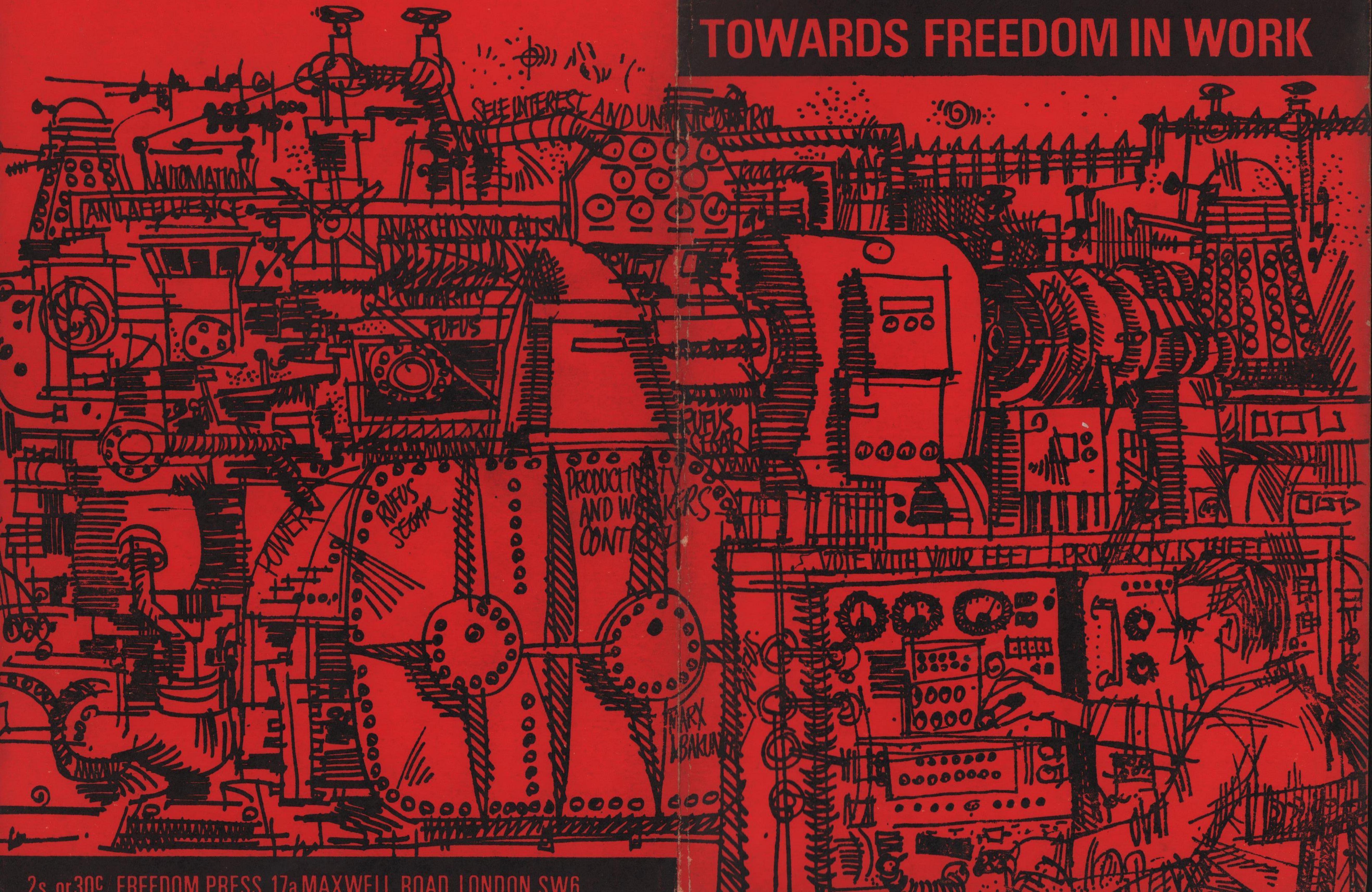


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# ANARCHY 47

JAMES GILLESPIE

## TOWARDS FREEDOM IN WORK





We asked a well-known authority on industrial management to initiate a discussion of freedom in work. This issue is devoted to his views. We would like readers to pursue the subject from an anarchist point of view and to let us have their opinions by March for publication in a subsequent issue.

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## Editor's note

JAMES GILLESPIE'S ESSAY IS NOT LIKELY TO PLEASE EVERYONE! Most managers will regard his ideas as a threat to their right to manage. Industrial workers will view them as the sales-talk of industrial conciliation. Industrialists will see him as an anarchist, and anarchists will see him as an apologist for half-measures. But to categorise him in this way would be to miss the point of his arguments.

