WORKERS CONTROL

TWO SHILLINGS OR THIRTY CENTS

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WORKERS' CONTROL: an idea on the wing

GEOFFREY OSTERGAARD

SIX YEARS AGO, in ANARCHY 2, Colin Ward described workers' control as an idea "looking for a movement". My own impression, after attending the 5th National Conference on Workers' Control held at Coventry in June, is that today the idea is on the wing. Rising like a phoenix from the ashes where it has been buried for more than a generation, the bird has stretched its wings and is taking off. For those of us who have been raking over the ashes for the past few decades, it is a most welcome spectacle.

If I am right in my judgment, it is a case of third time lucky. Since the war, there have been two other serious attempts to revive the movement. The first was made by the short-lived London League for Workers' Control formed at the end of 1948; the second by delegates from five small left-wing groups, including the London Anarchist Group and the Syndicalist Workers' Federation, who launched in January 1961 a new National Rank and File Movement. The present attempt originated with the Centre for Socialist Education which sponsored the current series of conferences beginning with a seminar held at Nottingham early in 1964.

I was not able to attend the first four conferences and thus cannot compare this one with the others. But there is no reason to doubt the judgment of Ken Coates and Tony Topham—the prime movers in the new campaign—that the 5th National Conference was the most repre-

GEOFFREY OSTERGAARD is Senior Lecturer in Political Science at the University of Birmingham. Co-author (with A. H. Halsey) of Power in Co-operatives (Blackwell, 1965). *Visiting professor at Osmania University, Hyderabad, India, 1962-65, he is currently engaged on a study of the leaders of the Sarvodaya Movement in India.*

sentative gathering of its kind held in the British Labour Movement since the heyday of Syndicalism and Guild Socialism, 1910-1924. Some 300 delegates and individuals attended the two-day meeting, a number which included 50 delegates from the TGWU, 20 from the AEU, and others from various trade union branches, shop steward committees and trades councils. Several groups of workers were represented at the conference for the first time, among them a small contingent of students waving the new banner of "Student Power". The latter included David Adelstein, the hero of the recent LSE "troubles", and Terry Lacey, the Young Liberal syndicalist. As might be expected, representatives of the various socialist sects were also in attendance. But the centre of gravity of the gathering was well symbolised by the chairman, Bill Jones, the London busmen's leader, vice-chairman of the TGWU executive and their recently nominated candidate for the TUC General Council. In short, this was a conference largely representative of the Labour and Trade Union Left, seasoned by a mixed bag of New Left intellectuals.

The venue of the conference was well chosen: Coventry, the centre of a modern growth industry which has borne the brunt of the Government's planned "recession" measures and an industry in which the idea of workers' control must take root if it is to have any relevance in the future. The timing of the conference also proved most propitious: the weekend which saw the publication of the *Report of the Labour Party Working Party on Industrial Democracy*. The conference, in fact, began with a speech from John Hughes (a member of the Working Party) presenting the main points of the document. The delegates, therefore, were able to initiate "the thorough debate" on the report which Len Williams anticipates "might well lead to far-reaching changes being made in the foundations of our industrial society" (Foreword). Since few of those present had had time to read and digest it, the discussion on the report was not particularly well informed. It is clear, however, that John Hughes was right in judging it to be "something of a revolution by British standards". *Industrial Democracy* is, indeed, a significant advance on the joint consultation and trade union representation mentality that has dominated Labour thinking for the last 40 years and on the more recent sophisticaated rationalisations of Hugh Clegg with his so-called "New Approach to Industrial Democracy" (see ANARCHY 2, April 1961). The Working Party's report merits extended examination and also close scrutiny—if only because of its reception as both revolutionary and "meek and mild" (the latter the phrase of the director-general of the CBI). Its most obvious shortcomings is its failure to face squarely the issue posed by Coates and Topham in their recent pamphlet: *Participation or Control?* (Bertrand Russell Centre for Social Research, March 1967).

This issue was raised by several contributors to the discussions in plenary session. It is not merely a question of semantics but rather

one that goes to the heart of the matter. Throughout its long history the concept of industrial democracy has been plagued by spurious substitutes: in the 19th century by capitalist co-partnership and profit-sharing, in the 20th century by Whitleyism, joint consultation and trade union representation. "Workers' participation" is only the current form of the counterfeit. It is the "O.K. version" of a radical demand, the version commended by *The Times*, the employers, conservative trade union leaders, and all those who wish to head off any challenge to managerial prerogatives. It should be obvious that no enterprise can be carried on without workers' participation: the only questions worth bothering about are the forms of participation, the manner in which it is achieved, and the spirit with which it is conducted. Stripped to essentials, the question is whether all workers are to be recognized as equal partners in a common endeavour or whether they are to be accorded some inferior status. Until the first alternative is fully accepted, participation is only a new name for the old idea of buying off or smothering the "trouble-makers". The sociologists have a word for it—"co-optation": the act of allowing critics to share in decision-making in order that they may be all the better emasculated. It is a beautifully simple and, alas, usually successful practice: give the critics a small say and make sure that they are bound by the decisions which you would have taken in any case. It is precisely this which the Labour Government is trying to put over in its proposals for workers' participation in the renationalized steel industry. If it is accepted, we shall be one step further towards the development of corporate state capitalism.

Having made this point, we can also agree with Ernie Roberts of the AEU who questioned the juxtaposition of the two concepts, participation and control. What participation means *in practice* will depend on what the workers want it to mean. Workers will continue, as in the past, to make what use they can of any machinery that is available in their efforts to control the authority of management. The counterfeits of control, it must be insisted, are a confession of management's weakness, its need to make concessions. Properly used by people who recognise what it is and know what they are doing, participation may be one more step forward in extending the frontier of control.

Another issue raised at the conference was that of industrial versus political action as the means of achieving workers' control. If I were not writing for an anarchist journal, I would be tempted to dismiss this as a great non-issue. Perhaps there are some who believe that workers' control can be legislated into existence; but they were not much in evidence at the conference. There was a real difference of opinion, however, about the part that parliamentary action can play in extending the opportunities of control. Some appeared to believe it was irrelevant, some that it was essential, while others took up various intermediate positions. For my part, I can't accept that it is either irrelevant or essential. The latter I need not argue here, but the former merits a

word. If John Fraser succeeds in persuading his colleagues in the PLP to pass the Industrial Democracy Bill he is said to be drafting, the act will certainly be relevant and its provisions *may* extend the opportunities of control. It is idle to deny that legislation can affect behaviour: the important thing is to see that it does not inhibit the right kind of behaviour and make matters worse. Capitalists can be denied their property rights by statute and this *may* be an advance, if only because it may clarify the real issue.

In general, the conference, composed as it was mainly of reluctant and disillusioned Labour voters, felt that it was best to proceed on two legs—the industrial and the political—rather than on one. All seemed to be agreed—even Stan Orme who brought fraternal greetings from the left in the PLP—that industrial democracy must come from the bottom and cannot be imposed from above. It was also generally agreed that workers' control, however pursued, is a political matter—which, of course, it most definitely is if one defines politics as concerned with the shaping and sharing of power.

Yet another issue raised was whether it is possible to achieve workers' control under capitalism. "If you can't have socialism in one country, you certainly can't have it in one factory," declared one delegate. It was a neat turn of phrase, but one that betrays a profound lack of understanding. True, as the delegate went on to say, workers' control does mean (among other things) working-class power. But power is a complex relation, not a thing which one either has or does not have. Looked at in terms of relations, it is clear that workers *already* exercise considerable power in certain areas of decision-making (e.g. speed of output, hiring and firing) even under the present system. The real problem—well understood by most of the delegates—is to extend these areas as widely and as rapidly as possible. There will be no sudden leap into freedom and, if there ever comes a day which we may be tempted to describe as such, it will only be the day when we declare to the world the freedom we have *already* won.

