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# Anarchy 10

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST IDEAS



## ALAN SILLITOE

HIS KEY TO THE DOOR

## COLIN MACINNES

AN ACCIDENTAL JAILER BY

## COMMITTEE OF 100

SEMINAR ON INDUSTRY

## AUGUSTUS JOHN

FOURIER'S UTOPIA - & MINE



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*Who are the Rats? Well, they're the people who do nothing about anything, who accept the atom bomb and want the cat back, the civil servants with closed minds and politicians who believe in armaments, all the forms of authority and persuasion which want people to conform into a mass, and all the people who worship the State and submit to over-government. This is nothing to do with politics, because the conformist is found under all banners, under Communism and Capitalism . . .*

—ALAN SILLITOE.

## Because he is a man

### NICOLAS WALTER

I BEGAN READING ALAN SILLITOE'S NEW NOVEL,\* a few hours after hearing he had joined us in the big sit-down, while I was lying on a police-cell floor during the long night of September 17th. I can think of no more suitable time and place, for Sillitoe has a voice of pure human dissent, like Seán O'Casey or John Osborne; there are no concessions attached to his total commitment. He offers no comforting message like Forster or Wesker, no prophetic cure like Shaw or Lawrence, no escape into art like Wilde or Behan, no indulgent affection like Orwell or MacInnes. He is just for the ordinary people and against their bosses and rulers, without question or quarter.

As everyone knows, Sillitoe made his name with his first novel, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), a début quite as remarkable as *Lucky Jim* or *Room at the Top*; the original edition has sold over 10,000 copies, the paperback edition has sold nearly a million, and the excellent film must have reached several million more people who had never heard of the book. Who read this book? "Ordinary working-class people", its author replies. It was followed by a collection of short stories, *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (1959), some of which—especially the outstanding title story—are even better than the novel. Then came a political fantasy, *The General* (1960), and a book of verse, *The Rats* (1960), neither of which I liked very much, despite their admirable sentiments. I remember even having the impertinence to tell the author to go back and write what he knew;

\**Key to the Door* (W. H. Allen, 18s.).



this he has now done, and here we have a long novel by present standards (which is also cheap by present standards) which makes me feel I was right, for it is an important and impressive achievement. Sillitoe has proved that his talent was not just a flash in the pan, like that of so many of the other new writers since the war; his last book stands firmly on the same high level as the first two.

*Key to the Door* has the function in its author's work that *Of Human Bondage*, *Eyeless in Gaza* and *Dr. Zhivago* had in theirs—to make a major statement about the meaning of his life and his ideas in the framework of a large semi-autobiographical novel. Because of Sillitoe's background and his reaction to it this statement takes the form of a powerful protest against his society—the sort of protest made in *Death of a Hero*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *From Here to Eternity*. I use these names deliberately; this is a big book. As a much-publicised Book Society choice, it will be enjoyed by many thousands of readers—but I wonder how many of them will understand what it is trying to say. Alan Sillitoe didn't come and sit down in Trafalgar Square for the sake of his health or his reputation, and the reasons he came are clear enough in *Key to the Door*. If the Establishment had any sense it would be worried about this book and its author. If we have any sense we will read the one and listen to the other.

Here is the story of the first twenty-one years in the life of Brian Seaton, who was born when Lady Chatterley found her lover, in the same part of England—industrial Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire—and shares with his author the same working-class origins that Oliver Mellors and Paul Morel shared with theirs (indeed, though there is no sign of imitation, the first part of *Key to the Door* reminded me strongly of *Sons and Lovers*). Readers of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* will remember its tough hero Arthur Seaton, his brother Fred and sister Margaret, his aunt Ada and cousin Bert; well they are all here, though Brian—the eldest Seaton brother—didn't appear in the earlier book. Arthur's story is set in the fifties, the age of full employment and television; Brian's is set in the thirties and forties, the age of unemployment and war. Here is the background not only of Brian Seaton and his brother, but of Alan Sillitoe and the best of his work, described in satisfying and convincing detail.

As in the earlier book, there is no conventional plot, no real sense of the passage of time, no contrived development or revelation—just a series of vivid episodes piling on top of each other, the last one fitting naturally into its place. The characters don't change much; they grow up, and struggle or give in, and fade away—birth and copulation and death, sometimes with good luck, usually with bad. But in the end Arthur came to some sort of terms with the world he defied; and in the same way Brian, a gentler person, finds the key to his door, though it is cut by everything that has happened to him from the material he was born with. There is no slick dénouement to round off the book; the story is real and its conclusion is real, for there is nothing phoney about Sillitoe.

There is richness here, more than he has shown before. The child growing up with his brothers and sisters in the shadow of a hot-tempered, foul-mouthed father (very like Walter Morel) and a rather helpless nagging mother (not like Gertrude Morel), with interesting aunts and grandparents, all in the deeper shadow of the Depression; his struggle to find knowledge in dictionaries and maps, excitement in *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Les Misérables*, identity and meaning in the harsh world of the industrial Midlands in the terrible thirties—all this is done with deep feeling and skill.

But *Key to the Door* is no portrait of the artist as an angry young man, or even as a hungry young man. It is far more than autobiographical self-pity. Brian Seaton grows up in a grim age, but he is no more a grim person than his creator. When the hungry years are over he puts them behind him, though—like his creator—he never forgets his early loathing of the people who kept the rotten system going and prolonged the hopeless helpless hunger of his childhood. "I don't know why they have coppers," says young Brian, "they're worse than school-teachers." "No difference," says his cousin, "it's all part of the gov'ment." Nonsense on the surface, but good sense underneath. Sillitoe does not preach resignation, as Arnold Bennett did, nor does he, godlike, rescue his hero from his predicament, as H. G. Wells did and as John Braine has done.

There is no consolation in religion. "There ain't no bastard God!" his father shouts; and little Brian reflects that "his teacher said that God loved everybody: Italians gassing blackies and mowing 'em down with machine-guns: dole, thunderstorms, school". Nor is there consolation in the nihilism expressed by Arthur Seaton in the earlier book. The only true consolation is in hatred of the top-dogs and solidarity with all other underdogs. When Brian looked at a picture of Shylock in a school edition of Shakespeare, "he knew whose side he was on and who would be on his side if he could suddenly come to life and step out of the printed book"; he admired the caricatured Jew for defying his persecutors.

When Brian buys a copy of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, his father is furious. "Yer've wasted 'alf a crown on a book?" he exclaims—furious not because he is illiterate (although he is) but because he is unemployed and can't afford food, let alone books. But the investment pays off; in his book Brian "heard the patient scraping and scratching of freedom, was shown that even dungeons and giant prisons were unable to keep men in forever". Even bitter poverty is unable to quench his thirst for knowledge and truth. Later he buys *Les Misérables* too, and reads about "the battle between a common man and the police who would not let him be free because he had once stolen a loaf of bread for the children of his starving sister". His own father goes to prison when he steals to feed his family. The problem of literary commitment is no problem for Brian Seaton; Dumas and Hugo are on his side and describe his predicament in imaginative terms—that is enough.



Perhaps it is difficult now to imagine a child who has to say: "My dad's allus on dole . . . Nearly all the kids at school 'ave got dads on dole." But *Love on the Dole* was published in 1933; the last great Hunger March took place just twenty-five years ago; Wal Hannington's National Unemployed Workers' Movement was pursuing its brilliant campaign well into 1939, when there were still over two million unemployed. We should remember the context of the first part of *Key to the Door*. It would be strange if Brian Seaton (and Alan Sillitoe) were *not* on the far left in politics.

Even after the betrayal of 1931, hatred of top-dogs and solidarity with underdogs meant support of the Labour Party for most people. "Labour was the best thing—and if Brian ever felt distrust for that sympathetic organisation it was only because all big names seemed like devil's threats to hold his soul in thrall." How right he was; and in fact he grows up to become a common sort of war-time fellow-traveller who scrawls LONG LIVE RUSSIA AND STALIN up by his 137 books and hopes that the 1945 election means the coming of his ideas of socialism—"he knew that all men were brothers and that the wealth of the world should be pooled and divided fairly among those who worked."

Back in the thirties war is welcomed because it means the end of want—what is rationing to starvelings in their hunger or conscription to men without work? But there are no illusions about it. When he asks his grandmother who won the first world war, her answer is simply "Nobody". And when Munich comes, the sadistic schoolmaster reminds the boys that "war is nothing but pain". Nor is there any illusion about Munich. "They'll be no peace in our time," says Brian's mother. "No," agrees his father, "nor in any other bloody time either." Nor later is there any illusion about Churchill—"Owd Fatguts", they call him. "He didn't give a bogger about us. It was all his bleeding factory owners he saved . . . It was him and his gang as turned hosepipes on the hunger-marchers before the war." Cynicism without illusions is necessary for survival. "It's no worse in a war than it is now," Brian is told. "You get boggered from pillar to post and get nowt to eat, just the same." For most people in the world this is the simple truth.