If anyone can claim to have seen manufacturing industry from every angle, it is the author of this essay. He has been a thirteen-year-old labourer, apprentice machine-hand, time-study man, shop steward, strike leader, works manager and management consultant. In this last capacity he has written a number of books on industrial organisation: *Training in Foremanship and Management*, *Dynamic Time and Motion Study*, *Engineering Reorganisation*, *Foundry Organisation and Management*, *Production Efficiency Manual for Trade Unionists*, *Principles of Rational Management*, and *Free Expression in Industry*.

The last of these books was so radical and original in its approach to the question of industrial management that it virtually ended its author's career as a consultant. Firms were unwilling to pay for the advice of a man whose opinions were unacceptable to them because they challenged all their preconceptions about the role of managers and the rights of workers. There were, however, exceptions. A handful of manufacturers in the Birmingham area adopted Gillespie's "free group theory" and attempted to apply it in their works. When I met one of these Birmingham industrialists—an active socialist and Quaker, not a typical manufacturer, certainly, he was full of enthusiasm at the way in which the adoption of Gillespie's suggestions had changed the whole atmosphere of his factory. Mr. Gillespie touches on this experience in his essay, and it is to be hoped that a full account of it will be published.

The idea of "industrial democracy" has taken many forms over the last hundred years—varying from schemes of co-partnership and co-ownership, which as Mr. Gillespie points out "seldom have more than a superficial effect if unaccompanied by individual direct involvement in the managing process", to the plans of the Guild Socialists for national guilds and the demands of the syndicalists for workers' control.

Taken at face value, all these aspirations have failed, in that they have not changed the structure of industry in this country. Fifty years ago in their paper "Why the Self-Governing Workshop Has Failed", Sidney and Beatrice Webb attributed this failure not to any defects in the characters of the people involved, nor even to lack of adequate capital, but to three leading disadvantages which they saw in practically all the then recorded experiments: "The group of workmen who make a particular commodity, though they may know all the technical processes of their industry, do not seem able, when they control their own enterprise, to secure in a high degree, either (i) adequate workshop discipline, or (ii) the requisite knowledge of the market, or (iii) sufficient



alacrity in changing processes". The Webbs regarded these factors as inherent drawbacks rather than as "accidental or remediable defects", and they thought that the future of this kind of experiment lay in associations of producers working for a "tied" market of associations of consumers which provided capital and was represented on the committee of management. (In other words the relationship which exists between those co-operative co-partnerships federated in the Co-operative Productive Federation and certain retail co-operative societies.)

Similarly the efforts of syndicalist movements to propagate workers' control as a revolutionary objective have always met with the dilemma which Geoffrey Ostergaard summed up in the words: "To be effective as defensive organisations the unions needed to embrace as many workers as possible and this inevitably led to a dilution of their revolutionary objectives. In practice, the syndicalists were faced with the choice of unions which were *either* reformist and purely defensive *or* revolutionary and largely ineffective."

But in spite of every discouraging experience, the idea which some call "industrial democracy", and others call "workers' control", and which Mr. Gillespie would call "free work in fellowship", does not die. Every aspect of this aspiration still has its advocates and eager experimenters—whether in the form of independent workers who want to build it from the bottom up, or of enlightened employers who are as much interested in making things as in making profits, or of trade unionists who are anxious to put the idea of workers' control back on the agenda.

What distinguishes the modern discussion of this issue is a certain sobriety of tone which forswears the luxury of revolutionary rhetoric in order to concentrate on the actual steps forward in the present situation. One aspect of this is the increasing advocacy of the "collective contract system" some examples of which are discussed by Mr. Gillespie, and another is the revival of the notion canvassed in the first two decades of this century by the syndicalists and guild socialists of "encroaching control". Thus in reporting the Nottingham conference, Tony Topham notes that "there were too many preliminary problems of definition and understanding, for an agreed set of specific demands for encroaching control to be formulated, though there were many references to such things as the right to hire and fire, the right to determine speed of work, the right to control expenditure and policy in welfare and safety matters, etc."<sup>1</sup> The American writer Daniel Bell has stressed the same aspect: "If there is any meaning to the idea of workers' control, it is control—in the shop—over the things which directly affect his work-a-day life: the rhythms, pace, and demands of work; a voice in the setting of equitable standards of pay; a check on the demands of the hierarchy over him."<sup>2</sup> Or as Ken Alexander puts it more positively, "And it is from workers' desire to change the character of their lives—working

<sup>1</sup> Tony Topham: "Conference Report" *The Week* 30/7/64.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Bell: *The End of Ideology* (1960).

