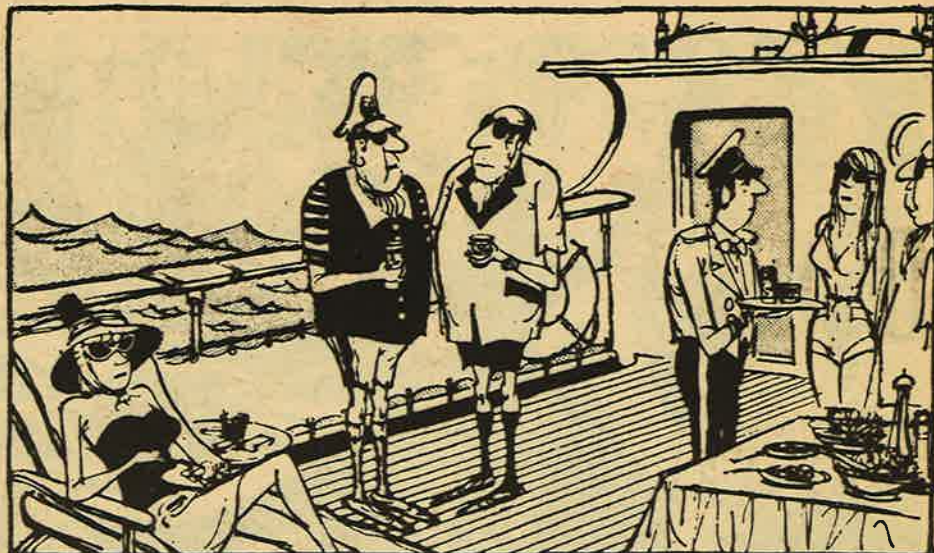


SHARING UNDER SOCIALISM

RATIONING



"The country's going to the dogs. Happily, it's the top dogs."

It's pretty clear that we are going to be in real trouble unless we cut down gasoline consumption, and there's been a lot of talk about whether to do it by rationing or raising prices.

There's no doubt where the people who run our country stand on this. Speaking for the interests of big business, Pres. Ford called rationing a "last resort" that we'd only have over his "dead body." So this fall, it looks like gas will be going up to at least 70¢ a gallon.

Why is big business so dead set against rationing? Because it's a socialist way of dealing with shortages, and it poses a direct threat to the way things are done in capitalist countries like ours.

Actually, the question isn't whether we should have rationing, because we have rationing already. Of course, it isn't called rationing. They call it the "free market" system, but the only thing free about it is the freedom of a handful of people to live off the labor of the many.

The real question is whether we should have the capitalist kind of rationing, where the few get a lot while the many, who do almost all of the productive work, get virtually nothing, or the socialist kind of rationing where the basic necessities are distributed more or less evenly.

HOW SOCIALIST RATIONING WORKS

The people who run our country say that rationing would take away our freedom. Just look at what rationing has done to the people of socialist countries like Cuba, they say. Okay, let's look.

They say that before Cuba became socialist, stores in Havana were full, food was plentiful, and people ate meat every day. Now, they say, the stores are supposedly empty, meat is scarce, and the people have to wait in long lines to buy anything.

What they don't tell us is that while life was pretty good for a few rich Cubans, most Cubans, who worked damned hard for their living, lived on a diet of rice, beans, and tubers, with practically no milk or dairy products, eggs, poultry, meat, fish, fruit or vegetables. And the average income in the countryside was less than \$100 a year, including homegrown food supplies.

These were the 4-5 million workers who produced most of Cuba's wealth by back-breaking labor in the sugar fields. These were the working people who produced most of the country's wealth, only to see it consumed in the cities by the rich who lived like parasites off the labor of working people.

Less than 20% of Cuba's imports were things that working people really needed, like rice, lard, beans, codfish, cloth, or medicines, while fully 80% were luxury goods that workers didn't need and couldn't afford.

Yes, stores were full in Havana, but only because 90% of the Cuban people couldn't afford to buy anything. Yes, some people ate meat every day, but only because the people who produced food in the countryside went hungry. And yes, a few Cubans lived pretty well, but only because most Cubans lived in extreme poverty.

Today, in socialist Cuba, milk, which used to be a privilege of the rich, is now rationed so that children, older people, and sick people get all they need.

Education, medical care, dental care, and utilities are free for everyone. Rent is free for most Cubans, and very cheap for the rest.

The basic needs of all Cubans are being met, and while no one lives really well, no one lives in poverty or goes hungry. The Cuban people judge their society by how well the average person lives not by how well the rich live.

It is true, rationing has meant an end to many "freedoms" in Cuba. The rich are no longer free to live off the labor and suffering of the many. And working people are no longer free to suffer from hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, or some diseases that could easily be prevented.

But of course, rationing is not the answer to everything. The only real solution to a shortage of something important is to increase production so there's enough to meet everyone's needs. That's exactly what's being done in Cuba and other socialist countries.

As the Cuban economy develops along socialist lines and production increases things will get better for the Cuban people, not just a few. The Cuban people will move forward together, as a

society of working people not as individuals trying to get ahead at the expense of everyone else.

That's how the socialist rationing works in Cuba. Now let's see how the capitalist kind of rationing works here.

This kind of rationing means that more than 30 million Americans suffer from hunger and malnutrition in the richest country in the world, a country that produces so much food that it sells enormous amounts to other countries and pays large growers to cut back production. Why? Because profits come before people's needs.

This kind of rationing means that most older Americans are forced to spend their final years in poverty and loneliness, no matter how hard they've worked all their lives.

And this kind of rationing means that medical care and quality education are the privilege of a few rather than the right of all.

This kind of rationing means that the wealthiest 10% of the American population earn more each year than the poorest 50%, the people who do almost all of the productive work.

It means, simply, that a country that uses more than 30% of the world's resources to meet the needs of less than 6% of the world's people can't provide anything close to a decent life for tens of millions of its people.

WHY IS BIG BUSINESS AGAINST RATIONING?

The people who run our country are dead set against rationing because it might start us thinking.

For instance, we might start asking why anyone has to go hungry or live in substandard housing in our country. Or why the children of poor and working class families can't afford a decent education. Or why so many people have to do without adequate medical care. Or why so many useless luxuries are produced while there is a shortage of basic necessities.

Or we might start asking why the richest 20 million Americans have more money than the poorest 100 million the people who do most of the work.

And we might start asking who really benefits from capitalism, and who would benefit from socialism. They don't want us asking questions like these, because it wouldn't take long for us to figure out that capitalism might make a lot of sense for the rich parasites who live off our labor, but it certainly doesn't serve the interests of working people. And we might discover that there's a completely different way of doing things, the socialist way, that makes a whole lot more sense for working people.