From the impressions I have given so far the older reader may be led to think that this was a conference which he had attended before, at least in spirit. None of the issues mentioned above is new: they have been with us a long time and will be with us for some time to come. Eric Harrison, a delegate from the Committee of 100 and the AFGB, expressed this view while invoking the name of Kropotkin, author of *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (a reference, incidentally, which surprised Ken Coates who should know better). Harrison was right up to a point, but to my mind there *was* something new about this conference and it was this element which I found most encouraging. I refer to the specific proposals for various key industries which were discussed mainly in the seminar groups. The proposals varied greatly in quality and content; and in the group which I attended—education

—we didn't get much beyond generalities. But in the discussions as a whole I sensed a determined attempt to express the demand for workers' control in terms of practical and realisable issues, relevant to present circumstances and capable of mobilizing men for action. It was this, rather than the general debate on "principles", which convinced me that I was taking part in a movement.

We *are*, I believe, on the move and the current campaign for workers' control is part of "the new politics". This "new politics" or "new radicalism" still awaits clear definition. Personally, I would describe it as the politics of the alienated man, struggling to transcend his alienation. The old politics, which will take some sloughing off, is the politics of the alienated man who is unaware, except dimly, of the causes of his alienation. The hallmark of the new radical is awareness of his plight and his determination to tackle the problem at the root. Such a man will no longer be satisfied with expressing his alienation in concern for remote objects which only too often seem quite beyond his capacity to influence. Rather, he will be concerned to link these remote objects (Peace in Vietnam, the Socialist Revolution, etc.) with his daily struggle to live an authentic and truly human existence in his family, his neighbourhood and his workplace.

The concept of workers' control focuses on a major source of alienation in contemporary society. No radical can ignore it if he wishes to be taken seriously. It was sad, therefore, to find so few avowed anarchists present at the Coventry conference. Anarchists have an honourable record in developing and in preserving the tradition of workers' control ("The mine for the miner" is the anarchist ideal, declared a writer in FREEDOM, December *1889*); and anarchism generally has an enormous contribution to make to the definition of what I have called "the new politics". If anarchists are to make that contribution, they must cease to be thought of, and to think of themselves, as just another of "the socialist sects". They should not refuse to join with others, who do not share all their principles, in working for genuinely radical change. To become an anarchist is itself a life-long process: some will make it, many will not. If more anarchists participated in the 6th National Conference on Workers' Control scheduled to be held at Scarborough later this year when the Labour Party holds its annual jamboree, they might make no new converts. But, on the basis of the Coventry conference, the journey might prove well worth making for any non-sectarian anarchist who is not afraid to lose his chastity. Who knows? We might even learn something about how to revive other of our cherished but presently encapsulated ideas!

Definitions: workers' control and self-management

KEN COATES

THE TERM "WORKERS' CONTROL" is commonly used to cover two quite distinctly different concepts. One, set out in the words of the German socialist Thalheimer, has it that "control over production signifies the management of the industries by the workers" and is wont to appear in discussion as an attempt to outline an ideal norm of administration for socialised industries. In this tradition, one finds that in Britain, throughout the nineteen-thirties, speakers in TUC debates on the popular administration of nationalised industries almost invariably used the term in this sense. But another tradition has produced a quite different concept which also recognises itself under the same label. This speaks of "workers' control" in those contexts where militant trade unions have been able to wrest some, or most, of the prerogatives of management from the unilateral disposition of managers.

It is misleading to use the same term to speak of two such different conditions. To do so implies that an unbroken continuity of democratic advance stretches away between the imposition of a trade union veto on dismissals, and the ultimate overcoming of capitalist property relations. This is a naive view, because it completely ignores the deforming power of such property relations in the generation of both ideology, and of state forces beyond democratic control. The continued power of

private property, as we have seen in Britain since the war, constantly renews all the absurd prejudices which are rooted in commodity-fetishism: in a climate in which all human relationships are founded on cash-values the most flagrantly anti-social effects of the irresponsible use of capital appear as "natural" events, beyond the scope of social control. It requires very little shrewdness on the part of the manipulators of opinion who serve the controllers of this system of things, to elaborate, out of the reflex response to such acts, as they are conditioned in such a climate, the kind of results that Colin Hurry produced when he polled the 129 marginal seats on the issue of nationalisation in 1959. What appears to be "fair" in such a structure is very remote from what would seem so in a society uncluttered by the domination of institutions of property. Even active trade unionists, who will respond most vigorously to changes in their conditions of work when these appear to be unfair, very seldom break through the given standards of our society to form any conception of the incomparably richer and more human standards which a classless society would evoke. Within the compass of this ideology, generated by it and constantly reinforcing it, lies the power of the state. This power, far from giving expression to democratic initiative, exists to inhibit, frustrate and overcome it. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the field of industrial relations, in which at every crucial time the state has intervened to side-track or transmute pressures for democratic control into harmless experiments, permitting the sovereignty of property institutions to continue unimpaired.

But even if these things were not true, and the continuous encroachment of democracy in industry were assured, we would still require at some point in its progress the recognition of a qualitatively different set of problems. It seems incorrect to speak of "workers' control" where ultimate authority is supposed to rest with the workers, because "control" is a term which implies a more or less involved apparatus of checks, or even vetoes, by one party on the behaviour of another. If we search out synonyms, "superintendence" or "supervision" are typical words which flash to mind. The demand for workers' control thus literally interpreted, becomes a demand, explicit or implicit, for a reversal of roles in a class-divided society. The workers wish to limit the scope of the action of other *persons*, of managers or owners, and not merely, as is often implied, to "control" inanimate objects such as their machines and raw materials. Where inanimate objects appear to be at stake, commodity-fetishism is at work, because what the machines do is not the result of any will of their own, but of the outcome of a tussle of wills between people, whose relationships have been refracted through things and camouflaged in the process. Whether at the level of shop control of hire-and-fire, or agreements on one hundred per cent trade union membership, or at the level of detailed union inspection of a firm's account books, and a workers' veto on investment decisions and the distribution of profits, workers' control in this sense involves a balance of hostile forces, a division of authority between rival contenders. Of course, union control of the former prerogatives can be, and has in some

cases been, relatively permanent: while in the latter cases it should be seen as likely to prove convulsively uncertain, shifting and temporary. To claim the right to intervene in the central decision-making areas of capital, the workers must have reached the last phase of a transition which can only lead either to a catastrophic regression of trade union powers in an authoritarian putsch, or to sharp and severe modifications of the system of property relations itself.

Once property and its fetishes are overcome, this mobile, dual relationship ceases to exist. The new problem becomes one of democratic self-regulation. It is not to make light of this problem to suggest that it is a very different concern from that which faces the labour movement this side of the socialist transformation of private property into common wealth. A recognition of this fact is implied in the most interesting experiences of the Yugoslavs and the Algerians. The Algerians invariably speak of the administrative system of their nationalised concerns as "auto-gestion", while the Yugoslavs use the term "self-management" to describe the Government of their socialised sector. Following this usage, it seems sensible for us to speak of "workers' control" in connection with the aggressive encroachment of trade unions on management power in a capitalist framework, and of "workers' self-management" in connection with attempts to administer a socialised economy democratically. While insisting that there is most unlikely to be a simple institutional continuity between the two conditions, it seems quite clear that workers' control can be a most valuable school for self-management, and that the notion of self-management can be an important stimulus to the demand for control. Between the two, however it may be accomplished, lies the political transformation of the social structure.

The full report of the Coventry Conference on Workers' Control, including the papers submitted on the car, aircraft, mining, docks, buses and steel industries, can be ordered at 10s. a copy from Tony Topham, 1 Plantation Drive, Anlaby Park, Hull.

Workers' Control and education

A CONFERENCE PAPER

ANY CONFERENCE CONCERNED WITH WORKERS' CONTROL in industry must, however briefly, be concerned with those formative years before the young worker reaches the factory floor. Quite obviously a youngster who has already exercised his or her critical faculties to some effect, who has experienced the confidence-inducing process of making real decisions, will have far more to contribute to meaningful industrial democracy when he leaves school.

Schools in this and other lands usually manage to present a fairly faithful reflection of the industrial reality in that country. Even in 1943, the Norwood Report claimed "three types of minds" and the educational system was geared to produce the machine minders, the technicians, and the executive brains that the industrial structure demanded. In the days when industrial "discipline" was harsh, preparation for this atmosphere was achieved with the tauze and cane in school, and it is not mere coincidence that the more relaxed atmosphere in primary and secondary schools today is contemporary with the atmosphere of "participation" in industry so non-beloved of Messrs. Coates and Topham, but convenient for the "managed capitalism" hailed by the *New Statesman* as stumbling into Socialism.