and leisure—that the motive power for social change must come. The Guild Socialist policy of "encroaching control" indicates how industrial action, economic power exercised by workers, can be used to set in motion basic changes in industrial organisation and indeed in society. 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 aims 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, most important, the extent to which the nature of their work already compels the workers to exercise some control."<sup>3</sup>

Another of the dominant themes discussed at Nottingham was the failure to advance beyond the normal capitalist methods of industrial management in the nationalised industries. "There was unanimous agreement on the need to press with utmost vigour for the democratisation of the existing nationalised industries. This general position was developed in one of the working groups which, in its report back, urged the need for legislation to give executive powers to the consultative machinery in the mining industry, as a first step". On this topic, Mr. Robert Best, whose experiments in the "free group method" are described in the following pages by James Gillespie, writes:

Before 1945 we all thought that if industry came under Common Ownership workers would participate in the fullest sense of the word, and would feel that the nationalised industries really belonged to them. It is almost a truism to say that this has not happened. But what is tragically strange is that at no time has there been any evidence of a strong desire, on the part of our socialist leaders, for experiment and change. Even when there was a national Labour government it was quite clear that those at the top just weren't thinking along these lines at all. And now . . . where are we? Read this from the latest Fabian Tract, *Nationalised Industries in the Mixed Economy*: "The Webbs, discussing nationalisation, called for a searchlight of published information. All too often the information published by nationalised industries resembles smoke screens rather than searchlights". Or "The fact remains that no new forms of industrial democracy have been thrown up in our nationalised industries, there is no change in the basic commodity status of labour and the wage system".

Just think what an opportunity for experimentation has been missed. Experiment in one or two pilot schemes would have proved beyond any doubt that participation is not only humane but, in the long run, efficient.

But really this authoritarian resistance to real participation on the part of managers, chairmen, secretaries, big business bosses, trade union leaders, politicians and others is so well documented that I must apologise for stressing it now.

Still there it is—and that brings me to the *obstacles* to sharing power and responsibility. They are formidable. Participation takes time. In the short run authoritarian leadership *looks* more efficient. Many people like power for its own sake and for the status it brings. Furthermore some of the managers are now using the knowledge of the social psychologists to *manipulate* groups . . .<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Alexander: "Power at the Base" in *Out of Apathy* (1960).

<sup>4</sup> Robert D. Best: *Sharing Power, Thought and Responsibility* (Birmingham Fabian Society 1961).



Mr. Best's reference to the dangers of manipulation brings us to an important point raised at the Nottingham conference by Ray Collins, in commenting on the conclusions to be drawn from Seymour Melman's *Decision-Making and Productivity*:

It is interesting to note how some American sociologists characterise the arrangements described by Melman. Blau and Scott in their book *Formal Organisations* warn against the dangers of "pseudo-democracy" in the context of a discussion about what we might call non-hierarchical methods of management. They urge that allowing scope for initiative and decision-taking does not amount to democracy unless the most basic decisions about operations are made by workers. They then go on to state that management by the use of "impersonal mechanisms" does not involve any assumptions about democracy. As an example of such impersonal control mechanisms they cite Melman's account of the gang system at Standard Motors, which, they say, "reduced the need for supervision because work-group pressures assured a high level of productivity". In short you get the workers to apply the whips to themselves! To be quite fair, however, there should be less danger of managerial manipulation in this situation precisely because of the collective bargaining situation in which the gang system has been worked out. This only emphasises how dangerous "self-control"; "worker participation" etc., could be in the absence of unions at the place of work. Here we have to meet the criticism of writers such as Clegg that systems such as that obtaining in Yugoslavia do not appear to measure up to collective bargaining in their protection of workers' rights.

He is right of course, and no modern advocate of "industrial democracy" suggests that it does away with the traditionally defensive role of the trade unions, which provide the best safeguard against the dangers of a worker participation system being exploited by manipulative managements, and would still be required in the most thorough-going system of "workers' control" that can be conceived. Melman himself, in the study referred to, differentiates between the "predatory competition" which characterises management and the "mutuality" of the workers:

Within the management hierarchy the relationships among the subsidiary functionaries are characterised primarily by predatory competition. This means that position is gauged in relative terms and the effort to advance the position of one person must be a relative advance. Hence one person's gain necessarily implies the relative loss of position by others. Within the workers' decision system the most characteristic feature of the decision-formulating process is that of mutuality in decision-making with final authority residing in the hands of the grouped workers themselves.

