

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE IDS BULLETIN

I would not normally cavil at casual misrepresentation of my views, especially when, as in the article by Robin Cohen and David Michael in your last issue, these are of little relevance to their slightly esoteric discussion of whether Marx's criticisms of the reliability of the 'lumpen bourgeoisie' did or did not turn out to be 'right after all' when applied to African conditions more than a century later. Their real object seems to be to discredit 'Fanonists', by associating them with 'professional developmentalists' and 'ideologues of the capitalist order' such as David Morse and myself.

However, readers might reasonably suppose that such a reference in our Bulletin would be authentic, especially since the editorial aim is 'mainly to reflect the work and interests of the Institute's Fellows'. Indeed even if people feel emotional about views with which they differ, they usually, in academic circles anyway, try to represent these accurately.

It is actually not quite clear who are the principle targets in various passages of the article, but it seems as if I am supposed 'to display fear and revulsion at the sight of 'the poor' or 'the masses' haunting... (our) citadels of power'. It would not be easy to document this (presumably a portrait photograph would be needed) – in fact anyone who has read anything of what I have written on the subject will know that I treat unemployment as a social evil because it is a cause of poverty and humiliation. And if my views on the prior importance of 'employment' over 'income' targets are to be cited, perhaps the authors might have quoted the sentence in full – I also said that 'the two are of course linked'. In any case, the context shows that what I am attacking is the use of aggregative income measures that mask social problems.

Yours sincerely,
Dudley Seers,
28 March, 1974.