Brian is too young to fight in the War, but he is called up soon after it and volunteers for service overseas, although he has just married the girl he gets into trouble (who is rather like Doreen in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*), because he wants to see something of the world before he settles down. The second part of the book alternates between his youth in wartime Nottingham and his experience in Malaya. He discovers the truth of "Orwell's Law" (that the oppressed proletariat of Britain has its own oppressed proletariat in the coloured parts of the British Empire—a version of the law that there's always someone worse off than you), he has an affair with a Chinese girl (who is uncomfortably like Suzie Wong), and he meets an example of the familiar species of the anarchic NCO (who reads *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* and is very like Jack Malloy in *From Here to Eternity*). Mean-

while we learn about his first jobs at home, and his courtship of Pauline.

Corporal Knotman, the anarchist, is important, since he helps to give shape to Brian's spontaneous political ideas. He is a regular who fought through the war and is almost due for release. "I've learnt to know what freedom means in these last eight years . . . and the bloke who doesn't learn that, sooner or later, isn't fit to be on the face of the earth, because they're the types that end up as the enemies and persecutors of those who know what freedom means." Like all real soldiers he has no hatred for his official enemies. "It's them who shout 'Charge' and 'Up and at 'em lads' who are your biggest enemies." He has evolved his own form of individualism, and he sees a kindred spirit in Brian. "You're not a communist . . . You might be a socialist when you've read more and know a bit about it . . . If you're anything you're a socialist-anarchist." One is reminded of the "anarchist socialism" described in the editorial of the first number of *FREEDOM* (reprinted in the 75th anniversary issue on October 21st); Brian Seaton, like Alan Sillitoe, is an old-fashioned—a pre-1917—socialist, as interested in liberty and fraternity as in equality.

Knotman adds mysteriously: "History is on our side, so just bide your time: you won't even know when to act; the first thing you'll know you'll be acting—and in the right way." This recalls the end of *The Rats*, and we are led to anticipate a semi-existentialist act of defiance like that in *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*. But what happens is more than an act of defiance: Brian is more mature than the Borstal boy, and manages to combine defiance of the top-dogs with an expression of solidarity with the underdogs.

The war against the Communist guerrillas begins just before he leaves Malaya, and he is involved in a skirmish with them. Sure enough, he finds himself acting—by deliberately shooting at trees instead of Communists, and even releasing a Communist he has captured by mistake. The only casualty in his unit is a typical middle-class dissenter, who speaks big but shoots straight enough when it comes to the point, and his death might have been Brian's fault. But he knows he was right. He imagines himself telling his father about it. "I caught a Communist and let him go," he says. "I let him go because he was a comrade! I didn't kill him because he was a man."

This is the key to the book. Brian's moment of decision comes when he is face to face with a fellow-countryman of his mistress, a fellow-opponent of the top-dogs, a fellow human being. His "duty" is to kill him or take him prisoner; but he knows that his real duty is to let him go. Similarly his real duty is to marry Pauline when she becomes pregnant and to go back to her when he gets out of the army, despite his feelings for Mimi, to stay with his own people—his family, his mates, his class—and to be a "socialist-anarchist".

The book closes with Brian on the way home to the England that is struggling out of austerity into affluence, to the busy Nottingham in which the Cherry Orchard (significant name!) where he used to play as a child and where he later used to make love with Pauline, has been



built over. He is 21 and he has become a man. "He somehow felt he had the key to the door . . . And with the key to the door all you need to do now," he decides, "was flex your muscles to open it . . . At least my eyes have been opened. All I've got to do now is to see with them, and when one person sees, maybe the next one will as well." As with Arthur in the earlier book, the time has come to settle down and hand life and liberty on to the next generation. "I'll spend a night or two helping the union, you can bet, because somebody's got to do it, and I feel I'm just the bloke for a thing like that. I'll get to know what's what as well, pull a few more books into the house to see what makes the world tick, maybe read some of those I nicked years ago."

But he hasn't been tamed by any means. It is worth remembering what Sillitoe said about his work on the film of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*: "I didn't want Arthur Seaton . . . getting transmogrified into a young workman who turns out to be an honest-to-goodness British individualist—that is, one who triumphs in the end against and at the expense of a communist agitator or the trade unions. I didn't want him to become a tough stereotype with, after all, a heart of moral gold which has in it a love of the monarchy and all that old-fashioned muck."

In the same way, Alan Sillitoe himself hasn't been tamed. He has refused to be turned aside by the people who would like him to be either responsible or sensational (*i.e.* conformist or melodramatic). In a way this harms *Key to the Door*. He is so anxious to make himself clear, that he has made his book far too long, and parts of it tend to drag badly without the pressure that drove *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* along—constructive anarchism is far more difficult to get across than destructive nihilism. Other defects are that Brian is a slightly colourless character and that the sex in his story seems to come to him rather too easily: surely there would have been some obstacles of the kind that Paul Morel encountered fifty years ago? Perhaps a more serious defect is that the symbolism that recurs in the book tends to get lost—the storms, the animals' deaths, the mountain-climb and so on all have important functions in the story, but what these functions are is not always clear.

Nevertheless, the statement made in *Key to the Door* is clear enough, and the book is certainly a vital part of Sillitoe's work. It would be absurd merely to label him as an "anarchist writer" but it would be equally absurd for anarchists to ignore what he has to say—and not only in his novels, stories and poems. Like John Osborne or like Seán O'Casey, he sometimes seems naïve and confused, but like them he is in touch with things that matter. Consider his comment on the big sit-down: "The anti-bomb campaign is, obviously a political movement. It is also disenfranchised and, as such, is revolutionary, more dangerous than if it had a couple of hundred M.P.s in Parliament—which would make it useless. The longer it remains unrepresented the more certain will be its complete victory . . . Everyone who sat down in Trafalgar Square did so for political reasons, and in so doing

they threaten (or would do if there were enough of them) the basis on which the present political life of this country stands."

Sillitoe is a revolutionary writer and a writing revolutionary. Brian Seaton is a worthy successor to Frank Owen, and Alan Sillitoe is a worthy successor to Robert Noonan, the unhappy pseudonymous author of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. Seaton is luckier than Owen, because his comrades have won a better share of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; Sillitoe is luckier than Noonan, because of *his* comrades, the people who read his books, and certainly we should be among them, because he too is a comrade, because he is a man.

## Notes of an accidental jailer

COLIN MACINNES

THE LEAST EXPERIENCE OF PRISONS teaches you that they're criminal universities for prisoners; they morally corrupt all law-enforcement officers; they make criminal the societies they're intended to 'protect'.

Like every human creature I have ever met or heard of, I am in part evil. Between the convicted and the unconvicted, the only differences I can see are those of fact, or of degree, not that of essence. Morally, we're all in the nick; but most of us are lucky, prudent, or our private evil's licenced by our laws.

Criminal law, in any society, is a haphazard approximation—usually with a time-lag of at least 50 years—to whatever this society supposes absolute law to be: the law of God, of Marx, or of a terrified Caribbean general. The varieties of crime—and therefore 'criminal'—in the world today are eccentric, extensive, totally irrational.

But even when the rules are understood, their application fluctuates from man to man. I was once accused of a crime in company with fourteen others. Two of us only were acquitted, since we could both pay for lawyers.

---

COLIN MACINNES is the author of three remarkable novels of London life in the fifties, *City of Spades*, *Absolute Beginners*, and *Mr. Love and Justice*. His recent book of essays *England, Half English* gave him the reputation of "England's most sensitive recorder of the contemporary scene."



Unless a man is rich or of strong nerve, the real trial happens before he ever sees a court. The first 24 hours after arrest—especially the first hour—determine subsequent police procedure. If he's alone, frightened, friendless, he'll convict himself—whether guilty, innocent, or 'guilty in fact but not by evidence'.

Are coppers monsters, then? Do they use violence, perjury, can they be corrupted? And if they do and can, who is "to blame" for this?

Direct knowledge—let alone common-sense—must tell us violence is used. You're one, they're six, it's 3 a.m., you 'don't want to co-operate' . . . what on earth *must* happen? When your 'case' comes up (one of hundreds they've handled—perjury ceases to be a 'problem'), are they going to 'tell the whole truth' against their profoundest professional instincts? In the criminal world, if a discreet man with fivers falling out of his ears offers money to a man much poorer, yet momentarily powerful, how likely will the poorer man be to refuse it?

But let us consider the policeman's problem. In countries where it's realised what coppers are and must be (*i.e.* in every one, it seems, except our own), he's not subjected, as he is in England, to the contradictory public pressures of both 'getting his man', and being a knight in shining armour. Further, because of his perilous power, he's exposed, throughout his professional life, to terrible moral dangers. To be a good copper, and a good man is, in these conditions, almost to be a saint. In addition, he's lonely: for despite archaic (largely bourgeois) legends of the public's trust in him, he's really a soldier of an occupation army. Also, his job's bloody dangerous, come to think of it.