For democrats the principle irony is that the teacher who is supposed to develop democracy and a critical sense among his pupils is himself too often subject to a tyranny which no group of industrial workers would tolerate. The history master who tells his class how

This is a paper circulated at the seminar on education at the Coventry Conference on Workers' Control.

Parliament, the Chartists, the Unions, and the Suffragettes have made them free citizens, has himself less freedom in his work than his pupils may anticipate in their future. The average headmaster in his own school wields more authority than many an industrial boss dare hope for. The nature of the job, practised in separate rooms, isolated from one's colleagues by the walls between and the children surrounding one, is not conducive to solidarity. The low basic pay and the number of small promotions sap the desire for individual independence. As soon as you start to teach you are wide open to criticism, and many a young teacher smarting under a Head's tongue lashing has had to choose between manhood or promotion. The fact that there has been no teachers' strike within living memory indicates how this choice has conditioned the entire profession. Democracy learned as a theory from such a source is obviously fit only for a concensus society. Nobody would argue that such a subject as children's education should be dominated by teachers alone. Parents, through their elected representatives, and advised by teachers, should define broad policy, but within these limits there is ample room for manoeuvre. Socialist teachers should seriously contemplate the abolition of the office of head teacher and principal assistant. There should be a staff meeting whose decisions formed the basis of school administration. The "Head" would be replaced by an elected chairman of the staff meeting, whose job would be to see to it that the decisions, democratically arrived at, were carried out. This office should be subject to periodic re-election and there should be a maximum period of time in which the office should be held by any one teacher.

It should carry no great increase in salary so that no one should feel the breeze when relinquishing the post. It might be politic to develop teaching grades so that promotion in salary could be obtained by inspection. This would obviate the ludicrous position where teachers work hard to reach the goal where the Head's study door closes behind them and they never teach another lousy class. Promotion for good teaching would lead to better opportunities for further teaching, not relegation to administration. Teachers now assured in the dignity of responsible freedom, and facing classes of a possible size, could welcome degrees of pupil democracy which would ensure to industry the responsible controlling workers of the future.

Those draughting this statement are aware of its incomplete nature and welcome criticism and amendment.

Towards a student syndicalist movement

CARL DAVIDSON

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, we have seen a variety of campus movements developing around the issue of "university reform". A few of these movements sustained a mass base for brief periods. Some brought about minor changes in campus rules and regulations. But almost all have failed to alter the university community radically or even to maintain their own existence. What is the meaning of this phenomenon? How can we avoid it in the future? Why bother with university reform at all?

It is a belief among SDS people that "all the issues are interrelated". However, we know far too little about the nature of that interrelationship. What is the connection between dorm hours and the war in Vietnam? Is there one system responsible for both? If so, what is the nature of that system? And, finally, how should we respond? These are the questions I will try to answer in the following analysis.

WHY UNIVERSITY REFORM?

We have named the system in this country "corporate liberalism". And, if we bother to look, its penetration into the campus community is awesome. Its elite is trained in our Colleges of Business Administration. Its defenders are trained in our Law Schools. Its apologists can be found in the Political Science Departments. The Colleges of Social Sciences produce its manipulators. For propagandists, it relies on the Schools of Journalism. It insures its own future growth in the Colleges of Education. If some of us don't quite fit in, we are brainwashed in the Divisions of

Counselling. And we all know only too well what goes on in the classrooms of the Military Science Building.

This condition takes on more sinister ramifications when we realize that all the functionaries of "private enterprise" are being trained at the people's expense. American corporations have little trouble increasing the worker's wage, especially when they can take it back in the form of school taxes and tuition to train their future workers. To be sure, many corporations give the universities scholarships and grants. But this is almost always for some purpose of their own, if only as a tax dodge.

Furthermore, the corporate presence on campus grotesquely transforms the nature of the university community. The most overt example is the grade system. Most professors would agree that grades are meaningless if not positively harmful to the learning process. But the entire manipulated community replies in unison: "But how else would companies know whom to hire (or the Selective Service whom to draft?)?" So we merrily continue to publicly subsidize testing services for "private" enterprise.

What we have to see clearly is the relation between the university and corporate liberal society at large. Most of us are outraged when our university administrators or their "student government" lackeys liken our universities and colleges to corporations. We bitterly respond with talk about a "community of scholars". However, the fact of the matter is that they are correct. Our educational institutions *are* corporations and knowledge factories. What we have failed to see in the past is how absolutely *vital* these factories are to the corporate liberal state.

What do these factories produce? What are their commodities? The most obvious answer is "knowledge". Our factories produce the know-how that enables the corporate state to expand, to grow, and to exploit more efficiently and extensively both in our own country and in the third world. But "knowledge" is perhaps too abstract to be seen as a commodity. Concretely, the commodities of our factories are the *Knowledgeable*. AID officials, Peace Corpsmen, military officers, CIA officials, segregationist judges, corporation lawyers, politicians of all sorts, welfare workers, managers of industry, labour bureaucrats (I could go on and on)—where do they come from? They are products of the factories we live and work in.

It is on our assembly lines in the universities that they are moulded into what they are. As integral parts of the knowledge factory system, we are both the exploiters and the exploited. As both managers and the managed, we produce and become the most vital product of corporate liberalism—bureaucratic man. In short, we are a new kind of scab.

But let us return to our original question. What is the connection between dorm rules and the war in Vietnam? Superficially, both are aspects of corporate liberalism—a dehumanized and oppressive system. But let us be more specific. Who are the dehumanizers and oppressors?

In a word, our past, present and future alumni—the finished product of our knowledge factories.

How did they become what they are? They were shaped and formed on an assembly line that starts with children entering junior high school and ends with junior bureaucrats in commencement robes. And the rules and regulations of *in loco parentis* are essential tools along that entire assembly line. Without them, it would be difficult to produce the kind of men that can create, sustain, tolerate, and ignore situations like Watts, Mississippi and Vietnam.

Finally, perhaps we can see the vital connections our factories have with the present conditions of corporate liberalism when we ask ourselves what would happen if: the military found itself without ROTC students; the CIA found itself without recruits; paternalistic welfare departments found themselves without social workers; or the Democratic Party found itself without young liberal apologists and campaign workers? In short, what would happen to a manipulative society if its means of creating *manipulative* people were done away with? We might find them have a fighting chance to change that system.

THE PRESENT IMPASSE

Most of us have been involved in university reform movements of one sort or another. For the most part, our efforts have produced very little. The Free Speech Movement flared briefly, then faded out. There have been a few dozen *ad hoc* committees for the abolition of this or that rule. Some of these succeeded, then fell apart. Some never got off the ground.

However, we have had some effect. The discontent is there. Although the apathy is extensive and deep-rooted, even the apathetic gripe at times. Our administrators are worried. They watch us carefully, have staff seminars on Paul Goodman, and study our literature more carefully than we do. They handle our outbursts with kid gloves, trying their best not to give us an issue.

We have one more factor in our favour; namely, we have made many mistakes that we can learn from. I will try to enumerate and analyze a few of them.

Forming Single Issue Groups. A prime example is organizing a committee to abolish dorm hours for women students over 21. This tactic has two faults. First, in terms of relevance, it is a *felt issue* for less than ten per cent of the average campus. Hence, it is almost impossible to mobilize large numbers of students around the issue for any length of time. The same criticism applies to student labour unions (only a few hundred work for the university), dress regulations (only the hippies are bothered) or discrimination in off-campus housing (most black college students are too bourgeois to care). The second fault is that most of these issues can be accommodated by the administration. For instance, after months of meetings, speeches and agitation, the Dean of Women changes the rules so a woman over 21 with parental permission

and a high enough grade average can apply, if she wants, for a key to the Dorm. Big Deal. At this stage, the tiny organization that worked around this usually folds up.