What Melman calls "mutuality" and Gillespie calls "fellowship" are at the heart of the argument of the following pages. As Gillespie says, "our economic culture rewards some of the worst of human characteristics and penalises some of the best, in the running of the economic rat-race". This is why he vehemently opposes incentive payment schemes like individual piecework which have the effect of reducing group solidarity and increasing predatory competition. A change here, to Gillespie, is fundamental.

If you don't think his arguments are relevant, read the chapters on the Ford works in Graham Turner's *The Car Makers*, where a shop-steward says of his fellow-workers: "They'll cut each other's throats for an hour's overtime".

## Towards freedom in work

JAMES GILLESPIE

THE HEART OF THIS ESSAY is the idea of free work in fellowship, and it can be illustrated simply from the practice:

In an electrical components factory we had trouble planning for smooth flow of components and balancing of operations. Output varied considerably from one operator to another. Monday's output was some 25% lower than output on Thursday which was the closing day of the bonus week, and work discipline was only fair. After some study a group bonus system was designed and the outline, meaning and purpose of this was put to the group which was then left to discuss it among its members, (free group discussion). The girls agreed to have a trial and they were then invited to check the base times set per operation, (group participation in method). The system was introduced with the quick result that the group members so organised themselves that the flow of work was greatly improved, discipline improved as a result of internal group controls, and output increased by about 12% over that previously attained under the individual piecework system. (Here the group took over the local management function of internal work progressing and, more important, that of local man-management).

But interesting though the figures given are, the heart of the matter for me was in the group's attitude to a girl called Mary, whose output, I pointed out, was some 16% lower than the group average. I was met with the antagonistic group rejoinder that Mary was a nice girl. This profoundly true evaluation by the group of the worth of qualities like kindness and goodness cuts across the motivational fabric of our modern culture, and it is a statement of values I have found in nearly all small groups who work closely together. I knew that Mary was unwittingly the "group psychiatrist", but were I a poet it would take an epic pen to tell that here was a guiding candlelight in the dark wasteland of our

*This essay is dedicated to my wife Edna who for thirty-five years has been the soil of my growing.*



materialist culture. In terms of production efficiency, individual cost, and export-import balance, Mary is a dead loss whose virtues are not entered in the commercial statistician's reports; but the Mary's are the symbols of the riches of small community living in which goodness and kindness are highly rewarded, whereas our economic culture highly rewards individualist acquisitiveness and egocentric power and status seeking. In terms of individualistic costing, based on individualist incentive schemes, the Mary's are a costly burden, but in terms of overall group efficiency, Mary was a lubricant factor without which the group could not, would not, have reached and maintained its state of high productive effectiveness. This effectiveness was a result of a situation in which the group shared work and the reward of work with encouragement of co-operation and mutual aid, and with group acclaim of individual material and spiritual contributions.

We use the social-psychological term "group", but our little group was more than an economic group dominated by economic self-interest. Because the group members consciously recognised the whole worth of each person in the group, there was a fellowship (*communis*), or, it may be said, a fellowship group. Later it will be shown that free work and fellowship are the twin components of individual growth towards personal maturity.

Tens of thousands of kind-hearted Mary's are victims of our materialist culture which offers high rewards for some of the basest of human characteristics and penalises some of the best through the stupified attachment of both managers and managed to individualistic ratings and rewards:

Sweet Mary your production's poor,  
Just dry your tears and go,  
For speed and greed are rated high,  
But love-for-others, no.  
Christ! Where's the electrician?  
Our lamps are burning low!

The illustration given describes in simple form the group contract system in which the group shares work and the rewards of work, and has a share in decision-making within the local work environment, a function which hitherto was in the sole field of management. The illustration also touches on the free or informal group discussion system which has been in use during the past fifteen years in a number of companies, and in which decision-making is shared on a wider level than in the group contract system.

### Man Citizen and Man Worker

Decision-making, according to orthodox management theory is the sole function of management; why is it, then, that the primary or non-managing worker is not a significant decision-maker in work life, but in social life is a responsible citizen who, when he votes for who shall

represent him at local and national level, shares in decision-making in a cogent manner? Why is it, too, that in work life the chief dependence is on money rewards and penalties to gain behaviour which is conformist to the economic code of laws, whereas in social life, the large majority of laws are unwritten and dependence for their operation is on free consent or morale in the part of the citizen? True, the state is limiting the field of citizen free decision-making, citizen free choice, as centralised planning increases, but it is nevertheless true that man-worker and man-citizen is split schizophrenic-wise in a manner which inevitably makes for antagonism between work life and leisure life, and degrades both. Man-worker is work conscious (class conscious?), but as work life is the important, money-earning aspect of living, man-citizen occupies a secondary position and his work-consciousness enters strongly into social life with consequent "anti-social behaviour that seems like blackmail" but, at root, is likely to be unconscious healthy protest against a schizophrenic role in the community.