What is detestable in England isn't coppers, isn't criminals, but the wilful dishonesty of the right-thinking public that expects an idiot like Dixon of Dock Green to get results . . . and thinks of the 'criminal classes' as if such a 'class' were hereditary and permanent. What we should feel for coppers, and for criminals, is positive pity: if only for this reason—the intense *sadness* of their lives. (And may I add a current example of this high-minded obliqueness—which my gentle readers will like less, I imagine—and that is the shocked indignation of those who sat down in Trafalgar Square, at their subsequent treatment by the police. What sort of world do they think they live in? Don't they know 'civil disobedience' is *militant*—or meaningless? Didn't Gandhi's followers get their way in the end precisely because they understood what they were doing? Aren't there hundreds of thousands of Continental Europeans who've suffered, often anonymously, for their ideas? Can't they realize the honour, and effectiveness, of a political prisoner is that he's treated worse? Of course they're right to protest! But the tone of injured amazement—'they can't do this to *me*'—is immodest, unrealistic, and 'respectable').

And what of the Courts? First, it has always seemed to me bizarre that men (barristers—not even solicitors) who spend half their lives pleading cases this way or that for fees, should suddenly be deemed objective underneath a judge's wig. Any experience of their

conduct and pronouncements must give them top marks for knowledge of the rules (the Law), often for 'impartiality' (within the limitations of these laws)—and no marks at all for any *direct* knowledge of the 'criminal world'. It is as if there were a kind of doctor called a Diagnostician, who'd never been inside a hospital, not even lanced a boil—but who could decide, simply by hearing others, what fatal operation was best for you and me.

I cannot take any judge—or magistrate—seriously for a second who has learned of crime only at second hand, like a *voyeur* peering at a brothel. Nor anyone who judges yet who has not *seen*, himself feeling it in the flesh, the physical and moral consequences of his sentences—including hanging.

So what, clever boy, do you propose? As usual, a totally 'impractical' idea, that better men than I have long known before, and which no doubt will—in several hundred years or so—become a commonplace. Namely, that the responsibility for criminals is society's. We now accept that children, or the sick (but not yet the mentally sick, or the very old), should be cared for, and protected by those of us who are adults in good health. In any society I'd not be ashamed of, a criminal act by one of us should immediately be the intense, prior preoccupation of at least half-a-dozen of his fellows. The 'prison' I envisage is one where every malefactor would find at once surrounding him a dozen who, recognizing their own evil in him, would try to help him out as a voluntary human duty (and a f—g nuisance it would be, admittedly).

This means, of course, a reform not of prisons, but of ourselves: since 'prison reform' is an illusion, or at best a palliative. So long as we are inwardly *attracted* by crime, as we are—just look at any of the mass media if you're doubtful about this—we will have prisons, and remain criminals outside them. Until we face our own, we shall project it onto others; and crime and criminals will attract us as deeply as they repel us. Criminal law, and law-enforcement officers, make crime: if you don't believe me, consult the shades of Beria or of Himmler . . . though they, of course, were *foreigners*.

In spring 1945, by an extraordinary series of accidents, I found myself *ad hoc* 'governor' of a German prison containing 1,200 (approximately—no one knew the exact number) prisoners, some Allied, some German, some political, some criminal. My 'duty' was to let out only the Allied politicals; but by the time I was superseded, everyone was out except for a hundred or so ('or so!') German murderers, rapists, bludgeoners and so forth. My only regret now is at my timorous prejudice against letting *everybody* out while I still could—against letting these demons out into a safe, pure world where 15 million Europeans had just recently been murdered legally.

'So one of those released murderers might have killed you?' I hope I am true to myself in saying I'd rather he did, than be responsible for what I saw inside that prison.



# Fourier's utopia — and mine

AUGUSTUS JOHN

## I

LET US PAY A VISIT to Charles Fourier's Utopia. Philosophers from Plato downwards have built Utopias. That of the commercial traveller we are going to take a glimpse of is not the least interesting. Here we are in the 'age of harmony'. It supersedes our 'civilisation' even as this has replaced 'barbarism'. The political unit here is the *phalanstery*. We will visit one of these imaginary institutions, reconstructing it from Fourier's voluminous writings as best we can, but adding a touch or two of our own. Fourier elaborated the constitution and working of his society down to the last detail, but much of this is too complicated and fanciful to be dealt with here. With a fundamental basis of sound sense, there appears in his speculations a note of extravagance. When, for instance, he envisages the harnessing of the Aurora Borealis, with the conversion of its light into heat, rendering thereby the climate of the Arctic regions eminently suitable for market gardening, I for one, feel baffled. Yet since the writing of these *Fragments*, the newly revealed possibilities of atomic energy have included this very miracle in its programme. Few would agree with his denigration of bread as an article of diet, but Fourier found it unpalatable; besides which, he argued, the cultivation of wheat took up far too much space, time and trouble. He advocated the use in its place of fruit and vegetables with the addition of fish and the products of the chase: but milk would be available and no doubt beef and mutton, though I remember no reference to these commodities in the selected résumé of his works, sympathetically edited by the well-known economist Charles Gide, to which I have had access.

As we approach, the phalanstery shows itself, standing on an eminence like a little hill-town. Surrounded by lesser buildings within the containing wall, the taller reminds me somewhat of the Pope's Palace at Avignon. The Line of the horizon is broken by distant silhouettes of more than one such landmark. We pass a troupe of magnificent children, amusing themselves at their task of scavenging and mending the road. ('Children love dirt'.) These are the *petites*

*The first part of this article is reproduced from Augustus John's 'fragments of autobiography' Chiaroscuro (1952) by kind permission of Messrs. Jonathan Cape; the second part was originally published in Albert McCarthy's anarchist quarterly Delphic Review in 1949.*

*hordes* to quote an example of Fourier's extraordinary nomenclature. By the river which partly encircles the phalanstery, a band of Nomads have pitched their tents. They seem to be making derisory comments on our appearance in an unknown tongue . . . (Fourier himself mentions no such people). Crossing the bridge, we penetrate the enclosure by a nobly planned gateway, bearing sculpture of arresting and unfamiliar quality. The outer walls appear to serve no military purpose but merely confine the town within the bounds of expansion prescribed by the philosopher. Fourier realized the truth that human greatness flourishes in inverse ratio to the size of the community, and limited his population, at most, to 1,700. A superfluity would set forth to found a new phalanstery. Thus the whole land becomes dotted by these ganglions of social life, between which there will be constant interplay and traffic. Proceeding through the glass-covered, air-conditioned and impeccably clean streets, we arrive at the Central Market Place. Under its tall trees numbers of people are taking the air: many sit before the taverns or under the arcades which alternate between the loftier façades of Church, Operahouse, University, Hall of Exchange, Library, Theatre, Council House and such communal centres of culture. Although it is of recent date with no sign of dilapidation, a mysterious air of antiquity pervades the whole, as if a Mycenaean or Huanacan city had come to life again. Raised in the centre, a great stone figure of a woman with head uplifted gazes at the sun, which shines through a hole in her torso. It may be a work by the twentieth-century statuary, Henry Moore. Although the inhabitants show much diversity in costume, which seems to indicate their occupation as much as the exercise of personal taste (the women showing a greater degree of uniformity), we meet with no signs of indigence. Fourier was no leveller, and admitted every degree of function and dignity in his world; but all, it appears, are shareholders in the common stock. The phalanstery, in a literal sense, belongs to all who belong to it.

In *Civilisation* the family was held to be the basic unit of society; not so in *Harmony*. It was observed that this institution, instead of welding society together was, on the contrary, a primary cause of its disruption. The interests of the family were seen to supplant those of the community as a whole, giving rise to class cleavage, intrigue, aggression, power-politics and finally war. With all its holy glamour, it tended to become an important accessory of business, with prostitution as its necessary adjunct. Here, the free association of the sexes carries no shadow of disrepute, and the resultant unions, without religious sanction or the constraints of law, are often seen to be remarkably durable, and that, moreover, without the concurrence of the brothel, which is unknown in *Harmony*. As for the ruling class, there does not appear to be one, for the philosopher, poet, man of science, artist or saint, who rank highest in popular esteem, wield no power at all other than moral or intellectual.

Some individuals, too, of no such high standing, exercise as much



authority in private as in the council chamber. A certain shoe-maker, I was told, was constantly resorted to by people in difficulties for his sound judgment and advice. But have not cobblers always been noted for their sagacity? We saw no police or soldiers in evidence and asked our guide, 'What about your frontiers, how are they guarded?' 'Frontiers,' he repeated stupidly, 'Frontiers? But we haven't any.' In this somewhat primitive community money is not regarded as wealth in itself, but is merely used to facilitate exchange. By applying at the bank you can have as much as you like. It is in great request with the children, who use it as counters in a game called 'Business' or 'Beggar my Neighbour'. Anthropologists say this game, like 'Hop-Scotch', is of very ancient origin.

And now we notice a great stir and hubbub. In every direction people are issuing from their workshops and factories and hastening to the gardens and orchards which stretch far beyond the circumference of the phalanstery. It is the hour when work is changed. In many cases a man has two, three or more pursuits which he follows in rotation: by this system monotony and rustiness are avoided. Above all work on the land at regular intervals is found to be especially beneficial. Dancing of a communal and ritual character is much cultivated. Music, ballet and theatre flourish, and in the cathedral the rites of birth, love and death are celebrated with great splendour and solemnity. The Festivals of the Sun, Moon and Planets, with other objects of worship, as types of Ultimate Reality afford occasion for pageantry, song and dance, of a highly spectacular and exhilarating nature. Often at these events a good deal of buffoonery and horse-play is indulged in. I inquired, 'Do you ever have rows, quarrels?' 'Oh yes,' was the reply, 'plenty; but for those who want to fight, there is always the Ring down there,' said my informant pointing to the Stadium by the river.

