

ANALYSE ET COMMENTAIRE DE TEXTES OU DOCUMENTS EN ANGLAIS

Durée: 6 heures

Analysez et commentez, **en anglais**, les cinq documents suivants:

DOCUMENT ONE

The problem of today, as of yesterday and tomorrow, is how to establish equity between men. The laborer who is forced to sell his day's labor today, or starve tomorrow, is not in equitable relations with his employer, who can wait to buy labor until starvation fixes the rates of wages and hours of time. The labor movement is the natural effort of readjustment, —an ever continued attempt of organized laborers, so that they may withhold their labor until the diminished interest or profit or capital of the employer shall compel him to agree to such terms as shall be for the first time measurably equitable. There are the forceful methods of all time, and may continue to develop manhood and womanhood by peaceful revolution, as laborers advance their line, or may cause a social earthquake, and become destructive by organized repression of labor's right. Before the solution of the labor problem can be reached, the nature of the complaint must be understood (...)

Primarily the responsibility of strikes and outbreaks rests upon the wage labor system, —a system that encourages cunning above conscience; that robs the producer and enriches the speculator; that makes the employer a despot, and the employee a slave, —a system that shortens life, engenders disease, enfeebles the mind, corrupts the morals, and thus propagates misery, vice and crime.

We complain, that whereas labor produces all the wealth of the world, the laborer receives only as much as will keep him in the poorest condition of life to which he can be crowded down, for the shortest number of years; that he makes civilization possible, and is reduced to barbarism, —building houses not to own them, carriages not to ride in them, growing food he may not eat, and weaving raiment he may not wear; that all of the arts and comforts that lift human life above the brute are present to tantalize and to encourage him; that steam, electricity, chemistry and productive machinery are competitors, and not co-operators, with him; that the conditions of employment are debasing, and not elevating, —demoralizing and not self-controlling; and that, whereas he is the most important factor, he is treated as the least, that his home is in the tenement houses, back slums, and alleys of the city; or the unhealthy lowlands of the suburbs; that his wife is forced from home, and his children from school, that he cannot, as a laborer, hope for thanks, honors or positions of trust; that he is practically debarred from representation or the public expression of his complaints. When at work, he belongs to the lower orders, and is continually under surveillance; when out of work, he is an outlaw, a tramp, —he is a man without the rights of manhood, —the pariah of society, homeless, in the deep significance of the term.

The laborer's complaint is not that brains rule, or that culture leads, but that conscienceless cunning and miserly acquisitiveness are rewarded better than constructive ability or open-hearted integrity. We complain that culture busies itself upon immaterial subjects, —conning the olden lore, not delving for the revealed treasures that lie embossed in humanity; that learning interests itself with the science of things, and not with the science of men; that philanthropy is the maudlin moan over the needs of the beasts, and a scoffer at the woes of humanity.

We complain that our rulers, statesmen, and orators have not attempted to engraft republican principles into our industrial system, and have forgotten or denied its underlying principles. We complain that statesmanship is narrow and partisan, the pulpit blind and ignorant, and the press the advertising channel of wealth; that the spirit and power of our institutions are being subverted from the high positions attempted by the Fathers, by gradual limitation of the power of the ballot, making elections less frequent, appointments more numerous, terms of office longer, (...) by the teaching of a false and pernicious system of political economy, that has no logical rule of law of action (...) a

system that, up to this time, has taught that the production, and not the distribution, of wealth, was the greatest factor in civilization.

We complain that the courts are administrators of estates, and not of justice; that the weight of wealth, and not of testimony, wins the case or decides the penalty. We complain that jurors are chosen from the traders and speculators, and not from the wage laborers. We complain (...) that we are wholly in the hands of our employers, —serfs of the mills, the workshop, and the mine, —subjects of the railroad kings and the cotton lords, who know no divided allegiance.

In the light to these facts, we declare that there is an inevitable and irresistible conflict between the wage system of labor and the republican system of government—the wage labor attempting to save the government, and the capitalist class ignorantly attempting to subvert it.

George E. McNeill¹, *The Labor Movement: The Problem of Today*, Chapter XVII, 'The Problem of Today' 454-459, 1887 (adapted).