Now, there is a school of apologist thought which suggests that responsible industrial democracy is at work when opposition takes place between trade unions and employers in collective bargaining (1). This plausible theory has, it seems, considerable support at executive level within the trade unions, but it is really a kind of verbalism; for while free opposition is a characteristic of democracy, so also is dependence on individual citizen morale and the spread of individual decision-making at the bottom as well as at the top of the social structure. A worker who is trained to sit correctly in a chair designed to promote maximum output, to move his left arm so and his right arm thus, who is clocked in and out of the works and the lavatory while engaged on continuous, repetitive production in which there is no decision-making, is certainly not playing a responsible citizen role, even though he has big brother arguing against his employer on hours of work and wages. Dependence on big brother manager and big brother trade union executive is equally neurotic in a situation in which planning is for material advantage and not also for self-respect.

However, this matter of our schizoid culture and of planning for everything but self-respect was dealt with many years past in *Free Expression in Industry* (2) and there is no need to labour it here.

### Management or Leadership in Work?

There is a quaint idea among management consultants and other experts that management incorporates leadership. Indeed, in all modern books on management this wishful notion is cultivated. Thus a recent book called *The Business of Management* (3) makes the statement that management and leadership are complementary, "but they are not the same thing". In this, as in the appropriate literature, ideas on leadership are hazy; "it is an art that is timeless . . . it is of the spirit . . . etc.", but whatever leadership is, it is "an element in management". Three definitions, the second and third from political science, may help to clear



the air:

**Management:** Management is a (socially necessary) activity expressed in the science and art of directing, organising and controlling material and human factors within the work institution with a view to effective and profitable results. (No-one, I think, will quarrel with this orthodox definition of management; the "art" mentioned is the art of leadership).

**Leadership:** Leadership is a power activity in which the leader and the led identify internally with each other (a "we" feeling) and the leader uses his power in a manner which accords with the wishes and expectations of the led.(4)

Management (apart from the situation when one man is both policy-maker and manager) is an agency for its principals who are the top policy-makers who enforce economic policy and reward or penalise management in terms of results. An agent always identifies with his principal, even when the identification is only external and is expressed in formal loyalty. He acts in conformity with the purpose and policy of his principal. Make no mistake, it is not said here that all managers identify internally with their principals (a "we" feeling), although formal allegiance at least is expected. But if management identifies with its principals, as it must, where is the supposed identification between primary workers and managers? Is there really a "we" feeling between management and managed? Is it not, rather a "we-they" feeling?

**Boss-ship:** Boss-ship is a power activity which, though it may conform to the economic formula, is lacking in two-way identification and may not include the respect and loyalty of those who are bossed. Boss-ship may be expressed in *mastership* or *skillship*, in *fixership* or capacity to gain conformity by negotiation, indulgencies, rewards and penalties, and in whole or partial *dictatorship*, or all three (4).

By definition, management is boss-ship when management is orthodox, and the confusion about leadership and management comes from the association of leadership with skillship and fixership. It may be said that political science has nothing to do with management and, in any case, business could not be run with the defined leadership. The economy is part of the body politic even though it has its own formula, and leadership is leadership just as a rose is a rose. In fact, when I was a shop steward I had the kind of two-way identification spoken of in the leadership definition, and when I was a manager I had to identify with the policy-makers and not with the primary workers. When the trade union leader meets the managing director, or the local supervisor meets the shop or union steward, who is then the leader?

A new definition of orthodox management is in order:

**Management:** Management is skilled power activity expressed in the direction, organisation and control of human and material factors with a view to effective, profitable results on behalf of the principals, public or private, with whom management tends to identify when carrying out the economic aims of their principals.

Management, though it has yet to be admitted in the literature, is a

power activity. Power is the production of intended effects (5). Professor Tawney's definition deals with power in a human situation, for management is a kind of power relationship between human beings. Tawney says:

"Power may be defined as the capacity of an individual, or group of individuals, to modify the conduct of other individuals or groups in the manner which he (the power-holder) desires". (6)

It is clear that management is a power activity, but what is not made clear in the literature is that the power is not given by those lead as in leadership, but is granted to management by the economic formula which makes the power legal and is endowed by existing power holders within the business hierarchy. Thus management's power at root is formal authority.

Authority does not depend only on the economic formula which gives it legal sanction; it depends on allegiance or formal loyalty from those over whom authority is wielded. The authority, as I have said, is legal, and to have legality is to win allegiance (but not identification) in the minds of the majority of people, given other things are equal.