As we continued our exploration, we came across a small house with a very large window giving on to a garden where was seated a venerable personage in a blouse, engaged in painting a young woman posed under a tree. 'Our oldest inhabitant,' said the guide, tapping his forehead significantly. One of our party remarked that the old gentleman looked like a revised and much improved edition of myself. I thanked him for the compliment and passed on.

Upon taking leave at the gate, the same witty fellow made a final inquiry: 'And how are you represented in the central legislature or governing body of the State; by a delegate, deputy or member from each phalanstery, or from a group of phalansteries?' Our guide was obviously shocked. 'We mind our own business,' he murmured, then pointing to an inscription over the arch, vanished. The inscription, in letters of gold, was to this effect: WHEN THE STATE CEASETH LOOK MY BROTHERS DO YOU NOT SEE THE RAINBOWS AND THE BRIDGES OF THE BEYOND?

## II

Many civilisations no less splendid than our own have passed utterly away under the assaults of conquest and disease. What secret of longevity can we claim, what extenuating circumstances plead, that will immunise us from a like fate, and, sentenced to death as we are, reprieve us at the eleventh hour?

Are not all human societies, like the men and women who compose them, subject to the same law of growth, flowering and decay? In the case of individuals, we are accustomed on perceiving signs of distress to send for the Doctor; for immediate and complete extinction is distasteful to most of us, and even those who cannot conscientiously aspire to immortality, will bank on some degree of perpetuation through the medium of their descendants' progressively diluted blood-stream. But we are now threatened with a catastrophe which will mean the extinction not only of ourselves, but of our children; the annihilation of society itself. Before putting forth the only suggestion I can offer in this predicament, let us take another look round. . . .

Upon examining the banners of the protagonists, we find to our astonishment, that all bear the same device; not *Excelsior* but *Democracy*! When the fighting starts, every man provided by his government with a gun, will be told to go forth and murder his opposite number in the cause of Democracy; so that when the carnage is over, Democracy will have won for a certainty, though the Democrats will have been considerably thinned out in the process. Is it worth it?

I doubt myself that, left to themselves, people of different provenance, on meeting, will instinctively leap at each other's throats: on the contrary, the general rule is to show extra politeness to foreigners. Who has not seen various racial elements mingling together in a spirit of perfect good-fellowship? Such assemblages are an excuse for conviviality, not an occasion for strife. But political propaganda is quite capable of proving black to be white, of reviving ancient rancour, of instilling fear and arousing in an innocent but gullible people, the rage and fury which is the prelude to blows. Propaganda in the service of ideology is the now perfected science of *lying* as a means of power. It was noticed that the most inflammable types of human war-material were not to be found among the *intelligentsia*, and accordingly, Propaganda for Power, like the New Journalism, addresses itself directly to the ignorant, the immature and the mentally defective—the majority in fact. Have we not achieved universal suffrage and isn't one vote as good as another? A non-voter myself and no great democrat either, I propose to keep out of the melee. I am quite without military ambition. *La Gloire*, in modern conditions leaves me stone cold. Strict neutrality however, will prove difficult to maintain. One's erring sympathies may betray themselves, and, oscillating, say, between the magic of Wall Street and the fairy-like lure of the Kremlin, lead to trouble. We will be watched, and as nothing excites suspicion like silence, I have decided that a practice of ceaseless, and inconsequent



loquacity should be cultivated, for, if it comes to being put to the question, with or without thumbscrews or other aids to veracity, such a line will be least compromising, and most likely to provide an intellectual alibi.

Though National Sovereign States, are by definition, bound to fall foul of one another; when thus employed, the combatants, by arrangement, may at a given moment, relent, cease fire, and in a burst of brotherly love, embrace and swear eternal friendship. The soldiers naturally welcome such a breathing-space and an emotional orgy follows. The murderous swine of yesterday, by a rapid metamorphosis, become the brave comrades of today. Unfortunately such a decision dictated by expediency alone, may, when necessary, be reversed for the same reasons, and the shooting starts again. The State must not be judged by human standards nor even be personified as representing the quintessence of the soul of the people it manipulates. The State is immoral and accountable to nobody. But what is this 'quintessence'? It consists in the people's needs and in their dreams. They need the means to gain their living; freedom to use their native tongue; to preserve their customs; to practice any form of religion they choose; to honour their ancestors (if any); to conserve and transmit their cultural traditions, and in general to mind their own business without interference. And the Land? But, in this country, the people seem to have forgotten the land of their fore-fathers; the vast Common Lands of England, held by them from time immemorial, and completely enclosed by Act of Parliament, and only in the last century we have lost our Commons but keep the *House of Commons*, which played this trick and still give our votes to the suppliants who periodically come begging for a seat in the best club in London. . . .

With the mention of hedges I come to my proposal of an alternative to a collective suicide pact. Hedges are miniature frontiers when serving as bulkheads, not wind-screens. Hedges as bulkheads, dividing up the Common Land should come down, for they represent and enclose stolen property. Frontiers are extended hedges, and divide the whole world into compartments as a result of aggression and legalised robbery. They too should disappear. There is nothing sacred about them for they are often shifted, as they have been erected, by force and fraud. They stand for no ethnological distinctions, for all races are inextricably mixed, and, in any case, should not be divided but joined. Frontiers serve no useful purpose for, costly as they are to guard, they have never stopped a conqueror yet, or checked the scramble for *Lebensraum*. They are absolute militarily though still an incentive to aggression. They give rise to the morbid form of patriotism known as Chauvinism or Jingoism. Frontiers besides are a great hindrance to trade and travel with their customs barriers, tariffs and *douanes*. We hear a good deal, though not enough talk, about doing away with passports. It would be more to the point to abolish the frontiers they symbolize. People will love their country no less for being free to get out of it now and then, and in the contemplation of other peoples' performances

in the Art of Living, learn to estimate their own with all the more accuracy.

But it may be asked, without frontiers what on earth would become of the State? There would be complete chaos surely. The answer is:— deprived of national frontiers, the State would undoubtedly 'wither away', as prophesied by Messrs. Marx and Lenin, as due to take place upon the imposition of the '*Dictatorship of the Proletariat*'. In their case, it must be admitted, the programme does not seem to have gone according to schedule: far from it, in fact; but to our ears, the sacred formula of social salvation used above, never did sound re-assuring. What's a *Proletariat* anyway! Never heard of it! We know what a Dictator is however . . . As for 'chaos', we've got that already. The withered State, will, of course, be replaced by a consultative body of scientific experts, issuing, not ukases but recommendations.

With the debunking and levelling of frontiers (though some picturesque bits might be preserved, like Bokerly Dyke and Grimm's Ditch), the whole pattern of society would change. No longer in the form of the Pyramid, it would come to resemble rather the constitution of *Amoeba*, which alone among living organisms possesses the secret of immortality. The monstrous 'wens' of capital cities and industrial towns would shrink and disappear in favour of a multiplicity of small communities dotted over the country, autonomous, self-supporting, federated and reciprocally free. To preserve these nerve-centres of human activity at a manageable size, growth would proceed, not by accretion but by proliferation. Gigantism is a disease. Where there will be no frontiers to be violated, no fortresses to subdue, no capitals to sack, soldiers will be an anachronism and will be forced by circumstances to make themselves useful. With no armies to support, no taxes, no dollars, and no debts, man will be economically in a sound position; he will be a shareholder in his Commune which will belong to him inasmuch as he belongs to it. Let not the ambitions be discouraged by the modest size of our village commune, phalanstery, or Kibbutz. Genius has been known to flourish in comparative solitude. Classical Athens was hardly bigger than Fordingbridge.

Such disturbances as may from time to time, interrupt the general harmony, will be local, insignificant, and possibly enlivening like a football or boxing match: there will be the Stadium handy. The spiritual revolution which must necessarily precede the inauguration of a world without war, will not at once inflame the imaginations of our up-to-date good-timers. The goal, to the hard-boiled, will seem visionary, its attainment uncomfortable. For some people Beatitude itself must prove disappointing. It is to the religious that we should turn, rather than to the devotees of Fashion and the Fun-Fair. The Baptists, for example, should not find our Primitivism repugnant, and their own initiatory rites might well be adopted by the Fundamentalists of the future.

Whatever excitements and amenities we may be called upon to



sacrifice, at least no monotony need be feared, under a form of society of which each unit reflects the character and cultural standards of its builders, and where everyone is at liberty to choose his environment and when he likes, change it for another.

What predominant type might we expect to emerge after a generation or two of experiment in such conditions? The answer to this question should decide the issue for "man is the measure" always. We do not look to Nietzsche's Superman perhaps, still less to his despised *homme bonasse*. Born and bred in peace and freedom and reared in familiarity with the nature he will have learned both to worship and, in part, subdue, he will have inherited from his pioneer progenitors the manners becoming a free man: wise in his simplicity, contemptuous of power, indifferent to office, this, the *Common* man, will gladly fill the humblest role in the community he elects to serve. His boon companions, artist, philosopher and vagabond, will always be at call, with the women and children not far off, either. . . .