Organizing Around Empty Issues. Students often try to abolish rules that aren't enforced anyway. Almost every school has a rule forbidding women to visit men's apartments. They are also rarely enforced, even if openly violated. Since most students are not restricted by the rule, they usually won't fight to change it. Often they will react negatively, feeling that if the issue is brought up, the administration will have to enforce it.

OUR FEAR OF BEING RADICAL

Time and time again, we water down our demands and compromise ourselves *before we even begin.* In our meetings we argue the administration's position against us, both before they will and better than they will. We allow ourselves to be intimidated by the word "responsible". (How many times have we changed a Student Bill of Rights to a watered down "Resolution on Student Rights and Responsibilities"?) We spend more energy assuring our deans that we "don't want another Berkeley" than we do talking to students about the real issues.

Working Through Existing Channels. This really means, "Let us stall you off until the end of the year." If we listen to this at all, we ought to do it just once and in such a way as to show everyone that it's a waste of time.

Waiting for Faculty Support. This is like asking Southern Negroes to wait for White Moderates. We often fail to realize that the faculty are more powerless than we. They have the welfare of their families to consider.

Legal Questions. We spend hours debating among ourselves whether or not the university can legally abolish in loco parentis. They can if they want to; or, hopefully, if they have to. Besides, suppose it wasn't legal; should we then stop, pick up our marbles and go home?

Isolating Ourselves. Time and time again we fall into the trap of trying to organize independents over the "Greek-Independent split". This should be viewed as an administration plot to divide and rule. On the other hand, we shouldn't waste time trying to court the Greeks or "campus leaders". They haven't any more *real* power than anyone else. Also, SDS people often view themselves as intellectual enclaves on campus when we should see ourselves as organizing committees for the entire campus. We retreat to our own "hippy hideouts" rather than spending time in the student union building talking with others.

Forming Free Universities. This can be a good thing, depending on how it is organized. But we run the risk of the utopian socialists who withdrew from the early labour struggles. We may feel liberated in our Free Universities; but, in the meantime, the "unfree" university we left goes on cranking out corporate liberals. In fact, they have it easier since we aren't around making trouble.

Working with Student Government. We should do this for one and only one reason—to abolish it. We should have learned by now that student governments have no power, and, in many cases, the administration has organized them in such a way that it is impossible to use them to get power. (In a few cases, it might be possible to take over a student government and threaten to abolish it if power isn't granted.)

From the nature of the above criticisms of our mistakes of the past few years, I think the direction in which we should move becomes more clear. Also, when we consider the fact that *our universities are already chief agents for social change in the direction of 1984,* I think we can see why it is imperative that we organize the campuses. However, I do not mean to imply that we ought to ignore organizing elsewhere.

TOWARD STUDENT SYNDICALISM

The Relevance of Participatory Democracy. In the above analysis (by no means original with me) of the university, we can find an implicit antagonism, or, if you will, a fundamental contradiction. Namely, that our administrators ask of us that we both participate and not participate in our educational system. We are told we must learn to make responsible decisions, yet we are not allowed to make actual decisions. We are told that education is an active process, yet we are passively trained. We are criticized for our apathy and our activity. In the name of freedom, we are trained to obey.

The system requires that we passively agree to be manipulated. But our vision is one of active participation. And this is the demand that our administrators cannot meet without putting themselves out of a job. That is exactly why we should be making it.

What Is To Be Done? Obviously, we need to organize, to build a movement on the campuses with the primary purpose of radically transforming the university community. Too often we lose sight of this goal. To every programme, every action, every position, and every demand, we must raise the question: How will this radically alter the lives of *every* student on this campus? With this in mind, I offer the following proposal for action.

(1) That SDS chapter organize a student syndicalist movement on its campus. I use the term "syndicalist" for a crucial reason. In the labour struggle, the syndicalist unions worked for industrial democracy and workers' control, rather than better wages and working conditions. Likewise, and I cannot repeat this often enough, the issue for us is "student control" (along with a yet-to-be-liberated faculty in some areas). What we do not want is a "company union" student movement that sees itself as a body that, under the rubric of "liberalization", helps a paternal administration *make better rules for us.* What we do want is a union of students where the students themselves decide what kind of rules they want or don't want. Or whether they need rules at all. Only this kind of student organization allows for decen-

tralization, and the direct participation of students in all those decisions daily affecting their lives.

(2) That the student syndicalist movement take on one of two possible structural forms—a Campus Freedom Democratic Party or a Free Student Union.

(a) *Campus Freedom Democratic Party.* This is possible on those campuses where the existing student government is at least formally "democratic" (i.e. One Student—One Vote). The idea is to organize a year-round electoral campaign for the purpose of educating students about their system; building mass memberships in dormitory and living area "precincts"; constantly harassing and disrupting the meetings of the existing student government (for instance, showing up *en masse* at a meeting and singing the jingle of the now defunct "Mickey Mouse" Club); and, finally, winning a majority of seats in student government elections. As long as the CFDP has a minority of the seats, those seats should be used as soapboxes to expose the existing body as a parody of the idea of government. It should be kept in mind that the main purpose of all the above activity is to develop a radical consciousness among *all* the students, in the *real* struggle yet to come against the administration.

What happens if a CFDP wins a majority of the seats? It should immediately push through a list of demands (the nature of which, and this is crucial, I will deal with later) in the form of a Bill of Rights and/or Declaration of Independence. The resolution should contain a time limit for the Administration (or Regents or whatever) to reply. If the demands are met, the students should promptly celebrate the victory of the revolution. If not, the CFDP should promptly abolish student government and/or set up a student government in exile. Secondly, the CFDP should immediately begin mass demonstrations; sit-ins in the administration buildings, in faculty parking lots, in maintenance departments, etc.; boycotts of all classes, and strikes of teaching assistants. In short, the success of these actions (especially when the cops come) will be the test of how well the CFDP has been radicalizing its constituency during the previous two or three years.

(b) *Free Student Union.* The difference between a FSU and a CFDP is mainly a tactical one. On many campuses existing student governments are not even formally democratic; but are set up with the school newspaper having one vote, the Inter-Fraternity Council having one vote, and so on. In a situation like this, we ought to ignore and/or denounce campus electoral politics from the word go. Instead, following the plan of the Wobblies, we should organize One Big Union of all the students. The first goal of the FSU would be to develop a counter-institution to the existing student government that would eventually embrace a healthy majority of the student body. It would have to encourage non-participation in student government, and to engage in active non-electoral "on the job" agitation. This would take the form of sleep-outs, "freedom" parties in restricted apartments, non-

violently seizing the building housing IBM machines used to grade tests, campaigning to mutilate IBM cards, disrupting outsize classes, non-violently attempting to occupy and liberate the student newspaper and radio station, etc. All this should be done in such a manner as to recruit more and more support. Once the FSU has more support than student government (i.e. when its membership is a majority of the campus), it should declare student government defunct, make its demands of the administration; and, if refused, declare the general strike.

Obviously, the success of either a CFDP or a FSU depends upon our ability to organize a mass radical base with a capacity for prolonged resistance, dedication, and endurance. With this in mind, it is easy to see why such a student syndicalist movement must be *national* (or even international) in its scope. There will be a need for highly mobile regional and national full-time organizers to travel from campus to campus, there will be a need for sympathy demonstrations and strikes on other campuses. There may even be a need to send bus-loads of students to a campus where replacements are needed, due to mass arrests. Again, we can learn much from the organizing tactics of the Wobblies and the CIO.

(3) That the student syndicalist movement adopt as its primary and central issue *the abolition of the grade system.* This is not to say that the other issues, such as decision-making power for student governing bodies, are unimportant. They are not; and, in certain situations, they can be critical. But to my mind, the abolition of grades is the most significant over-all issue for building a radical movement on campus. There are other reasons why I think this is so:

(a) Grading is a *common condition* of the total student and faculty committee. It is the direct cause of the alienation of most faculty members from their work, in addition to being the direct cause of most student anxieties and frustrations. Among our better educators and almost all faculty, there is a common consensus that grades are, at best, meaningless, and more likely, harmful to real education.