Authority has small real power, but the prestige of the person holding authority is an important factor. "Even a nod from a person who is esteemed", said Plutarch, "is of more force than a thousand arguments". Wealth, status and technical skills are attributes which tend to increase the weight of authority, and it is on these that orthodox management must on the whole depend, if outright coercion is not to be the rule. But, to repeat, the gaining of formal allegiance through external identification with authority itself, or with this or that attribute of the person holding authority, is not leadership.

The experts, economic and psychological, who have had this point of view on leadership in work put to them have, without exception, hotly rejected it. This rejection is understandable in view of the hundreds of books and the many educational courses on management which have promoted, and still promote, the idea that orthodox management and leadership of human beings are in some mystical manner twin functions. But in our analysis of human leadership there is no rejection of management and the necessity for management; rather, there is advanced the idea that the management structure be designed to integrate the human leadership function with technological and commercial functions in a manner later to be described.

### Management's Work Doctrine

Management doctrine, as with other political and economic doctrines, serves to justify the holders of power and those of the group or class with which the power-holders identify (4).

Some of the doctrinal assumptions are:

1. That leadership is a component of orthodox management activity. (This we have examined.)
2. That management is or can be a professional body with an ethical code independent of the code of the policy-making group which employs



management as agent and with which management necessarily identifies. The latter part of the foregoing sentence contains the answer to the first part.

3. That the orthodox management process and structure is the best possible and there is no reasonable alternative.

4. That the decision-making process is by right and, in terms of business efficiency, the sole prerogative of management, (i.e. the managers-must-manage philosophy of the Harvard Business School, the methods of which are being humbly copied in British business schools.)

The matter of whether there is a reasonable alternative to orthodox management process and structure remains to be examined, but that decision-making is the sole prerogative of management is questionable.

It has been shown that management is a skilled power activity. Power is decision-making or participation in the making of decisions. A has power over B with respect to value C, when A participates in decision-making affecting the C policy of B (4). In other words, the manager has power over a non-managing worker (or a subordinate manager) in respect of money when the manager decides that the bonus reward for a certain job, which the managed-one does to earn money, is so much money. Likewise, a manager exhibits power when he decides to move Bill from the job Bill likes to another job which Bill doesn't like. This is power with respect to a man's desires and feelings.

In his book *Decision-making and Productivity*, Professor Melman, as will later be shown, indicates factually how foolish is the management doctrine that the managers must manage, (7), as does Professor Lickert in his *New Patterns of Management* (8). But the change from centralised decision-making to shared decision-making is not easy. For the holders of power, if they are not enlightened by mature insight, tend to hold on to their power. As Lord Acton said, "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely".

I like the philosopher Roger Bacon on the effect of power on man, (I will misquote slightly): "Man doeth like the ape, the higher he goeth the more he showeth his ass". Power is of an encroaching nature, or, as the political scientist Michels put it:

"Every human power seeks to enlarge its prerogatives. He who has acquired power will almost always endeavour to consolidate and to extend it, to multiply the ramparts which defend his position, and to withdraw himself from the control of the masses". (9)

Part of the management doctrine has to do with work, but, it should be said, the idea of work held by management is that held by management is that held by the majority of people:

1. Work is effort applied for the material values which income from work will buy. (Economic theory.)

There is a corollary to this definition of work and this comprehends the notion of economic man:

1a. A whole man can wholly be bought for money and money incentives.

Many managers will rightly reject the corollary out of hand, but on the whole, judging in terms of economic techniques, the corollary

expresses economic doctrine. It is true that some men will sacrifice money for status, but not willingly in the following case of the loyal forty-years service clerk who went to the boss in a woollen mill for a rise from £1 a week. In those days the top men in the woollen trade wore top hats, and the boss replied, "Ah wain't gie thee a rise Nathan, but that has been a guid and faithful servant so on Monday tha can come ti wark in a top 'at."

If we compare other definitions of work with that given above we will find ourselves leaving the concealing smoke of economic work, and breathing a sweeter air:

2. Work is prayer; prayer is work. (St. Benedict).

3. I pray with the floor and the bench. (Hasidic Judaism).

4. Labour is the great reality of human life. In labour there is a truth of redemption and a truth of the constructive power of man. (Berdyayev).

5. Laying stress on the importance of work has a greater effect than any other technique of reality living. (Freud).

6. Work and love are the two chief components in the growth of mature personality in community. (Erich Fromm).

Although our stress is on the psychological value of work, as in Freud, Fromm and others, it would be pleasing if we had more room to develop a work philosophy and to quote the poets' work visions, the fine work philosophy in the Hindu *Bhagavat Gita* (Gandhi's Karma Yoga), Zen Buddhism, which somewhat parallels Benedictine work practice, Chinese neo-Confucianism which affirms the Tao or Way as that of drawing water and gathering wood, and as the marriage of the sublime and the commonplace, and the respect for the common task in Isaiah, Deuteronomy and Ecclesiastes: "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour".

