

A Different Kind of Socialist

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A FEW months ago, I reviewed Harold Wilson's book about the Labour Government of 1964-70. This book strongly suggested to me that Britain's Prime Minister was a man by no means lacking in high human and political qualities, yet curiously bereft of any deep sense either of the past or of the future. As some men are tone-deaf, or incapable of ever appreciating a poem, so Harold Wilson revealed himself to be without any historical sense whatever: a politician, but never a statesman.

By contrast let us examine Michael Manley, Prime Minister of Jamaica, as seen through his book, *The Politics of Change**. No doubt Michael Manley would also describe himself as a socialist; and in Britain there is little doubt that he would fit comfortably into the Fabian Society.

Within the confines of his economic errors, Michael Manley has thought deeply about political fundamentals: economic, sociological, psychological, historical. He is a man far too wise, far too humane, far too intelligent, to wear chips on his shoulder; yet he is well able to appreciate how others do, in a land where nearly everybody is descended from slaves and has keen memories of colonialism.

There have been human societies where radical change was difficult, or impossible. In Jamaica at the moment of her independence, radical change was not merely easy and possible, but absolutely inevitable. The operative questions were how and when the change should occur, and in what direction.

Michael Manley is nothing if not a realist. He appreciated full well, for example, that a small and under developed country required foreign capital to develop at any speed, and it was futile to grumble about neo-colonialism. He appreciated the educational needs of a

land with a high proportion of illiteracy. He saw the social problem of awakening a people who, for a variety of historical reasons, had come to accept a rather run-down, unimaginative way of life.

Thus far, we see Michael Manley as very much the man for the job. But, what a pity he has that streak of paternalism that seems to characterise most political figures today: the quiet confidence that if only every economic problem is left firmly in the hands of themselves and their friends, and all the wise, altruistic planners, then everything will be well.

We meet all the sad, swinging clichés - "relevant"; "elitist", "economic strategy", and so on, half a dozen to the page.

I must stop carping. Mr. Manley has done a good job, has introduced a measure of land-value taxation in his country and has written a good book. If we must have a socialist Prime Minister, then I should be very pleased indeed to swop him for Harold Wilson.

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"If the situation (in Germany) after the war had not been hopeless, it would have been impossible to have, as I did, a policy based on order. If countries live above their means, and central banks encourage them to do so by a policy of easy money, then their balance of payments cannot be in order and there cannot be real competition. This is the position we have reached today in the West. We have run off the rails. The question is how we get back on them. I am a fanatic of order. A country which is ready to restore a good orderly balance is a country where there is social justice."
Ludwig Erhard, Paris, 6th March.

*Andre Deutsch, £2.75.

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