(b) As an issue or organize around, the presence of the grade system is constantly felt. Hour exams, mid-terms, and finals are always cropping up (while student government elections occur only once a year). Every time we see our fellow students cramming for exams (actually, for *grades*), we can point out to them their exploitation and try to organize them. In every class we take, throughout the school year, every time our profs grade our papers and tests, we can agitate in our classrooms, exposing the system and encourage both our classmates and profs to join with us to abolish that system.

(c) The abolition of the grade system is a demand that cannot be met by the administration without radically altering the shape and purpose of our educational system. First of all, if there were no grades, a significant part of our administrators would be without jobs, for they would have nothing to do. Also, large mass-production TV classes and the like would have to be done away with. Since education would

have to be done through personal contact between the student and his professor, classes would necessarily be limited in size. Since the evaluation of a student's work would not have to be temporally regulated and standardized, independent scholarship would be encouraged, if not necessitated. As a result, the corporate system might have some difficulty in finding manipulable junior bureaucrats. Finally, the Selective Service System would have a hell of a time ranking us.

For these reasons, it is my feeling that the abolition of the grade system should serve as the umbrella issue for a student syndicalist movement, much as "the abolition of the wage system" served within the syndicalist trade union movement. Under this umbrella, a myriad of other issues can be raised, depending upon which segment of the student community we were appealing to and what degree of strength we might have at any one time.

(4) That the student syndicalist movement incorporate in secondary issues the ideology of participatory democracy. This can be viewed as an attempt on our part to sabotage the knowledge factory machinery for producing the managers and the managed of *1984*. There are numerous ways to go about this. I will list a few:

(a) Approach students in Teachers' Colleges with a counter-curriculum based on the ideas of Paul Goodman and A. S. Neill for the radical education of children.

(b) At the beginning of each semester, request (or demand) of the prof that you and your fellow classmates participate in shaping the structure, format, and content of that particular course.

(c) Sign up for, attend, denounce and then walk out of and picket excessively large classes.

(d) Organize students and liberated profs in certain departments to work out model counter-curriculae and agitate for their adoption, *mainly because students participated in shaping them*, rather than on their merits.

(e) Hold mock trials for the Dean of Men and Dean of Women for their "crimes against humanity".

(f) Women students might organize a decentralized federation of dormitory councils (soviets?) where each living unit would formulate a counter set of rules and regulations; and then use them to replace existing rules on the grounds that *the women themselves made the rules*.

I am sure that if we used our imaginations, we could extend this list indefinitely. And as programmes embodying the philosophy of participatory democracy, these suggestions, to my mind, are of intrinsic worth. However, I also believe that they might have far-reaching effects. For participatory democracy is often like a chronic and contagious disease. Once caught, it permeates one's whole life and the lives of those around us. Its effect is disruptive in a total sense. And within a manipulative bureaucratic system, its articulation and expression amounts to sabotage. It is my hope that those exposed to it, while building a movement for student syndicalism, will never quite be the same, especially after they leave the university community.

Desire and need

MURRAY BOOKCHIN

MARAT-SADE

MOST OF THE ARTICLES THAT HAVE BEEN WRITTEN thus far about the Marat-Sade play have been dribble—and the tritest remarks have come from its author, Peter Weiss. A good idea can slip from the hands of its creator and follow its own dialectic. This kept happening with Balzac, so there is no reason why it shouldn't happen with Weiss.

The play is mainly a dialogue between Desire and Need, a dialogue set up under conditions where history froze them into antipodes and violently opposed them in the Great Revolution of 1789. In those days, Desire clashed with Need: the one as aristocratic, the other as plebeian; the one as the pleasures of the individual, the other as the agony of the masses; the one as the satisfaction of the particular, the other as the want of the general; the one as private reaction, the other as social revolution. In our day, Marat and Sade have not been rediscovered; they have been reinterpreted. The dialogue goes on, but now on a different level of possibility and toward a final resolution of the problem: It is an old dialogue, but in a new context.

In Weiss's play, the context is an asylum. The dialogue can only be pursued by madmen among madmen. Sane men would have resolved the issues raised by the dialogue years ago. They would have resolved in practice. But we talk about them endlessly and we refract them through a thousand mystical prisms. Why? Because we are insane; we have been turned into pathological cases. Weiss, on this score, is only just: he places the dialogue where it belongs, in an asylum, where it is policed by guards, nuns, and an administrator. We are insane not only because of what we have done, but also because of what we haven't done. We "tolerate" too much. We tremble and cower with "tolerance".

How then are we to act? How, following the credo imputed to Marat, are we to pull ourselves up by the hair, turn ourselves inside out

MURRAY BOOKCHIN is a New York anarchist.

and see the world with fresh eyes? "Weiss refuses to tell us," says Peter Brooks in an introduction to the script and he trails off into talk about facing contradictions. But this doesn't carry any conviction. The dialogue, launched by its literary creator and by its stage director, has its own inner movement, its own dialectic. At Corday's third visit, Sade lasciviously displays her before Marat and asks: ". . . what's the point of a revolution without general copulation?" Sade's words are taken up by the mimes and then by all the "lunatics" in the play. Even Brooks cannot leave the answer alone. The ending of the play, equivocal in the script version, turns into a riotous bacchanal in the movie version. The "lunatics" overpower the guards, nuns, visitors, and administrator; they grab all the women on stage and everybody fucks like mad. The answer begins to emerge almost instinctively: the revolution that seeks to annul Need must enthrone Desire for everybody. Desire must become Need!

DESIRE AND NEED POLARIZED

Need—the need to survive, to secure the bare means of existence—could never have produced a public credo of Desire. It could have produced a religious credo of renunciation, to be sure, or a republican credo of virtue, but not a public credo of sensuousness and sensibility. The enthronement of Desire as Need, of pleasure principle as reality principle, is nourished as a *public* issue by the productivity of modern industry and by the possibility of a society without toil. Even the widely touted recoil of the Flower Generation from the verities of consumption, drudgery, and suburbia has its origin in the irrationalities of modern affluence. Without the affluence, no recoil. To state the matter bluntly: the revolutionary growth of modern technology has brought into question every historical precept that promoted renunciation, denial, and toil. It vitiates every concept of Desire as a privileged, aristocratic domain of life.

This technology creates a new dimension of Desire, one that completely transcends the notions of Sade, or for that matter, of the French symbolists, from whom we still derive our credos of sensibility. Sade's Unique One, Baudelaire's Dandy, Rimbaud's Visionary, each is an isolated ego, a rare individual, who takes flight from the mediocrity and unreality of bourgeois life into a hallucinated reverie. In spite of its high, anti-bourgeois spirit of negation, this ego remains distinctly privileged. Baudelaire, one of the most unequivocal of the symbolist writers, expresses its aristocratic nature with bluntness in his notion of Dandyism. The Dandy, the man of true sensibility, he tells us, enjoys leisure and is untroubled by need. This leisure is defined by the opposition of the Dandy to the crowd, of the particular to the general. It is anchored in the very social conditions that breed Marats and the Enrages of 1793—the world of need. Dandyism, to be sure, asserts itself against the existing elites, but not against elitism; against the prevailing privileges, but not against privilege. "Dandyism flourishes

especially in periods of transition," Baudelaire writes with acuity, "when democracy is not yet all-powerful and the aristocracy is just beginning to totter and decay. Amidst the turmoil of these times, a small group of men, *declasses*, at loose-ends, fed-up — but all of them rich in determination — will conceive the idea of founding a new sort of aristocracy, stronger than the old, for it shall be based on only the most precious, the most indestructible factors, on those heaven-sent gifts that neither money nor ambition can confer." The truth, however, is that its gifts are not Heaven-sent. This aesthetic elite floats on the surface of the social war, a richly ornamented debris that presupposes, objectively, the very aristocracy and bourgeoisie it rejects in spirit.

What, then, of the revolutionary movement—the movement that seeks to reach below the surface of the social war to its very depths? Characteristically, this movement almost completely dispenses with a credo of sensuousness. Marxism offers itself to the proletariat as a harsh, sobering doctrine, oriented toward the labour process, political activity, and the conquest of state power. To sever all the ties between poetry and revolution, it calls its socialism scientific and casts its goals in the hard prose of economic theory. Where the French symbolists form a concrete image of man, defined by the specifics of play, sex, and sensuousness, the two great exiles in England form an abstract image of man, defined by the universals of class, commodity, and property. The whole man—concrete and abstract, sensuous and rational, personal and social—never finds an adequate representation in either credo. This is tragedy in the Hegelian sense that both sides are right. In retrospect, it is only generous to add that the social situation of their time is inadequate to the complete fulfilment of man. Ordinarily it admits neither of the liberated personality nor the liberated society; its doors are closed to the free expression of instinct and the unfettered exercise of reason.

