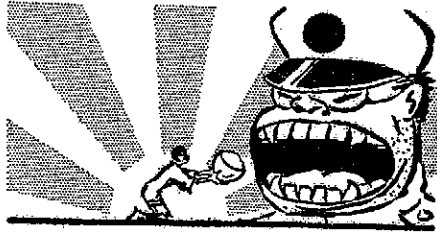


## How Low Can Nippon Go?

WHETHER THINGS made for destructive purposes are or are not "wealth" is a source of interesting, if fruitless, discussion. But the results of labor exerted in the production of things which do not contribute to human satisfactions are too painfully real to permit of harmless dialectics.

News trickling through the Japanese censorship throws much light on this question. Fish, vegetables and rice—the staples of Japanese diet—are crucially deficient. So many people are eating the curd bean



waste usually fed to cattle that cows are giving only one-fifth the usual milk supply. Charcoal, the national domestic fuel, is getting scarce, and school children are sent to the mountains to cut wood and carbonate it. A shortage of labor has resulted in the drafting of Chinese war prisoners. The use of electric power is being restricted because of the acute shortage of coal. Lack of housing, because the building workers are at war, has made a Harlem of Tokyo: ten people have been found living in a nine-by-twelve-foot room. And so on.

For more than two years hundreds of thousands of Japanese soldiers have been destroying the production of hundreds of thousands of Japanese workers. If the purpose of production is the satisfaction of desires, then the machines of war made by Japanese workers can be called productive only by a slavish obedience to word-logic. That the desires of the Japanese engaged in the making of bullets have not been satisfied is evidenced by their own acute lack of the necessities of life.

Man labors to enjoy the fruits of his labor, which, in turn, direct other laborers to produce things in exchange. In the marketplace the various things that satisfy the multitude of human desires are liquidated. The values of the marketplace determine the direction of productive labor.

There is a market for bullets. But it is a false market, one created by predatory interests, not by free workers. It is not a place where workers freely give up their production in exchange for things they want more.

The government which creates this marketplace is a predatory organism which takes but does not give. Since it produces nothing, it can bring no equitable exchange to the marketplace. Its instrument of forced exchange is taxation. The worker who receives the proceeds of this taxation for his produce must ultimately pay it back with more production. Thus, what he gets in the false market is merely a mortgage on his labor.

From the human point of view, this constant depletion of the product of labor for the prosecution of war, or the doing of things that do not conduce to human satisfactions called for in a free market, results in what is euphemistically called "a lower standard of living." That is, labor is robbed of its produce and has less to live on. Eventually it has so little to live on that it loses human resemblance and becomes more akin to the vagrant cur that furtively gains its livelihood at the garbage pail.