DOCUMENT TWO

There was, as I have said, no Trade Union tradition among the class of workers to whom we were appealing. Many of the dock workers were recruited from the farm labour class, and it appeared that the management of the Tilbury Docks, as it was located in what was once an agricultural area, considered 4d. per hour² enough for the docker. From Tilbury to the up-town docks, at the gate and on the quay-side, at the approaches to the wharves, and at street corners, we began our constitutional propaganda. (...)

It might be supposed that under such conditions as these the workers were ripe for the message we brought. Far from it. For the first twelve months it was almost impossible to obtain a hearing, and positively futile to attempt to obtain platform support. Insult, physical violence, and filthy refuse, stones and solid missiles were thrown at us. (...)

In this work I found new friends, among them George Howell,³ who had become a couple of months earlier a Member of Parliament, contemporary with George Odger,⁴ one of the first Labour candidates, who were both to help me with practical advice in drawing up the rules of our Union. Howell, later on, found much to challenge in what came to be called the 'New' Unionism. He had been brought up in an older school.

The Trade Unionism of his way of thinking, was the organisation of skilled craftsmen, paying relatively high dues and obtaining substantial trade and friendly benefits from their organisation. The Trade Unionism defended so vigorously by George Howell and his friends, differed both in character and in method from the Trade Unionism which originated in the teaching of Robert Owen. It was based upon a different principle of organisation. The project of forming one General Union had long been abandoned. The individual Unions which had sprung up were bent on making the best of the capitalist system in the interests of their members in mitigating the rigours of industrialism and in providing for their members benefits of a benevolent and industrial character, which they could not obtain from any other source. (...)

A woman with whom I came in contact for the first time in those days of laborious and exhausting agitation, and for whom I formed a sincere admiration which later years only tended to deepen, was Beatrice Potter, later to become famous as Mrs Sidney Webb. (...)

¹ George McNeill (1837-1906) was a prominent labor leader in the US in the late 19th century. The son of an abolitionist, he was a member of several unions and organizations, both in New England and at the national level. That year, he unsuccessfully ran for Mayor of Boston and Governor in Massachusetts as a labor candidate.

² The dockers were paid four shillings an hour.

³ George Howell, originally a bricklayer, was secretary of the Trades Union Congress Parliamentary Committee from 1871 to 1875. He stood for Parliament as early as 1868.

⁴ George Odger, a shoemaker, was in the 1860s secretary of the London Trades Council and a member of the Junta.

Miss Potter, or Mrs. Webb⁵ as I had better call her (...), had interested herself in the conditions of dock labour, and had made a first-hand investigation, the results of which were embodied in an article on dock life in one of the monthly reviews, *The Nineteenth Century* I think it was, and later incorporated in one of the volumes of Charles Booth's monumental works on life and labour in London. Mrs. Webb, it appears from her own reminiscences, recently published, kept a diary in those days, and in it she describes a meeting at Canning Town.

I was one of the speakers, but neither I nor any of the other people on the platform appeared to have made a very satisfactory impression upon our rather aristocratically prejudiced visitor; she was young, clever, much petted by the intellectuals of the older generation; undoubtedly sincere, anxious to help, but somewhat condescending. (...)

Many of the skilled workers held that the general labourer could not be a Trade Unionist. He was outside the pale. We encountered it when we started the organisation of the gas workers. I assisted Will Thorne to form the Gas Workers' Union which grew into a National Union of General and Municipal Workers, and to which Thorne gave a lifetime of devoted service; and from the older Unions we received very little help. (...)

Similarly my own feeble Union was developed. There were frequent strikes, which emphasized the need for organisation and which produced results which illustrated the benefits of Unionism: extra times for meals, extra money for work. But those who benefited drifted out of organisation when their immediate fight was won.

These starved and dispirited men were not easy to inspire with the spirit of revolt. Revolutions are not as a rule made by hungry men.

Ben Tillett,⁶ *Memories and Reflections*, Chapter XII, 'The Work of an Agitator', 1931 (adapted).

DOCUMENT THREE

Negroes are almost entirely a working people. There are pitifully few Negro millionaires and few Negro employers. Our needs are identical with labor's needs: decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children, and respect in the community. That is why Negroes support labor's demands and fight laws which curb labor. That is why the labor hater and labor baiter is virtually always a twin-headed creature spewing anti-Negro epithets from one mouth and anti-labor propaganda from the other mouth.