## Augustus John — an appreciation

WHEN AUGUSTUS JOHN DIED at the age of 83 on October 31st, the newspapers were full of such adjectives as "boisterous, blustering, brilliant" (*Daily Herald*) and "robust, swashbuckling, romantic" (*The Times*). Those who saw him as a grave and courteous old gentleman, who, though he was the finest draughtsman this country has produced, was his own severest critic as a painter, must have felt that the papers were talking about someone else—a superannuated Errol Flynn. It is characteristic that none of the newspapers called him an anarchist, which is what he called himself, and that only one of them mentioned that his last public act was to take part in the illegal 'sit-down' in Trafalgar Square on September 17th, organised by the Committee of 100, of which he was a member.

John was a subscriber to FREEDOM and ANARCHY, and a generous supporter of Freedom Press for many years—he always claimed to be our oldest reader. One of his last letters must have been his message of greetings to the Anarchist Ball on October 20th, celebrating the 75th anniversary of Freedom Press, evoking his memories of its founder Peter Kropotkin, and Mr. Anthony Powell recalled last week how "when he did a drawing of me not many months ago, he talked of Verlaine, Moréas, Kropotkin . . ." His association with the anarchists went back to the 'nineties when he and his sister first came to London

to study at the Slade, and "used to attend anarchist meetings in the Fitzroy quarter". There they heard Louise Michel, the 'Red Virgin' of the Paris Commune of 1871: "The little old lady in black made a dramatic figure as, in prophesy, she thrust out a lean and accusatory claw. Gwen and I once attended a party organised for the benefit of David Nichol, a *colporteur* of anarchist literature, including the journal FREEDOM." At these meetings (John recalled in *Horizon*, April 1949), "More than once I listened to the voice of Peter Kropotkin. The great and tireless champion of Freedom, correctly attired in his revolutionary frockcoat, beamed on his audience with the true *rayonnement* of goodness, courage and faith. In him, these qualities, supported by the authority of a scholar, joined in condemnation of society, based, it would appear, on corrupt and insecure foundations: this student of Dante, geographer, anthropologist and historian, pointed the way to a new social order with its roots in the Commune, the fertile bed from which had sprung, in mediaeval times, those flowers of civilisation, the Free City and the Gothic church."

Half a century later, when the editors of FREEDOM were in the dock at the Old Bailey in 1945, there was John in the public gallery, making a fuss about being asked by an official to produce an identity card. He was a sponsor of the Freedom Defence Committee, and a lifelong protester about invasions of civil liberties. Very many years ago, in his monograph on John's paintings, T. W. Earp, referring to his reticence on the non-professional side of his life, noted that "The newspapers, have recorded two characteristic gestures: one was a protest against the refusal of admission to Epsom racecourse of his friends the gipsies; the other, his support of a movement opposing undue restrictions upon the liberty of the subject."

These were indeed, preoccupations of his, ever since, as a boy, he had felt in his father's house "that I was living in a kind of mortuary where everything was dead", while he and his sister, "longing for a wider, freer world than that symbolically enclosed by Tenby's town walls; we craved for Art, Liberty, Life, perhaps Love!" This early sans-culottism, as he called it, "was succeeded by a higher form of anarchism, vehement only in a growing apprehension of the corruptibility of Power, and the moral bankruptcy of the masses, since, Esau-like they have bartered their birthright for a mess of pottage, which is about all the Vote amounts to."

His association with the gipsies began too, in childhood, when he watched them in the market of Haverfordwest. Writing indignantly in FREEDOM ten years ago he observed that, "Moving amidst a usually ignorant and hostile population, the gipsies have developed a technique, by which they may gain a living while preserving their peculiar conventions, their code of manners and their self-respect. They say *dukerin* (fortune-telling) for the *gâjos* (gentiles) is one thing and *dukerin* for the *Romanichals* another. In the one they use the ritual of cozenage, in the other they speak the truth. In both they are not unassisted by



the curious clairvoyance of the illiterate. Under the present drive towards uniformity, subservience, and the sedentary life, they will fuse their morale, their folk-memory and what is left of their language, to sink at last in the underworld of anonymity, petty crime, and squalor. What Hitler accomplished by the lethal chamber, our Bumbles will achieve by a system of harrying and fines. A naturally genial, intractable and somewhat primitive portion of the community, has been condemned by bureaucratic exigency to be stretched on the fatal bed of Procrustes."

The attraction of the gipsies was not for a spurious romanticism, but because "the absolute isolation of the gipsies seemed to me the rarest and most unattainable thing in the world." Isolation is a curious word to couple with that of Augustus John, the least solitary of men, whose conviviality was legendary, yet as a painter he was an isolated figure. FREEDOM's critic Arthur Moyse (whom John himself admired for his perception and integrity), remarked last month that "Too much of an intellectual, John could not leave a canvas or a subject alone and too often his constant repetition and overwork killed the humanity that gave birth to the original creation." And John himself recognised in a poignant passage that "The ruined canvases which encumber my studio bear witness to a sad lack of system. Foresight, calculation, patient planning have not been within my grasp." Yet it was his intellectual qualities (John was a reader of Freud and Reich and the modern anthropologists as well as of the French classics) which gave so many of his portraits their immense comprehension of the whole character as well as the physiognomy of their subjects—which is why so many of his sitters were disappointed by them. Consider his portrait of Lady Ottoline Morrell (No. 28 in the Phaidon volume) which tells us all, and more, than we know of her from the literary reminiscences of the period, or his portrait of Thomas Hardy (in the Fitzwilliam Museum), which made Hardy remark "That's exactly how I feel", or his portrait of Governor Fuller (shown at the big John exhibition in London in 1954) from which, as the *Listener's* critic remarked at the time, "one can see exactly the kind of man upon whose decision the lives of Sacco and Vanzetti hung."

John always regretted that he lived in an age when public art and architecture were at such a low ebb. "When one thinks of painting on great expanses of wall, painting of other kinds seems hardly worth while". But in the few very large pictures which he painted—the unfinished *Lyric Fantasy* or the huge cartoon *Galway* in the Tate, and in the lyrical sunlit groups of women and children in the French or Welsh landscape—there are glimpses of a golden age of the imagination, a youthful utopian dream of life, which makes us assent to his question "Does it not seem as if the secret of the artist lies in the prolongation of the age of adolescence with whatever increase of technical skill and sophistication the years may bring?"

In his fragments of utopian speculation which we print in this issue of ANARCHY (John's version of Fourier is much more attractive than

Fourier's own), the vision of a free society is seen with a painter's eye. The Nomads by the river are John's gipsies, the "magnificent children" by the roadside are ravishing children of John's family groups, even his odd recommendation of the initiatory rites of the Baptists comes from his recollection of such ceremonies in his Welsh childhood where "the girls with their skimpy black frocks, saturated and clinging, emerged like Naiads from the ordeal. Without making these observations at the time, I admired the spectacle. . . ."

Few of us would be unwilling to share the vision of life which this great lover of life has left us.

## Observations on Anarchy 8

### Orwell: an accident in society

That Eric Blair was an "accident" in English society is surely due, at least, partly, to the fact that his parents were Scots.

London SE23

J. EDWIN MACDONALD.

Nicolas Walter is correct in criticising the publishers of *Collected Essays* by George Orwell for their errors and omissions. It is important to know the times and circumstances in which writers of the calibre of Orwell thought and wrote. However, having correctly described how the dying Orwell managed to finish writing *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, N.W. then adds "rather like Lawrence fighting against time to finish *Lady Chatterley's Lover* twenty years before"—which is wrong. Lawrence finished *Lady C.* in 1928 and died in 1930. For many years he was in bad health and no doubt wrote the book under difficulties, but he wrote many things in his last two years—not least *The Man Who Died*—and went on writing until two days before his death.

I should have expected N.W. to have known this, for he is unusually well-informed, but I am not concerned about catching him out in a mistake. What is important, and what concerns me, is that his aside about Lawrence, if believed by him is possibly believed by others, and thus a romantic myth may be in process of creation: that the book is great because Lawrence killed himself writing it! The book has enough strikes against it already without this one. Non-literary working-class people, in my experience, were acutely disappointed because they had been misled, and expected it to be enthrallingly salacious. The general, and revealing, complaint was that there was "nothing in it." Non-literary criticism may be shrugged off, but in a passage of literary criticism I am compelled to object to the fostering of the idea of poor, pathetic Lawrence, coughing up blood, nobly



"fighting against time" to finish his masterpiece before death overtook him. Apart from being a chronological error, the picture is so false. Lawrence, who was many things to many people, was never poor and pathetic to anyone. He was a wonderful man, and at times he was damnable. He wrote marvellously, in prose and poetry, and at times he droned boringly. He wrote some things inferior to, and many things infinitely better than *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Glenrothes, Fife.