But the doors are never solid. There are moments when they, the walls, indeed the entire house is shaken to its foundations by elemental events. In such moments of crisis, when the senses of everyone are strained to extraordinary, almost hysterical acuity by social emergencies, the doors break down and men surge past the hanging portals, no longer as masses, but as awakened personalities. These men cannot be crucified on theoretical formulas. They acquire their reality in revolutionary action. The Paris Commune of 1871 represents precisely such a moment when neither aesthetic nor social theory adequately encompass the overall social situation. The proletarians of the Belleville district in Paris, the men who fight the battles of the barricades and die by the tens of thousands under the guns of the Versaillaise, refuse to confine their insurrection to the private world described by symbolist poems or the public world described by Marxian economics. They demand the eating and the moral, the filled belly and the heightened sensibility. The Commune floats on a sea of alcohol—for months everyone in the Belleville district is magnificently drunk. Lacking

the middle class proprieties of their instructors, the Belleville proletarians turn their insurrection into a festival of public joy, play, and solidarity. Perhaps it is foredoomed that the prose of bourgeois society will eventually digest the songs of the Commune, if not in an orgy of slaughter, then in the day to day retreats and compromises required by work, material scarcity, and social administration. Faced with a bloody conflict and a nearly certain defeat, the proletarians fling life away with the abandon of men who, having tasted of life in the open, can no longer return to the coffins of daily routine, drudgery, and denial. They burn down half of Paris, fighting suicidedly to the very last on the heights of their district.

In the Paris Commune of 1871, we have the expression not merely of social interest, but of social libido.* It is hard to believe that the repression following the fall of the Commune—the mass shootings, the ruthless trials, the exile of thousands to penal colonies—owes its savagery strictly to *class* vengeance. A review of the memoirs, newspapers, and letters of the time shows that the bourgeois directed his vengeance against his own subterranean humanity. In the spontaneous outburst of social libido which we call the Paris Commune, the bourgeois saw the breakdown of all the repressive mechanisms that maintain propertied society. He recoiled with the horror and ferocity of a man who suddenly comes face to face with his own unconscious drives.

THE SELF: MYTH AND REALITY

No one really learned from the proletarians of the Belleville district, with the result that Desire and the revolutionary credo developed away from each other. In separating, both were divested of their human content. The credo of Desire evaporated into a misty subjectivism, far removed from all social concerns; the credo of revolution hardened into a dense objectivism, almost completely absorbed in the techniques of social manipulation. The need to round out the revolutionary credo with Desire, or Desire with the revolutionary credo, remains a pressing, perhaps the most pressing, problem of our times. Serious attempts to achieve this totality were made in the 1920's, when the surrealists and Wilhelm Reich tried to resynthesize Marxism, and essentially to transcend it with a larger conception of the revolutionary project. Although this project did not suceed, it did not fail. All the issues were passed on to us, transformed by new dimensions of thought and by a new sense of immediacy produced by the technological advances of our time.

The obstacles to fulfilling this project have also changed. Years ago, the greatest single obstacle was the revolutionary credo. Marxism and particularly Leninism refocused the revolutionist's attention from social goals to political means, from utopia to strategy and tactics, from the dissolution of power to the seizure of power. Lacking a reasonably clear definition of its human goals, the organized revolutionary movement felt free to use any means at its disposal; its own opportunism quickly demoralized it and led to its dissolution as a vital force.

By far a greater obstacle to the project envisioned by the surrealists and Reich is a crude subjectivism that casts the rediscovery of man in self-discovery, in the journey inward. What is basically wrong with this subjectivism is not its emphasis on the subject, on the concrete individual; indeed, as Kierkegaard has emphasized, we have been overfed with the universals of science, philosophy, and sociology. The tragic error that vitiates modern subjectivism lies in its operating principle that the Self can be divorced from society, subjectivity from objectivity, consciousness from action. Ironically, this inner, isolated Self turns to be the most fictitious of universals, the most treacherous of abstractions, a metaphysical domain in which consciousness, far from expanding, contracts to banalities and trivia. Philosophically, its ultimate state is contact with pure being, a purity of experience and inner repose that adds up to nothing.* Its ultimate state, in short, is the dissolution of Desire into contemplation.

The fact is that the Self is not an inherent "it", a cryptic "soul" covered and obscured by layers of reality. This abstract Self remains an undifferentiated potentiality, a bundle of instinctual drives and individual proclivities at best, until it interacts with the real world. Without dealing with the world it is incapable not only of surviving; it simply cannot be *created* in any human sense. Neitzsche presents this externalized nature of the Self when he declares: ". . . your true nature lies not concealed deep in you, but immeasurably high above you, or at least what you call your self." *Valid* introspection turns out to be the conscious appropriation of a Self made and shaped by the world, a judgement of its qualities, and the actions needed to reconstitute it for new ends. This order of Self-consciousness reaches its height in revolutionary action. To revolt, to *live* revolt, is the complete reconstitution of the individual revolutionary, as far-reaching and as radical as (as the Commune of 1871 shows, even *more* radical than) the remaking of society. In the process of discarding accumulated experiences, of integrating and re-integrating new experience, a new Self grows out of the old. For this reason it is idiotic to predict the behaviour of people after a revolution by their behaviour before one. The simple fact is that they will not be the same people.

The modern cult of subjectivity exhibits a poverty not only of ends but also of means. If it is true that valid introspection must

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*Is it any different in other great revolutions? Can we resolve the anarchic, intoxicating phase that opens all the great revolutions of history merely into an expression of class interest and the opportunity to redistribute social wealth?

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*My concern with this philosophical aspect of subjectivism is due not only to the fact that it is advanced by cheap hucksters like Timothy Leary and a salad of Hindu Cagliostros, but by earnest and serious thinkers like Norman O. Brown. Cf. Brown's *Love's Body*.

culminate in action, in a reworking of the Self by experience with the real world, this reworking achieves a sense of direction only insofar as it moves from the *existent* to the *possible* reality, from the *what-is* to the *what-could-be*. Precisely this dialectic is what we mean by psychic growth. Desire itself is the *sensuous* apprehension of possibility, a complete psychic synthesis in the "yearning for. . . ." Without the pain of this dialectic, without the struggle that yields the achievement of the possible, growth and desire are divested of all differentiation and content. The very *issues* which provide a concept of the possible are never formulated. The real responsibility we face is not to eliminate the psychic pain of growth but rather the psychic suffering of dehumanization, the torment that accompanies the frustrated and aborted life.

The goal of modern subjectivism is stasis, the absence of all pain, the achievement of undisturbed repose. This stasis yields an all-embracing placidity that dissolves anger in love, action in contemplation, wilfulness in passivity. The absence of emotional differentiation means the end of real emotion. Confronted with the goal of insensate stasis, dialectical growth could justly demand any right to emotion—including the right to hate—all the more to reclaim a real state of sensibility, including the ability to love selectively. In the Orient, the miserable stasis hypostasized by the cult of subjectivism is attained, at least, by discipline, often by extreme psychic pain. The Western subjectivist, however, must have it both ways, a painless road to stasis, a short-cut to pure experience. In an age that describes its therapeutic agents as "magic bullets", the magical alternative to the discipline of the East is the chemistry of the West. These psychedelic drugs, taken as pattern-shattering *means,* could provide the distance that is indispensable to self-liberation from conventional "consciousness". But taken as experiential *ends,* as substitutes for living experience, reason, and the dialectic of ego-formation, they provide no real growth forward but merely "upward"—or downward. The trip, repeated continually *for its own sake*, degenerates into a mere pursuit of disordered subjectivity, divested of the possibility of interconnected emotional and rational sequela. The drugs are abused to a point where they not only shatter conventional patterns of the mind, but where they invade and distort the very processes of all ego formation. They become devices for mere sensation, for formless states of mind, often as grotesque as they are enjoyable. The apostle for this undifferentiated type of sensation is Marshall MacLuhan, whose fantasies of integral communication consist essentially of kicks and highs. Technique is degraded into ends, the message into the media. In the case of Leary, Desire dissolves into stasis; in the case of MacLuhan, into instrumentalism.