The duality of interests of labor and Negroes makes any crisis which lacerates you, a crisis from which we bleed. And as we stand on the threshold of the second half of the twentieth century, a crisis confronts us both. Those who in the second half of the nineteenth century could not tolerate organized labor have had a rebirth of power and seek to regain the despotism of that era while retaining the wealth and privileges of the twentieth century. Whether it be the ultra right wing in the form of Birch societies or the alliance which former President Eisenhower denounced, the alliance between big military and big business, or the coalition of southern Dixiecrats and northern reactionaries, whatever the form, these menaces now threaten everything decent and fair in American life. Their target is labor, liberals, and Negro people, not scattered "reds" or even Justice Warren, former presidents Eisenhower and Truman and President Kennedy, who are in truth beyond the reach of their crude and vicious falsehoods.

Labor today faces a grave crisis, perhaps the most calamitous since it began its march from the shadows of want and insecurity. In the next ten to twenty years, automation will grind jobs into dust as it grinds out unbelievable volumes of production. This period is made to order for those who would

⁵ Beatrice Webb was interested in social work and she later became a Fabian.

⁶ Ben Tillett (1860-1943). He started his career as a trade union organizer in 1887 and he was instrumental in setting up the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union which was active in the 1889 London dock strike. The latter aimed at securing higher wages for the dockers.

not seek to drive labor into impotency by viciously attacking it at every point of weakness. Hardcore unemployment is now an ugly and unavoidable fact of life. Like malignant cancer, it has grown year by year and continues its spread. But automation can be used to generate an abundance of wealth for people or an abundance of poverty for millions as its humanlike machines turn out human scrap along with machine scrap as a byproduct of production. And, I am convinced that our society, with its ability to perform miracles with machinery, has the capacity to make some miracles for men –if it values men as highly as it values machines.

To find a great design to solve a grave problem, labor will have to intervene in the political life of the nation to chart a course which distributes the abundance to all instead of concentrating it among a few. The strength to carry through such a program requires that labor know its friends and collaborate as a friend. If all that I have said is sound, labor has no firmer friend than the twenty million Negroes whose lives will be deeply affected by the new patterns of production.

Now to say that we are friends would be an empty platitude if we fail to behave as friends and honestly look to weaknesses in our relationship. And unfortunately there are weaknesses. Labor has not adequately used its great power, its vision, and resources to advance Negro rights. Undeniably, it has done more than other forces in American society to this end. Aid from real friends in Labor has often come when the flames of struggle heighten. But Negroes are a solid component within the labor movement and a reliable bulwark for labor's whole program, and should expect more from it exactly as a member of the family expects more from his relatives than he expects from his neighbors.

Labor, which made impatience for long delayed justice for itself a vital motive force, cannot lack understanding of the Negro's impatience. It cannot speak with the reactionary's calm indifference, of progress around some obscure corner not yet possible even to see. There is a maxim in the law –justice delayed too long is justice denied (...)

Discrimination does exist in the labor movement. It is true that organized labor has taken significant steps to remove the yoke of discrimination from its own body. But in spite of this, some unions, governed by the racist ethos, have contributed to the degraded economic status of the Negro. Negroes have been barred from membership in certain unions and denied apprenticeship training and vocational education. In every section of the country, one can find labor unions existing as a serious and vicious obstacle when the Negro seeks jobs or upgrading in employment. Labor must honestly admit these shameful conditions, and design the battle plan which will defeat and eliminate them. In this way, labor would be unearthing the big truth and utilizing its strength against the bleakness of injustice in the spirit of its finest traditions (...)

The two most dynamic and cohesive liberal forces in the country are the labor movement and the Negro freedom movement. Together we can be architects of democracy in a South now rapidly industrializing. Together we can retool the political structure of the South, sending to Congress steadfast liberals who, joining with those from northern industrial states, will extend the frontiers of democracy for the whole nation. Together we can bring about the day when there will be no separate identification of Negroes and labor.

Martin Luther King, Speech to the AFL-CIO Fourth Constitutional Convention, Miami Beach, Florida, December 11, 1961 (adapted).

DOCUMENT FOUR

Since the middle of the 20th century, organized labor in America has undergone two transformations with major implications for the nation's politics. The first is the dramatic decline in overall union membership. In 1955, organized labor represented one-third of the non-agricultural work force; today, it represents just 12.3%. The second transformation, however, is even more significant: the change in the composition of the unionized work force. As private-sector unions have withered, public-sector unions have grown dramatically. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that, in 2009, for

the first time ever, more public-sector employees (7.9 million) than private-sector employees (7.4 million) belonged to unions. Today, unionized workers are more likely to be teachers, librarians, trash collectors, policemen, or firefighters than they are to be carpenters, electricians, plumbers, auto workers, or coal miners.