G. GILFILLAN.

Nicolas Walter writes: *The Blairs were certainly a Scottish family, but George Orwell was brought up in India and England, and was if anything ashamed of being Scottish in origin and prejudiced against the Scots—apparently because of the class significance of grouse and deer shooting; he always thought of himself as an Englishman, though it is possible that he did so rather aggressively just because he wasn't quite.*

*As for the comparison with D. H. Lawrence, it was made quite deliberately and in full sight of the facts. It is true that Lawrence finished Lady Chatterley's Lover in 1928 and died in 1930; but it is also true that Orwell finished Nineteen Eighty-Four in 1948 and died in 1950. Lawrence, like Orwell, had weak lungs all his life; he became very seriously ill in the winter of 1924-25, even before he finished The Plumed Serpent, and nearly died in Mexico in February 1925, when acute tuberculosis was diagnosed by Dr. Uhlfelder.*

*The fact that he lived for five more years is nothing extraordinary—tuberculosis is often a slow killer, and in creative men is often accompanied by bursts of activity. But Lawrence never recovered properly, and suffered from periodic relapses which sometimes forced him into special chalets and sanatoria. There were particularly severe attacks in July 1927 and January 1928, while he was writing the third and final version of Lady Chatterley's Lover (the one that introduced the tabu words). Richard Aldington states that during the two years he was working on the novel "he was often so ill that even he had to stop writing"; and Frieda said that he was impotent from 1926 onwards (a particularly ironical point, suggesting that he was more like the despised Sir Clifford than his hero Mellors and that the book is a prime example of sex-in-the-head!).*

*Of course Lawrence wouldn't accept his illness; nor would Orwell. This was something they had in common, something admirable. But I still think that both Lady Chatterley's Lover and Nineteen Eighty-Four show signs of strain, and that this can be partly attributed to the difficulty of trying to write a conscious masterpiece in the face of worsening tuberculosis. Poor—yes, poor—Lawrence and poor Orwell both shortened their lives by "fighting against time" to finish their last great works, coughing up blood and suffering from nagging discomfort and increasing pain. This doesn't detract from the greatness of the men, but surely it does help to explain what is wrong with their books.*

## Industrial decentralisation and workers' control

COLIN WARD

THE COMMITTEE OF 100 in convening this series of meetings and in linking the current protests against preparations for nuclear warfare, with the theory and practice of non-violence, and in treating under this theme, topics as far apart as the way we bring up our children and the structure of our economic life, are recognising that these are not separate fields of human experience and activity: that they are all bound up together.

They are recognising that nuclear war is not a dreadful *aberration* of the modern state, but simply the logical and more perfect development of that old-fashioned, incomplete warfare which was, and is, in Randolph Bourne's famous phrase "the *health* of the State". This is why the struggle against war is bound to be a struggle against the State. The State is a system of human relations based ultimately on violence—there never has been a non-violent State. The State is authority: small wonder that it is authoritarian. But its authoritarian pattern of relationships is not unique, it occurs in every aspect of life with *one significant exception*. The exception is the network of spontaneous and purely voluntary human relations which we undertake for pleasure or for some common purpose of our own.

Why do we not strive to transform all our relationships into free associations of autonomous individuals like those which we form in our leisure? People don't question whether or not this would be a good thing: they know it would be, they simply say that modern urban life is too complicated and that modern industry is on too large a scale for the simple face-to-face contacts and freely chosen decisions which such a suggestion implies. This is said with resignation, if not with regret, but then everyone goes on daydreaming about "getting away from it all," or being their own master for a change, with five acres and a cow, and we all pity the inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha at being driven out of their island anarchy into civilisation.

The ironical thing is that these escapist fantasies have become most prevalent at a time when industrial techniques and sources of motive power have made it possible for us to organise a modern industrial society on whatever scale or degree of complexity we choose.

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*This is the text of a paper read to the Committee of 100 seminar at Kensington Central Library on November 20th. The seminar is a pilot course for the Committee's "Schools for Non-violence".*



There is no need to labour this point. Modern transport, electricity, telecommunications, have made the traditional distribution of industry obsolete. It could be concentrated or dispersed wherever we care, particularly when knowledge of basic industrial techniques is widely diffused, and no longer concentrated in certain districts.

Let us take for granted that industry could be dispersed wherever we wanted it, and that only habit, inertia, or lack of imagination was responsible for the vast industrial agglomerations of today. We can very rapidly see that this is only part of the answer to our demands for a changed social environment. We will do this by reference to two celebrated examples of the decentralisation of industry. My first example is the Tennessee Valley Authority. You are probably familiar with the inspiring story of TVA. The drainage basin of the Tennessee River and its tributaries covers an area about the size of England. There was little or no industry, and the isolated valleys of the region were occupied by single-crop subsistence farmers, growing cotton, tobacco or maize, and as the yields of the valley fields diminished, they cut down the trees, burnt off the vegetation and ploughed the hill slopes, moving further and further up the mountain sides. The heavy rainfall, the failure to replenish the land's fertility, and the removal of the forest cover, allowed the soil to wash away into the rivers, so that, as Julian Huxley put it "in the heart of the most modern of countries you could find shifting cultivation of the type usually associated with primitive African tribes." Several regional planning surveys were made in the earlier part of the century to propose the development of the area, but because of controversy on whether the work should be undertaken for public or private profit, nothing was done until Roosevelt's New Deal in 1933 set up the TVA which "was not handed a simple task of engineering like the Panama Canal or the Boulder Dam. It was told to remake the economic and social life of a vast underprivileged community: through cheap power, land reclamation, re-forestation, flood control, diversification of agriculture, terracing of hillsides, encouragement of animal husbandry, cheap transport through restoring the navigability of the river, and abundant vacation-sites on the lakes which would form behind the new dams." It achieved all these and more, and its methods carried many lessons for people concerned with community development. As Herbert Agar wrote, "perhaps the finest and the most hopeful achievement of the Authority is that the citizens of the Valley regard their new society, which has flowered in twenty years, not as something imposed by 'reformers' from far away, but as something which belongs to him, which they helped to create, which in many cases they moulded and shaped according to their local customs and traditions. They were never pushed into accepting an 'improvement' until their objections have been removed by discussion and experiment, and their conservatism overruled by *their own experience*."

Splendid. But unhappily the story doesn't end there. The valley, with its abundant hydro-electric power provided by the new dams,

and its plentiful labour supply, was for these very reasons selected for the Oak Ridge plants of the Atomic Energy Commission. At Oak Ridge, the beautiful dams and shining turbines that brought light and power to the hillside farms, and brought work and hope to the poverty-stricken people of the valley, made the bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thousands and thousands of people worked there for over a year *without the faintest idea what they were making*. And would it have made any difference if they had known? Today the Atomic Energy Commission at Oak Ridge and Paducah plants is by far the biggest user of TVA power. It uses so much that it has to supplement it by burning 8 million tons of coal a year in five additional generating stations.

My second cautionary tale comes from nearer home. After over forty years of propaganda by voluntary associations in the field of town planning, the Government initiated after the war a programme of New Towns, designed to disperse industry and population from the great urban conurbations. In essence it was a great constructive idea; it could have been a great adventure, but was too timid in scale and execution. The first and foremost of the new towns was Stevenage in Hertfordshire. I won't comment on its architecture, nor on the complete absence of any opportunity for its inhabitants to plan for themselves or to initiate anything for themselves, but it is certainly the most prosperous and economically flourishing of the new towns. It has acquired the nickname Missileville, for it is flourishing because its industries are largely armament industries. Over 50% of its working population are employed at the English Electric Guided Weapons Division factory where the Thunderbird missile is being produced, or at De Havilland's where the Blue Streak Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile is made. Smaller firms like Hilmor Ltd., makers of tube-bending machinery for the Admiralty and the A.E.R.A., or Fleming Radio, makers of electronic equipment for guided missiles, or Stevenage Tools and Switches, makers of electronic equipment for the Admiralty, are busy in the same business or in sub-contracting for the missile giants.

It isn't accidental that Stevenage became Missileville, it is Government policy that it should be so: "Priority has been given to firms producing, or capable of producing, for defence contracts; location certificates from the Board of Trade have been granted far more easily to firms making a contribution towards the defence programme." The nature of Missileville's industry is no secret either: everybody is proud of it. English Electric advertise their missile in the local paper as though it was a washing machine: "To all these problems the answer is THUNDERBIRD". In 1959, as you know, the Committee of 100's predecessor, the Direct Action Committee, carried out an intensive campaign in Stevenage, by leaflets, door to door canvassing, open air meetings and poster demonstrations. The only *obvious* result was that building workers on the extension to the English Electric factory had a one-hour token strike, and one man left his job there.



You can see very clearly from this that industrial decentralisation, in the geographical sense, is only a small part of the story. We need to decentralise the *control* of industry, we want in fact worker's control. Let me take as my text an observation, not by an anarchist or syndicalist, but by Gordon Rattray Taylor, in his book *Are Workers Human?* He says:

The split between life and work is probably the greatest contemporary social problem. You cannot expect men to take a responsible attitude and to display initiative in daily life when their whole working experience deprives them of the chance of initiative and responsibility. The personality cannot be successfully divided into watertight compartments, and even the attempt to do so is dangerous: if a man is taught to rely upon the paternal authority within the factory, he will be ready to rely upon one outside. If he is rendered irresponsible at work by lack of opportunity for responsibility, he will be irresponsible when away from work too. The contemporary social trend towards a centralised, paternalistic, authoritarian society only reflects conditions which already exist within the factory. And it is chiefly by reversing the trend within the factory that the larger trend outside can be reversed.