But there is small joy in work within the work institution, for work is an enforced means to earning money; and how can the soul enjoy good in its labour when there is no soul in the places where labour is organised? But these are big, if somewhat odd thoughts, which have as yet no echo in the work institution, for to equate work with fellowship, with love, with the liberated vitality of the artist of which Morris, Ruskin, Kropotkin and others speak, is to be met with the hidden smile behind the polite hand, or with a psychiatric diagnosis. Once I attacked what is now called "work study" in one of my books (10) and quoted Plato. "What", a reviewer of the American edition asked, "Has Plato to do with work?" What indeed?

Yet there is joy in work when the task is a man's own; when he is not ant-heaped in a monstrous tall flat which shrinks him to less than man-size, but has a garden in which there is the poetry of fulfillment, "The Apple tree, the Singing, and the Gold."

Or he makes a table, or she bakes a good cake, or sews a dress, or together they raise a family—why is there fulfillment only in this work and not in the other? I have been told, "But that's different; we



couldn't organise production that way". Why is it different, and who is this "we"?

What function, if any, has work in the well-being of the personality or, on the other hand, what relationship has work to life as a whole? Why is it, for example, that the capacity regularly to work is a dominant factor in individual normality from the psychiatric and the depth psychological points of view? Why too is work-therapy an essential treatment in neurotic and psychotic illnesses where there is a withdrawal from reality? It is because in free, meaningful work which calls for skill and decision-making there is at once a focussing of consciousness on the world of reality and a protection against the backward grasp of unconscious fantasy and infantilism.

Work in which there is free expression of the whole man is an ego-building and sustaining function of the self. The age of primitive innocence, of the *participation mystique* when men were yet in the mindless state of oneness with nature, was the Golden Age spoken of in the great religious traditions. In the Hindu epic, the Mahabharata, there is a description of the Krita or Golden Age: "In that age no buying or selling went on, no efforts were made by man; the fruits of the earth were obtained by their mere wish; righteousness and abandonment of the world prevailed". The Greek peasant poet Hesiod bemoans the passing of the Golden Age in which men cared nothing for toil and lived like gods and had no sorrow of heart. But of his own, the Iron Age, Hesiod cries: "Dark is their plight. Toil and sorrow by day are theirs and by night the anguish of death".

Writing over 2,000 years past, the Chinese philosopher Chuang Tzu describes the Golden Age of Chaos, of placid tranquility in which no work was done and there was no need for knowledge. In Genesis, man lived in a paradisaical Golden Age until with the expression of self-consciousness, of knowledge of good and evil, the curse of work was placed upon humanity.

Always, in the great traditions, the pain of work and the rise of self-conscious individuality are twinned, and in other language the story is repeated by modern anthropologists who have studied primitive societies and tell of their loathing of work. Primitive man obeyed the call of the ancient blood which would charm us away from the sore round of duties and obligations to a state of primitive indolence in which personality disintegrates and, as in the primitive, the wish substitutes for the act, and fantasy substitutes for directed thought. It is against this regression, so well-known to psychotherapists, that Freud and Jung warn us:

"Laying stress upon the importance of work has a greater effect than any other technique of reality living in the direction of binding the individual to reality. The daily work of earning a livelihood affords particular satisfaction when it has been selected by free choice; i.e. when through sublimation it enables use to be made of existing inclinations, of instinctual impulses that have retained their strength, or are more intense than usual for constitutional reasons." (Freud, 11).

Freud also stresses the psychological value of work in community. Jung has this to say: "The best liberation (from the grip of primitive and infantile fantasy) is through regular work. Work, however, is salvation only when it is a free act and has nothing in it of infantile compulsion. (12)

Work which is creative and thought-provoking is a blessing and a boon to growing personality, but work in which there is no thought and no decision-making breeds infantilism and is once accursed for those who, like repetitive psychopaths, are forced to do it, but manifold for those who enforce it and would reduce another person to the level of instinctive beast or cataleptic stone. Men do not so much dislike work as they dislike their management-dependent status. They do not dislike work as such, but mainly that work which calls for small skill and for repetitive movement, the effect of which, the American sociologists Walker and Guest show, is to reduce interest in social affairs, in sport, in religion, and in out-of-work activities generally. (13) The important aspect of this is that if a man's occupation is thoughtless and skill-less, or if he has no occupation, he will introvert and so retreat from the call of social, family and economic duties.