THE DISINTEGRATING SELF

The fact remains, nonetheless, that there can be no meaningful revolutionary credo that fails to include the subject in its point of departure. We have passed beyond a time when the real world can be

discussed without taking up in depth the basic problems and needs of the psyche—a psyche that is neither strictly concrete nor strictly universal, but both newly integrated and transcended. The rediscovery of the concrete psyche is the most valid contribution of modern subjectivism and Existentialism, to the revolutionary credo, albeit a psche that is partial, incomplete, and often tends to become abstracted. In an era of relative affluence when the system, as Marcuse puts it, can "deliver the goods," the revolution acquires intimate, intensely personal qualities. Revolutionary opposition tends to centre primarily around the disintegration in the quality of life, around the anti-life perspectives and methods of bourgeois society.

To put this matter differently, the revolutionist is created and nourished by the breakdown of all the great bourgeois universals: property, parsimony, class, free enterprise, industrial routine, political democracy, monogamy, family, patriarchalism, religion, *ad nauseum.* From all of this wreckage, the Self begins to achieve self-consciousness and Desire begins to recover its integrity. When the entire institutional fabric becomes unstable, when everyone lacks a sense of destiny, be it in job or social affiliations, the lumpen periphery of society tends to become its centre and the *declasses* begin to occupy the frontier of social and personal consciousness. It is for this reason that any work of art can be meaningful, today, only if it lumpenized.

The lumpen's Self is permeated by negativity, a reflection of the overall social negativity. Its consciousness is satyr-like and its mockery is acquired by its distance from the verities of bourgeois society. But this very mockery constitutes the Self's transcendence over the repressive ideologies of toil and renunciation. The lumpen's acts of disorder become the nuclei of a new order and his spontaneity implies the means by which it can be achieved.

Old Hegel understood this fact beautifully. In a brilliant review of Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, he writes: "The mocking laughter at existence, at the confusion of the whole and at itself, is the disintegrated consciousness, aware of itself and expressing itself, and is at the same time the last audible echo of all this confusion. . . . It is the self-disintegrating nature of all relations and their conscious disintegration. . . . In this aspect of the return to self, the vanity of all things is the self's own vanity, or the self is itself vanity . . . but as the indignant consciousness it is aware of its own disintegration and by that knowledge has immediately transcended it. . . . Every part of this world either gets its mind expressed here or is spoken of intellectually and declared for what it is. The honest consciousness (the role that Diderot allots to himself in the dialogue*) takes each element for a permanent entity and does not realize in its uneducated throughtfulness that it is doing just the opposite. But the disintegrated consciousness is

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*Diderot takes the role of the virtuous man, the petty bourgeois, engaged in a dialogue with Rameau's nephew, a Figaro-like scamp and pimp.

the consciousness of reversal and indeed of absolute reversal; its dominating element is the concept, which draws together the thought that to the honest consciousness lie so wide apart; hence the brilliance of its language. Thus the contents of the mind's speech about itself consist in the reversal of all conceptions and realities; the universal deception of oneself and others and the shamelessness of declaring this conception is therefore the greatest truth. . . . To the quiet consciousness (Diderot's role in the dialogue), which in its honest way goes on singing the melody of the True and the Good in even tones, i.e., on one note, this speech appears as 'a farrago of wisdom and madness . . .'"

Hegel's analysis, written more than a century and a half ago, anticipates and contains all the elements of the "absolute refusal" advanced so poignantly at the present time. Today, the spirit of negativity must extend to *all* areas of life if it is to have any content; it must demand a complete frankness which, in Maurice Blanchot's words, "no longer tolerates complicity". Anything less than complete, unrelenting opposition is assimilable by the established order. To lessen this spirit of negativity is to place the very integrity of the Self in the balance. The established order is totalistic: it stakes out its sovereignty not only over surface facets of the Self—work, physical environment, formal education, civic duties—but also over its innermost recesses. It demands complicity not only in appearances but also from the most guarded depths of the human spirit. It seeks to mobilize the very dream life of the individual, as witness the proliferation of techniques and art forms for manipulating the unconscious. It tries, in short, to gain command over the Self's sense of possibility, over its capacity for Desire.

DESIRE AND REVOLUTION

Out of the disintegrating consciousness must come the recovery, the reintegration, and the advance of Desire, a new sensuousness based on possibility. If this sense of possibility lacks a humanistic social content, if it remains crudely egotistic, then it will simply follow the logic of the irrational social order and slip into a vicious nihilism. In the long run, the choices confronting the modern bohemian—beat or hip—are not between a socially passive subjectivism and a politically active reformism (the prevailing society, as it moves from crisis to crisis, will eliminate these traditional luxuries), but between the reactionary extremism of the SS man and the revolutionary extremism of the anarchist.

Bluntly, to drop out is to drop in. There is no facet of human life that is not infiltrated by social phenomena and there is no imaginative experience that does not float on the data of social reality. Unless the sense of the *merveilleux,* so earnestly and so correctly fostered by the surrealists, is to culminate in death (a credo advanced with consistency, at least, by Villiers de L'Isle Adam in *Axel's Castle*), scrupulous honesty requires that we acknowledge the social roots of our dreams, our

imagination, and our poetry. The real question we face is *where* we drop in, *where* we stand in relation to the whole.

By the same token, there is nothing in the prevailing reality that is not polluted by the degeneration of the whole. Until the child is discharged from the diseased womb, liberation must take its point of departure from a diagnosis of the illness, an awareness of the problem, and a striving to be born. Introspection must be corrected by social analysis. Our freedom is anchored in *revolutionary* consciousness and culminates in *revolutionary* action.

But revolution can no longer be imprisoned in the realm of Need. It can no longer devolve on the prose of political economy. The task of the Marxian critique is finished and must be forever transcended. The subject has entered the revolutionary project with entirely new demands for experience, for re-integration, for fulfilment, for the *merveilleux*. To rephrase Pierre Reverdy's words: the poet now stands on the ramparts—not only as dreamer, but also as fighter. Stalking through the dream, permeating the surreal experience, stirring the imagination to entirely new evocative heights are the liberatory *possibilities* of the objective world. For the first time in history, object and subject can be rejoined in the revolutionary affinity group —the anarchic, revolutionary band of brothers. Theory and practice can be re-united in the purposive revolutionary deed. Thought and intuition can be merged in the new revolutionary vision. Conscious and unconscious can be integrated in the revolutionary revel. Liberation may not be complete—for us, at least—but it can be totalistic, implicating every facet of life and experience. Its fulfilment may be beyond our wildest visions, but we can move toward what we can see and imagine. Our Being is Becoming, not stasis. Our science is Utopia, our reality is Eros, our Desire is Revolution.

Observations on Anarchy 78: Liberatory Technology

FRANCIS ELLINGHAM

I WOULD LIKE TO RAISE TWO QUESTIONS about Lewis Herber's valuable article, "Towards a liberatory technology", in ANARCHY 78. First, despite all the new technological marvels he describes, does Mr. Herber really make out a clear and convincing case for the possibility of decentralization under conditions of advanced technology? Secondly, although he sets out to demonstrate "the liberatory potential of modern technology, both materially and spiritually", does he succeed in showing anything more than that modern technology can be liberatory in the purely material sense of eliminating toil?