Yes, we are all theoretically in favour of workers' control nowadays, but we regretfully reflect that the scale and complexity of modern industrial production makes the notion impracticable. The Labour Correspondent of *The Times* for example, discussing the only examples of workers' control we have in this country—the handful of co-operative co-partnerships—these shoes I'm wearing were made by one of them—agrees that they “provide a means of harmonious self-government in a small concern” but that there is no evidence that they provide “any solution to the problems of establishing democracy in large-scale modern industry.” This is the same conclusion that George Orwell reached about anarchism.

If one considers the probabilities one is driven to the conclusion that anarchism implies a low standard of living. It need not imply a hungry or uncomfortable world, but it rules out the kind of air-conditioned, chromium-plated, gadget-ridden existence which is now considered desirable and enlightened. The processes involved in making say, an aeroplane, are so complex as to be only possible in a planned, centralised society, with all the repressive apparatus that that implies. Unless there is some unpredictable change in human nature, liberty and efficiency must pull in opposite directions.

I often think he was right: that we would have to choose between an air-conditioned nightmare or a free society with a low standard of living, but of course the vast majority of the inhabitants of our world *have* the worst of both worlds—a nightmare of poverty *and* an unfree society. They haven't got the luxury of choosing, as we can, between air-conditioning and freedom. But it seems to me that the vital point that we usually overlook in assuming that it is the scale and size of industry which make it useless to strive for workers' control, is that these primarily are a reflection of the social and economic ideas current in society rather than of actual technical complexity. We are hypnotised by the cult of *bigness*. This cult, which makes oversize cars, oversize ships like big Cunarders, and oversize aircraft (remember the

Brabazon—whole villages were swept away to make a runway for it, and now it rusts in its million pound hangar)—this cult of bigness pervades industry as well as most other fields of life, and it has nothing to do with complex processes. Actually, it makes us exaggerate the actual extent of bigness in industry, as Kropotkin found sixty years ago in compiling the material for his *Fields, Factories and Workshops* when he discovered that the economist's picture of industry had little to do with the reality.

At a conference held a few years ago by the British Institute of Management and the Institute of Industrial Administration, Mr. S. R. Dennison of Cambridge declared that the belief that modern industry inevitably trends towards larger units of production was a Marxian fallacy. (Since then, Khrushchev and his so-called Decentralisation Decree, seems to have reached the same conclusion). Mr. Dennison said that

Over a wide range of industry the productive efficiency of small units was at least equal to, and in many cases surpassed that of the industrial giants. About 92 per cent. of the businesses in the United Kingdom employed fewer than 250 people and were responsible for by far the greater part of the total national production. The position in the United States was about the same.

(There is of course a whole field of economic theory about the optimum size of the firm and its relation to the law of diminishing marginal productivity, but I am not the right man to discuss it). Again, those who think of industry as one great assembly line may be surprised to learn from Dr. Mark Abrams that “in spite of nationalisation and the growth of large private firms, the proportion of the total working population employed by large organisations (*i.e.* concerns with over 1,000 employees) is still comparatively small. Such people constitute only 36% per cent. of the working population and are far outnumbered by those who hold jobs as members of comparatively small organisations where direct personal contact throughout the group is a practical everyday possibility.”

It is also revealing to study the nature of the industrial giants and to reflect on how few of them owe their size to the actual technical complexity and scale of their industrial operations. Broadcasting under the title *Have Large Firms an Advantage in Industry?* Mr. H. P. Barker referred to two essentially different types of motive, the industrial and non-industrial. By the industrial motive, he meant

the normal commercial development of a product or a service which the public wants; for instance, the motorcar industry or the chain store. There is also the vertical type of growth in which a seller expands downwards towards his raw materials, or a primary producer expands upwards towards the end products of his primary material. The soap and oil industries are such cases. Then there is the kind of expansion in which a successful firm seeks to diversify its business and its opportunity and to carry its financial eggs in several baskets—and lastly there is the type of expansion by which whole industries are aggregated under a single control because they cannot effectively be operated in any other way. Electricity and Railways are an example.



One might very well have reservations about the truth of Mr. Barker's last two examples\*, and it is interesting that his other reasons relate to the *financial* structure of competitive industry, rather than its actual technical demands. When he turns to what he calls the non-industrial and less healthy types of growth, we are in familiar territory.

Among these there is the type which starts and ends in the Stock Exchange and where the sole reason is the prospect of making a profitable flotation. Then there is the type of adiposity which often occurs when a successful company becomes possessed of large resources from past profits. The Directors then look round for ways of investing the surplus fat merely because they have it. Then there the type of large business born only out of doctrinaire or political considerations. Last of all there is the industrial giant created primarily to satisfy the megalomania of one man.

The very technological developments which, in the hands of people with statist, centralising, authoritarian habits of mind, can make robots of us all, are those which could make possible a local, intimate, decentralised society. When tractors were first made, they were giants suitable only for prairie-farming. Now you can get them scaled down to a size for cultivating your backyard. Power tools, which were going to make all industry one big Dagenham are now commonplace for every do-it-yourself enthusiast. Atomic power, the latest argument of the centralisers, is used (characteristically), in a submarine—the most hermetically sealed human community ever devised.

And now comes automation. Those industries where the size of the units is dictated by large-scale operations, for example steel rolling mills or motor car assembly, are the very ones where automation is likely to reduce the number of people required in one place. Automation—the word is merely jargon for a more intensive application of machines, particularly transfer machines—is seen by some people as yet another factory for greater industrial concentration, but this is only another expression of the centralist mentality. Mr. Langdon Goodman in his Penguin book *Man and Automation* puts the matter in

\*I think he is wrong about electricity. A few years back the "New Scientist", commenting on the appalling complexity of the present centralised system, prophesied that "in future there will be a tendency to return to more or less local generation of electricity." In the "Guardian" (9/11/61) Gerald Haythornthwaite comments on the Central Electricity Generation Board's "spinning a web of electrical transmission lines without much reference to any other interests than its own" thus "prejudicing the development of a more flexible and useful power system" from such new developments as the advanced gas-cooled reactors which could provide a "footloose power unit" for "a large number of small and compact power stations close to the centres of demand."

I think he is wrong about railways, especially in view of the present proposals for granting autonomy to the Regions of British Railways instead of central control by the British Transport Commission. After all, if you travel across Europe, you go over the lines of a dozen systems—capitalist and communist—co-ordinated by freely arrived at agreement between the various undertakings, with no central authority. Paul Goodman remarks that "It is just such a situation that Kropotkin points to as an argument for anarchism—the example he uses is the railroad-network of Europe laid down and run to perfection with no plan imposed from above."

a very interesting (positively Kropotkinian) light.

Automation can be a force either for concentration or dispersion. There is a tendency today for automation to develop along the larger and larger production units, but this may only be a phase through which the present technological advance is passing. The comparatively large sums of money which are needed to develop automation techniques, together with the amount of technological knowledge and unique quality of management, are possibly found more in the large units than in the smaller ones. Thus the larger units will proceed more quickly towards automation. When this knowledge is dispersed more widely and the smaller units may take up automation the pattern may be quite different. Automation being a large employer of plant and a relatively small employer of labour, allows plants to be taken away from the large centres of population and built in relatively small centres of population. Thus one aspect of the British scene may change. Rural factories, clean, small, concentrated units will be dotted about the countryside. The effects of this may be far-reaching. The Industrial Revolution caused a separation of large numbers of people from the land, and concentrated them in towns. The result has been a certain standardisation of personality, ignorance of nature, and lack of imaginative power. Now we may soon see some factory workers moving back into the country and becoming part of a rural community.

But perhaps the most striking evidence in favour of reducing the scale of industrial organization comes from the experiments conducted by industrial psychologists, sociologists and so on, who, in the interests of morale, increased productivity, or health, have sought to break down large units into small groups. The famous experiment of Elton Mayo at the Hawthorne Works of the Western Electric Company or the experiences of the Glacier Metal Company, or J. J. Gillespie's ideas about 'free expression in industry' or the Group Production methods adopted by a Swedish firm, are all examples of this tendency. Their aim is by no means workers' control. They simply want to increase productivity or to reduce industrial neurosis or absenteeism, but they do indicate that the preconditions for workers' control of industry are there. Thus Professor Norman C. Hunt, in a broadcast in 1958 remarked that the problems arising from the growth of industrial enterprises were such that

A number of large companies have recently decentralised their organisations and established smaller, largely autonomous units, each to some extent a managerial entity in itself. A few years ago the President of the General Electricity Company of America, one of the companies which has followed such a policy said: "With fewer people we find that management can do a better job of organising facilities and personnel. This results in lower manufacturing costs and better production control." It may be that the current interest in and apparent tendency towards the decentralisation of large undertaking is a somewhat belated recognition of the importance of *people* in organisations. One can only hope that at long last we are beginning to think about the pressures which traditional forms of organisation put upon the people who are required to work in them.