This shift has produced a noticeable change in the demographic profile of union members; gone is the image of a union man as a beefy laborer in a hard hat and steel-toed boots. According to data from the University of Michigan's American National Election Study, in 1952, about 80% of union members were blue-collar workers, while 20% were white-collar workers; by the mid-1990s, those classified as white-collar workers gained majority status. Nor do men dominate unions any longer: In the 1950s, more than 80% of union members were men, but today there is near gender parity. Union members also have much more schooling than they once did. In 1960, more than 35% of union members had not finished high school and barely 2% had college degrees. Today, almost every union member has completed high school, and more than 25% have college degrees. The typical union member no longer lives in a major city center close to the factory; by the 1990s, union members were more likely to live in suburban than urban areas. Unions have also become multi-racial: Nearly a quarter of union members are now non-white. Unions today represent a vastly different slice of America than they did at the height of the country's manufacturing prowess.

The rise of government-worker unionism has also combined with the broader transformation of the American economy to produce a sharp divergence between public- and private-sector employment. In today's public sector, good pay, generous benefits, and job security make possible a stable middle-class existence for nearly everyone from janitors to jailors. In the private economy, meanwhile, cutthroat competition, increased income inequality, and layoffs squeeze the middle class. This discrepancy indicates how poorly the middle class has fared in recent decades in the private economy, which is home to 80% of American jobs. But it also highlights the increased benefits of government work, and shines a spotlight on the gains public-sector unions have secured for their members. Perhaps this success helps explain why, on average, 39% of state- and local-government employees belong to unions. (Differences in state and local laws of course mean that the percentage varies from state to state; New York tops the chart with roughly 70% of state employees in unions, while many Southern right-to-work states hover in the single digits.⁷)

The emergence of powerful public-sector unions was by no means inevitable. Prior to the 1950s, as labor lawyer Ida Klaus remarked in 1965, "the subject of labor relations in public employment could not have meant less to more people, both in and out of government." To the extent that people thought about it, most politicians, labor leaders, economists, and judges opposed collective bargaining in the public sector. Even President Franklin Roosevelt, a friend of private-sector unionism, drew a line when it came to government workers: "Meticulous attention," the president insisted in 1937, "should be paid to the special relations and obligations of public servants to the public itself and to the Government....The process of collective bargaining, as usually understood, cannot be transplanted into the public service." The reason? F.D.R. believed that "[a] strike of public employees manifests nothing less than an intent on their part to obstruct the operations of government until their demands are satisfied. Such action looking toward the paralysis of government by those who have sworn to support it is unthinkable and intolerable." Roosevelt was hardly alone in holding these views, even among the champions of organized labor. Indeed, the first president of the AFL-CIO, George Meany, believed that it was "impossible to bargain collectively with the government."

Courts across the nation also generally held that collective bargaining by government workers should be forbidden on the legal grounds of sovereign immunity and unconstitutional delegation of government powers. In 1943, a New York Supreme Court judge held:

To tolerate or recognize any combination of civil service employees of the government as a labor organization or union is not only incompatible with the spirit of democracy, but inconsistent with every principle upon which our government is founded. Nothing is more dangerous to public welfare than to admit that hired servants of the State can dictate to the

⁷ Right-to-work states are states where unions are prohibited from creating "union shops" making union membership mandatory for all workers in companies where a majority of employees have voted to have a union. Right-to-work laws also bar unions from establishing automatic paycheck deduction for union dues, which makes it much harder for unions to collect dues.

government the hours, the wages and conditions under which they will carry on essential services vital to the welfare, safety, and security of the citizen. To admit as true that government employees have power to halt or check the functions of government unless their demands are satisfied, is to transfer to them all legislative, executive and judicial power. Nothing would be more ridiculous.

Another common objection to collective bargaining with public-employee unions was that it would mean taking some of the decision-making authority over government functions away from the people's elected representatives and transferring it to union officials, with whom the public had vested no such authority. In this view, democracy would be compromised when elected officials began sharing with union leaders the power to determine government employees' wages, benefits, and working conditions.