In considering the economic feasibility of Mr. Herber's decentralized communities, it may be true that we need not think strictly in terms of financial profit and loss. But it is surely obvious that *any* community must be economically viable. Any community must, for example, be large enough to command a supply of such resources, both material and human, as are necessary to sustain its economy at the required pitch of technological development. A sophisticated modern industrial economy, so far advanced as to have eliminated the need for toil completely (which is Mr. Herber's aim), would necessarily consist of a vast complex of highly specialized industries, requiring supplies of many highly specialized materials, and also (even with maximum automation) a supply of highly trained scientists and technicians. Obviously a village of a few hundred inhabitants would be far too small to sustain such an economy. So would be a town of a few thousand inhabitants. And so would be a complex of half a dozen such towns. It is highly significant, I think, that nowhere in his article does Mr. Herber specify the exact size of his "small or moderate-sized" sovereign communities. He writes that "primary authority" would "belong to the popular assembly of the community, convened in a face-to-face democracy", which seems to imply a community of about the size of an ancient

Greek city-state. The idea that such a small community could, out of its own resources, maintain an advanced modern industrial economy seems utterly fantastic. Yet Mr. Herber actually states that the popular assembly would have "exclusive command over all the material resources of society" (p. 238).

True, Mr. Herber also writes: "I do not profess to claim that all of men's economic activities can be completely decentralized". But he never tells us precisely which activities would have to remain centralized, nor who would centralize and organize them, nor where the necessary supplies of materials and skilled manpower would come from, nor how many communities would have to share the products of any given centralized industrial organization. Nor does it seem to have struck Mr. Herber, that if his "small or moderate-sized" communities were economically dependent upon centralized industrial facilities, it could hardly be true that the face-to-face popular assembly in each community would have "exclusive command over all the material resources of society".

It seems obvious, then, that an extremely complex mode of material production is inconsistent with decentralization and democracy. Mr. Herber argues that much of the complexity of modern technological civilization, as we know it, "has its origin in the paperwork, administration, manipulation, and constant wastefulness of capitalist enterprise". But surely much of the complexity has its origin in modern technology itself. In his Reith Lectures, Professor J. K. Galbraith described in detail, for example, just how amazingly complex a modern productive organization, or corporation, can be—not because of capitalist wastefulness, but because, with increasingly sophisticated knowledge, each minute element of the productive task becomes the sole province of a particular technical specialist. Other specialists are required to combine the smallest elements into larger elements, and so on until final completion of the product. The task of organizing all these specialists may become so complex, that there may even have to be specialists on organization. Hence, in part, the great size of the modern large corporation.

Other technical reasons for its size (to follow Galbraith's argument further) are its need for a great deal of capital; its need to command supplies of highly specialized materials and highly specialized manpower for long periods of time; its need to reap the economic benefits of modern large-scale production; its need to control its markets; and its need, for all these reasons, to plan far ahead—sometimes four or five years ahead. As Galbraith himself sums it up: "The modern large corporation can be understood only as an adaptation to the needs of modern technology, related capital requirements and organization, and resulting planning." That is, you just cannot have modern technology without vast, complex productive organizations (and consequently a mass-market of consumers whose behaviour can be safely predicted for years ahead, if not actually manipulated by advertisers and other

mind-controllers). Moreover, as Galbraith also shows, even the modern large corporation, for all its size, cannot plan the economy of the community as a whole. But an economy composed of large corporations, with correspondingly large markets, *must* be planned as a whole—and so there has to be centralized control by the State. The total upshot of modern technology, then, is a large, highly regimented, monolithic community, as far removed from the small, democratic, decentralized community as one could possibly imagine.

The new machines and productive methods described by Mr. Herber —the miniaturized computers, the multi-purpose machine-tools, the small-scale steel-complex with electric furnaces, a planetary mill, and so forth—are surely no real solution. Who would train the highly specialized technicians needed to design, set up, and operate that steel-complex? Who would supply the capital, and the specialized materials and manpower, needed to manufacture those miniaturized computers—a type of product that has only been developed through decades of research and development by vast organizations inconceivable in a small city-state? The multi-purpose horizontal boring mill described by Mr. Herber was built for the Ford Motor Company—a vast corporation which in 1964 employed 317,000 people and had assets of approximately $6 billion, or about £2,200,000,000! True, even a highly sophisticated article like a computer, if mass-produced, can be made cheaply. But it would be absurd to look only at the cost of the individual mass-produced article, forgetting the fact that a large and complex organization, with all that that entails, was necessary to produce it at that cost. Mass-production means mass-organization and mass-marketing in a massive socio-economic unit. Surely there is no need to labour the point further.

My other question—whether Mr. Herber succeeds in showing that modern technology can be liberatory in any but a material sense—has already been answered, to a large extent, by the above considerations. Mr. Herber argues that advanced technology can "humanize society" by making decentralization possible, and thereby reducing to "human" dimensions the scale of economic and social organization. If that argument is in fact unsound, most of his case for the "spiritual", "humanizing" potentialities of modern technology collapses. There is, however, one other idea that seems to permeate Mr. Herber's thinking, which requires a brief answer. I mean the idea that somehow or other material liberation from toil and want can, by itself, lead to spiritual improvement and the humanization of men's relationships. For example, he writes that modern technology could eliminate the "denial, suffering and inhumanity exacted by a society based on scarcity and labour" (p. 237)—as if the elimination of scarcity and labour would necessarily produce a diminution, if not the elimination, of inhumanity. But there is no evidence that the poor and hard-working are ipso facto more inhumane than the rich and leisured. And surely the truth about spiritual liberation, as the world's great spiritual teachers, from Laotse

and Socrates to Krishnamurti, have all pointed out, is that it depends, not on technological sophistication (which is quite unnecessary if not a hindrance), but on the purely psychological factors of self-knowledge, awareness, understanding, and love.

and some further observations

D. R. KIPLING

LIBERATORY TECHNOLOGY, WHAT IS THIS? One might as well talk of liberatory water-closets, liberatory psychiatry, or liberatory mass-communication media. I would suggest that these are not autonomous, self-determining entities. They are "things" occurring in the human world, brought about by man's activities; "things" only merit adjectives (like liberatory) when the nature and consequence of their use by man come within a defined area to which man has attached a descriptive term.

Lewis Herber discussed existing and future technology. Personally, I enjoyed reading the neatly-condensed review of modern technical practice; right up my street, thank you. But I fail to see why Mr. Herber bundles together some choice aspects of our machine age, and suggests that these are desirable, liberatory, and the key to happy social living. There is nothing inherently "good" or "liberatory" in the oxygen lance or the self-regulating rolling mill, any more than there is anything "erotic" or "nocturnal" or "dehumanising". It is as foolish to say that the steam engine is freedom giving, as to endorse Luddite opinion that it is enslaving. It is neither, it is just a steam engine.

Technology is evolved and used by man. Today, he uses it (as he uses other disciplines such as education, politics, law) to serve and maintain the existing way of living. This way of living does not come within the sphere of conditions described by the term liberatory. It matters not a jot that a vastly-improved cybernetic device or a wonder chemical be produced tomorrow. Just like the ones produced yesterday, they will be annexed by those having the power to do so, and used to

perpetuate the existing order. While I probably share a degree of enjoyment, with Mr. Herber, in learning of nuts and bolts and their uses, I cannot look at a particularly brilliant design and think "this is so good a piece of engineering, it has the potential to liberate me and my fellow men". It has no such potential. It has nothing at all, until I switch it on, or otherwise assume control of it. Suppose "it" is a novel and truly advanced mode of propulsion; will "it" bring free transport to the people, will "it" carry goods hither and thither at speed and cheaply? "It" will do nothing until I (being the one in a position to decide on and implement its use) choose to do something with it, something in my own interests. What if my name is Wilson, LBJ, or Hitler? Liberatory . . . ?

Explosives, rocket and jet engines, steel-making, automation, the Press, psychiatry, all discovered or evolved by the fertile human brain. All just processes, objects, or studies waiting to be put to use. One might have hopefully greeted the arrival of each with cries of "liberation". But the one who rejoices thus is rarely the one who controls the political and economic processes that predetermine, by their nature, the most expedient use for a new idea.

As long as one man is master over another, no process, no substance, no device, no living trend, no programme of human studies, will be graced by the noble term "liberatory". Anarchists will be able to read that first phrase: "As long as one man agrees to submit himself to domination by another . . .", and see that liberation isn't going to issue from any man-made "thing" ("things" aren't what freedom is all about). It's going to issue from you and me and him and her.

Let's not look at external events, trends, movements, sciences, and make fools of ourselves by solemnly naming a hunk of metal "liberatory". Let's liberate Us.