He concluded by reflecting on the possibility of reversing the trend of so-called scientific management; "decentralising rather than centralising; increasing the significant content of jobs rather than subdividing them further; harnessing group solidarity rather than trying to break it up; putting more satisfaction into the work situation rather than



expecting workers to find it outside their jobs; in short, making it possible for workers to utilise their capacities more fully and thus truly earn their keep."

Notice his last phrase which tells us why the industrialists employ the psychologists. But if the industrial psychologists were employed by the workers instead of by the employers, where would this line of thinking end?

It would lead us to conclude that technically, organisationally, and in terms of the sociology and psychology of work, control of industry by the people who work in it was both possible and desirable. This is a revolutionary demand, for it affects the whole foundations of our society, and implies a change in the whole structure of property relationships upon which it is based. Is there any demand for it (let alone any likelihood of its being achieved in the immensely stable and unrevolutionary society in which we live)? The fact is that the demand is infinitesimal. Between forty and fifty years ago, in the time of syndicalism and Guild Socialism, there was at least a vocal minority in the trade union and socialist movements which sought workers' control of industry. Today such a minority movement does not exist, though there have been many attempts—after the war in the League for Workers' Control, and today in the National Rank and File Movement—to sow the seeds for the re-creation of such a movement. The labour movement as a whole has settled for the notion that you gain more by settling for less. This is why Anthony Crosland contends that

In the sphere where the worker really *wants* workers' control, namely his day-to-day life in the factory, we must conclude that the British (and American and Scandinavian) unions, greatly aided by propitious changes in the political and economic background, have achieved a more effective control through the independent exercise of their collective bargaining strength than they would ever have achieved by following the path (beset as it is by practical difficulties on which all past experiments have foundered) of direct workers' management. Indeed we may risk the generalisation that *the greater the power of the Unions the less the interest in workers' management.*

Now we may regret this profoundly, but if you look at the history of the trade union movement in different countries you will find this generalisation to be true. It is idle for disappointed revolutionaries to proclaim that the ordinary day-to-day industrial conflicts over wages, hours, tea-breaks and so on are useless. Within their own terms they justify themselves completely. For just as one of the great social lies is that crime doesn't pay, when it *does*, so it is another myth that strikes do not pay off—they do. (And let me add, parenthetically, that strikes over tea-breaks, that make the middle-class *Evening Standard* reader, as he drinks his tea, smile because of their "pettiness" or scowl because of their "irresponsibility", are not about tea-breaks but about human dignity and about the intolerable boredom of doing what someone else wants, as, when, and how, he wants it).

Happily, there need not be an all or nothing choice between revolutionary and reformist industrial action. There is an approach which combines the day-to-day struggle in industry with the aim of changing the balance of power in the factory. This is what the Guild Socialists called "encroaching control". As Ken Alexander puts it,

A few simple aims—for example control over hire and fire, over the 'manning of the machines' and over the working of overtime—pressed in the most hopeful industries with the aim of establishing bridgeheads from which workers' control could be extended, could make a beginning. The factors determining whether such demands could be pressed successfully are market, industrial organisation and, more important, the extent to which the nature of their work compels the workers to exercise more control.

For the elaboration of this argument, in terms of the collective contract and in terms of the 'gang system', I must refer you to ANARCHY 2—the issue on Workers' Control. The effect of the group contract system, as G. D. H. Cole put it "would be to link the members of the working group together in a common enterprise under their joint auspices and control, and to emancipate them from an externally imposed discipline in respect of their method of getting the work done."

But since we are discussing this topic from the point of view of the struggle against war, we must also recognise that—just as we have seen that the geographical decentralisation of industry is only part of the story, so is the decentralisation of *control* of industry—a far more radical aim, and one infinitely harder to achieve. When Reg Wright in ANARCHY 2 and 8, or Seymour Melman in his book *Decision-Making and Productivity* describe how three thousand men made half a million Ferguson tractors in ten years with practically no supervision, you can reflect that they could just as well have been tanks or any other kind of war material. Considering the fabulous output of the war industry from 1939 to 1945, the story would have been one of far greater miracles of production. A self-governing industry will reflect the general social climate with great accuracy. (Think of the record of the British Medical Association—the mouthpiece of a self-governing profession—and the way in which it behaved over the absorption of refugee doctors in this country before the war, or that of the American Medical Association today over all and every effort to create health services available to all in the United States). It is true that the only working-class body campaigning today for workers' control of industry, the National Rank and File Movement, has as item 8 of its aims and objects, "To promote the policy and slogan of an 'International General Strike Against War'". But we know how, in 1914, the identical policy and slogan, at a time when industrial militancy was a hundred times more widespread, vanished into thin air the moment war was declared. The slogans were no more than . . . slogans. Don't think I mention this to discredit the working-class movements: the same *volte face* was accomplished, as Richard Gregg points out, by many highly intelligent pacifists on the outbreak of the second world war.



Just as we need to widen and deepen the motives and effectiveness of the struggle of the industrial workers, so we need to widen and deepen those of the people who have been drawn, for the first time in their lives, to movements of social protest and struggle by the campaign against the bomb. I agree completely with the editorial in one of the Rank and File journals that declared that the Committee of 100 must show "that it not only stands against nuclear weapons, but that it also stands for something positive, for a new philosophy of life, for a new system of society in which ordinary people will be masters of their own fate". And I agree with Michael Randle's answer to a journalist when challenged on this point: "People have come into the nuclear disarmament movement from many different backgrounds. It's quite legitimate for people who come from a background of industrial struggle to see there is a relation between what we have been saying about nuclear disarmament and what they are saying about society in general."

It is always said that the way in which the English aristocracy has maintained its ascendancy is by continually absorbing new blood from below, and in one generation imbuing it with its own values and attitudes. The establishment absorbs the outsiders. This happens all the way down the social scale. One of the characteristics of industrial and social change in the last forty years—and one which is moving at a greater pace today than ever, has been the decline in the number of people employed in primary production, and the growth of the numbers in secondary or service industries. In terms of personality types, the change is one from the "status-accepting" to the "status-aspiring", it is a change from the traditional working-class values to those characteristic of the middle-classes. The good side of this change is the opportunity it provides to break out of the restricted and narrow traditional environment of working-class life. The bad side is that, in accepting the value system of the bosses, the traditional strength of the working-class attitude is being eroded. In industry the characteristic working-class value is sticking together—solidarity, but the characteristic middle-class value is what Seymour Melman calls "predatory competition"—individual self-advancement, which because it is individual, must be at the expense of others. Other people call this the rat race. When after the Leyland take-over of the Standard Motor Company, a number of executive staff were sacked, one of them said "If one man on the shop floor was fired there would be a strike because they are organised. About 200 of us will go and nothing will happen". But the reason why they were powerless to protect their own interests is precisely because they had identified themselves with the interests of the employers and not those of the workers. They have opted out of that working-class solidarity which is one of the alternative foci of power to which Gene Sharp referred in his lecture last week.

One great incidental virtue of the anti-bomb campaign is that it is teaching middle-class people working-class solidarity. (Even its favourite dirge, the one about the *H-Bomb's Thunder* is an adaptation

of a miner's song). It is also teaching them how much more realistic than their own, is the traditional working-class attitude towards the police. But most of all, it is teaching them how weak are their methods of resistance to political authority, compared with the methods by which the working-class have learned how to resist industrial authority. The middle-class sits in puddles as a symbolic gesture—of its own impotence; the working-class has developed over the last hundred years, in the interests of self-protection and of its own concept of social justice, the most effective weapon of non-violent direct action yet devised: *the strike*, the withdrawal of power from industrial authority.

It is in recognition of this that the Committee of 100 has issued its appeal for industrial action against the bomb. But it is precisely because the bomb is not something unique, but is the inevitable outcome of the principle of authority, that we must recognise that our common struggle is against authority itself, an authority which is only effective because we have surrendered to it our own power over our own lives.

*We have three duties, to resist, to educate and to establish mutual aid communities. By these means we may make possible survival if Western society collapses, the ability to resist if tyranny succeeds it, and the readiness of the people if reform can be gained by compromise. Resistance and disobedience are still the only forces able to cope with barbarism, and so long as we do not practise them we are unarmed. The means of resistance on a scale larger than the individual is the mutual-aid community, which is in itself an alternative unit able to exist within the state, to survive it, and to combat it. And without education freedom is impossible, for it is not a state which can be imposed upon people who have learned nothing about the nature of responsibility.*

*Up till now, it has been an article of pride among English politicians that the public would shove its head into any old noose they might show it—unflinching, steadfast patriotism, unshakable morale—obedience and an absence of direct action. We are going to alter that . . . When enough people respond to the invitation to die, not with a salute but a smack in the mouth, and the mention of war empties the factories and fills the streets, we may be able to talk about freedom.*

—ALEX COMFORT: "Art and Social Responsibility".



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*Who are the anarchists?*

*The world of Paul Goodman*

*Disobedience*

*Direct action*

*The autonomy of the teacher*

*Theatre and anarchy*

*Gustav Landauer's 'Revolution'*

*Strikes*

*Jazz, Science Fiction*

*The work of David Wills*

*Pressure Groups*

*Secondary Modern*

*Malatesta*

We need contributions, suggestions, and above all, more readers.