Daniel DiSalvo, "The Trouble With Public Sector Unions", *National Journal*, 2010 (adapted).

DOCUMENT FIVE

The days of the old trade unionists were passing, along with many of the industries that they dominated—coal, steel, shipbuilding, textiles. The new industries—in particular those driven by emerging technologies, and modern service industries—were not attracted by the trade union mixture of industrial agitation and politics. More importantly, neither were those who worked in them. There was something irretrievably old-fashioned about the meetings, the rules, the culture. Some trade unionists realized this and tried to effect change, but the comfort zone was too big, too enticing, too enveloping for the leadership ever to feel the necessity to change. They could see it was important and occasionally they made steps towards it, as in the development of new union services, but it was not existential. They didn't feel: change or die. There was no general election that pronounced an unalterable and unavoidable verdict; just the steady draining away of members, support and relevance. Unfortunately, they were still powerful and sufficiently relevant with the Labour Party; where the fact that they were courted and feted only added to their comfort.

Also, the nature of the union leaders themselves was changing. The leaders of the early and mid-twentieth century like Ernie Bevin, or Jack Jones later, were titans: working-class men who, through union meetings, colleges and conferences, achieved the education society had denied them, and who were shining examples of self-improvement. In those days, meetings were well attended—hundreds at a branch meeting was not exceptional. They were arenas of debate, often fiercely conducted, of discussion, of decision. They called for qualities of true leadership, of strategy and tactics combined to advance a cause that at the time was both reasonable and essential.

Old miners who had spent a life in the coalfields of the North-East used to tell me of the solemn ritual of such meetings, their significance in the community, their grandeur even, in terms of what they represented to local people. To be the branch official was a major role. To get to be an official was to have your feet on the rungs of achievement. To lead the Durham coalfield, for example, as Sam Watson, the famous leader of the 1950s, did, was to occupy a position of genuine authority. When Attlee was Labour leader and a dubious proposition was put forward, he would say: 'Can't be done. Sam Watson wouldn't have it'.

But all progressive movements have to beware their own success. The progress they make reinvents the society they work in, and they must in turn reinvent themselves to keep up, otherwise they become hollow echoes from a once loud, strong voice, reverberating still, but to little effect. As their consequence diminishes, so their dwindling adherents become ever more shrill and strident, more solicitous of protecting their own shrinking space rather than understanding that the voice of the times has moved on and they must listen before speaking. It happens in all organisations. It is fatal to those who are never confronted by a reckoning that forces them to face up and get wise. The new leaders of the unions tended to ape the old, but in a context so changed that it became increasingly pointless except in maintaining the morale of those who just wanted to carry on as they were.

When she took on the trade unions, Margaret Thatcher didn't come out of a sealed chamber with a new idea. It already existed: Harold Wilson and Barbara Castle had it with *In Place of Strife*; Edward Heath had it in the Industrial Relations Act of 1971. Both were attempts to bring union power

within the purview of normal law. The difference was that by the time she took over, it was clear that an evolutionary attack on trade union privileges had failed and only a revolutionary one would succeed. And she had the character, leadership and intelligence to make it happen.

She was also greatly helped by her opponents. When Arthur Scargill became leader of the miners and the strike of 1984-1985 began, it was plain that the choice was between on the one hand a very right-wing prime minister who was nonetheless democratically elected as leader of the nation and also correct about the excesses of union power; and on the other a leftist union leadership that was obviously undemocratic and completely out of touch with the modern world.

As I surveyed the wreckage of the Labour Party in the aftermath of the 1983 election, I knew change had to come about. The trade union base simply could not support a modern political party if it was to be a governing party. (...) As the 1980s gave way to the 1990s and the defeats kept coming, I became ever more convinced that there were crucial bits of a government coalition missing for Labour. Where was our business support? Where were our links into the self-employed? Above all, where were the aspirant people, the ones doing well but who wanted to do better; the ones at the bottom who had dreams of the top? (...) So did hard work, character, determination, grit, get-up-and-go. Where were those people in our ranks? Nowhere, I concluded. Even back in 1983 when I still had ideas on nationalization and defence that would have astounded and drawn derision from the Tony Blair of 1994, I knew we were a party out of its time. But I had to exercise care. I nearly failed to become candidate at all in 1983 because my views on modernizing the party were so heretical.

Tony Blair, *A Journey*, London, Hutchinson, 2010, pp. 40-43 (adapted).