing those few forth; but now....
the education of the masses is the chief single process which has made possible our modern world, -- the ranks of intellectuals could never have done anything alone. If the Greeks had only acted instead of talking, -- but they, too, despised the artisan, and devoted their thoughts to less mundane -- therefore presumably better -- subjects, like fans. Russia, the only country which has its masses as the real rulers, is the most advanced state mechanically, and if the Soviet system has little cultural background.... that takes time, -- more than 25 years.

Well, Roy anyhow, does admit by inference that the masses have contributed something to the non-mechanical side, at least, therefore contradicting himself -- Here one unreadable word. Ed.

As to the dogmatic statement that the masses are dumb. Oh, Roy, have you ever been near the masses ? The working-class man especially is politically conscious, and if he is swayed by the newspapers, how can he help it ? -- his other sources of information are small indeed. The present time especially is indicative that the masses are not inactive or apathetic -- certainly they've done proportionately more than the fans, who are so lauded directly and by inference ! Yes, we fans argue blissfully over Communism and various other socialist doctrines -- the Greeks of another age ! The despised workers, backed at long last by a worthwhile fraction of the middle class, merely joins some socialist organisation, and instead of merely believing there is power in unity, puts the belief into practice. -- And, Roy, do you really believe the Average Fan would be of any use in a revolution ? -- Remember, the Average Man is not a satisfied conservative, as you seem to think.

 Doug Webster writes:- "I have read the latest issue of DT's with the usual enjoyment, Mr. Johnson's essay with some regret. Edwin MacDonald, who was with me at the time, will testify that I yammered audibly for some moments. It would, of course, be futile to comment on the essay; but the reference to myself puzzles me. I should have thought that my fault, if any in this particular, was to be too opinionated and argumentative : certainly not the opposite. One glance at any issue of THE GENTLEST ART or FANTAST will surely show that where I differ from others is in never refraining from shoving my car into other people's arguments. (cf. my reply to Staggerer a few pages before, and your own -- e.g. -- perpetual silence as an editor). No room for my own views !! -- Ed." Just what does Mr. Johnson want ? -- bearing in mind that I have discussed this point with him on several occasions. Does he imagine that because I prefer to look at both sides of a question, I have no interest in it ? Naziism is Mr. Johnson's ivory tower." Idlewild, --13:7:43.

 Interesting letter from Sid Birchby:- "At the present I am in ----, on the ----, at a little village called ----, which thinks it's a great place because once a week it runs a cinema show in the village hall, which also serves inter alia,

for dog shows, mothers' meetings and dances, so-called.

"To my surprise, the cinema is running a serial, and at that a science-fictional serial, which, as far as I know, has never before been mentioned, even by that archfiend of the fantasy film, PFC Acky.

"It is called 'Undersea Kingdom', produced by Republic Pictures in 1936. Cast includes Crash Corrigan as himself (Tah-rah!!), old-timer Jack Mulhall, Boris Karloff, Jr., and Smiley Burnette.

"Story is the usual comic-strip medley of fights and fantasy. Much of the apparatus, such as the rocket-ships, the laboratory fittings, and the television screens, will be familiar to anyone who saw the Flash Gordon serial in the autumn of 1939. This, I think, was also a Republic Production.

"As far as I can make out, the background of the story concerns a party of Americans whose submarine breaks through into an air-bubble on the sea-bed. Here they find the well-known rival groups of Atlantians, who have developed the usual Wellsian bag of scientific tricks, but who still fight with bows and arrows because the use of explosives might cause the air-bubble to collapse. Nevertheless, there is a certain Mad Scientist, named Oompah Khan (I think) who is prepared to take a chance, the more so because, would you believe it, he wants to destroy the world. So, he captures a scientist from the American party and uses him for his own foul ends to produce rocket motors and armaments. Shame !! At the end of this week's installment, Crash Corrigan, having wangled the post of C-in-C., Home Forces, is beginning to wish he hadn't, as he's fallen over the city walls and is being trampled to death by wild 'orses. Still, since he's been falling over the wall since 1936, he should be getting used to it by now.

"The paraphernalia of Hollywood's Futuria has caused much amusement in ----. Many of the local kids are staging ray gun battles by the quiet waters of the ----, and their determined hissing scares many a Land Girl who thinks she has run across a snake in the grass. /I take it you mean this latter strictly literally? -- Ed.7

"Usually the serial is followed by the news reel with pictures of war machines, and it is difficult to think which is the more futuristic. Science has caught up with a good deal of fiction in the last seven years. Let us hope it doesn't catch up with much more or we shall not need any mad scientists to finish off this old planet.

"If I see any more instalments, perhaps you would like to hear what happened to poor old Crash. It does seem at present as if he's had one crash too many.

"But then, it always does, doesn't it?"

-----ooOOoo-----

/Thanks, Sid. We'll certainly be pleased to hear how Crash gets on. ----Ed.7

FANTASY FILM REVIEW.

While in London recently, I paid a visit to the local Odeon Cinema, and saw the Hal Roach Production, "Man and His Mate". This is a most unusual picture, the plot being laid in prehistoric times, and the actors taking the parts of cave-men. One of the most impressive points about the film is that there is a negligible amount of speech all through. The effect would have been quite spoiled had the "cave-men" spoken voluminously with American accents. High spots are:- battles with prehistoric monsters, a death-struggle between two giant saurians, and a volcanic eruption. The fact that certain of the monsters were extinct when Man appeared is ignored, but the film is well worth seeing.