This is the unspoken fear of the many writers on the problem of leisure: that man, drugged by comfort and distracted by mass amusements, will regress to a state of neurotic dependence on the state, the managers, the amusement caterers, and the computerisers:—

*Here where brave lions roamed, the fatted sheep,  
and poppies bloom where once the golden wheat.*

## Automated Work

Mechanisation precedes automation, and the fruits of mechanisation and of technology generally, have been distributed roughly on the basis of half to increased leisure and half to increased economic living standards. If we move into automation in a substantial way and the trend continues, then, on a conservative estimate, the present working week will be cut by 50% in the next thirty years.

Mechanisation is the use of machines which, on the whole, replace handwork. But the product parts have to be loaded and unloaded into and out of the machine, the machine itself may require individual attention, and the product part has to be moved manually between one machine and another. With automation, loading and unloading the machine is mechanised and transfer machines take the product part to the next machine, and so on down the line until the product parts reach assembly, when, again, this may be taken over by automated process. The automated process may be controlled by an "electronic brain" and, at higher levels or work, decision-making may be the function largely of computerism.

I have seen remarkable results in labour displacement in both offices and works through automation and computerism, but it is from America that a clear indication may be had of the present and probable effects of these processes. For example, two men can assemble as many



radio sets in a day as were formerly assembled by two hundred men, and a car engine block can be produced by one-eighth of the previous labour force in half the time previously taken. It should be noted, however, that only about 50% of our production plants are likely to be the subject of full automation.

About half of the automation slack is taken up by shorter hours, and the other half by increased production, absorption of displaced producers in service industries, and by unemployment. The tendency is to increase the number of "degreed" managers, electronics engineers and planners. ("From apprentice to managing director" will be the subject of historical novels only, in the future), and to decrease skill on the workshop floor. Although there will be a lowering of skill and thought on the shop floor, it is likely that there will be an upgrading of status, by giving floor workers "staff" standing—an event much to be desired.

The result of labour displacement on service industry is remarkable and it is likely that in a few years more than half the country's labour force will be engaged on services—that is, the percentage effort put into making things will decrease radically, and the percentage put into managing, planning, selling, financing, and moving things will radically increase. But these services are also being automated and computerised increasingly. For example, the automated supermarket, the electronically controlled rail and motor roads, and, who knows, the computerised medical and psychiatric diagnosis and treatment, the computerised marriage arrangement, and the computerised, psychiatric merit rating card in the personnel department which will pick out the rebels and outsiders who need brain surgery to make them happy, laughing, well-adjusted individuals? And why have a doubting, arguing, democratic assembly composed of frail, party-minded humans when a computer can so easily and quickly made more reasonable and workable decisions?

Automation is more than a works or office method; it is a design for living which has to be paid for. Indeed, as Aldous Huxley remarks in his *Brave New World Revisited*, like last year's washing machine, technological advances are still being paid for, and each installment is higher than the last.

And automated factory methods have invaded the farms and farming employment is fast decreasing. The use of meat-producing factories with large savings in labour cost and efficient reduction of animal life-hours per unit of meat produced is at once a victory for modern technology and a sacrilegious monument which bodies ill for our future.\*

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\* Not now for them the friendship of the sun,  
the benediction of the sheltering trees,  
or soft sweet grass to ruminant upon in meadowed ease  
—their Mother-nature sterilized and undone.  
Now sunless factories speed their orphan flesh  
these egoid other animals to refresh.  
After we eat of automated cattle,  
let's light a candle in Saint Francis' chapel.  
This odd aside I call "Inscription for Whited Sepulchres."

We are ceaselessly told that the major solution to our social and economic problems is more production to keep up employment which will keep up buying power which will keep up production; and in this automation is to play a large part. The function of production, etc., is said by orthodox economists to be the satisfaction of increasing natural wants—this is the economics of scarcity. But, as the brilliant Harvard economist Galbraith points out, we are no longer in an age of scarcity but in an age of affluence, and instead of production satisfying natural wants, it is also geared to the satisfaction of artificially created wants on the promotion of which millions are spent in advertising. We are caught up in a vicious circle from which, it seems, there is no escape—yet there are electronic sleeping machines, not yet marketed; so . . .

There is no doubt that technological progress has far outstripped human progress towards personal and social maturity, and many are the valiant efforts to solve this threatening problem. Perhaps it may be solved by large educational measures; perhaps one of history's erupting minorities may opt out of the rat race and lead us in the process of challenge and response; perhaps there will be a new Franciscanism, perhaps a nation like India may opt out in Gandhian terms. Perhaps small communities of individuals will form to do useful work by hand and with small tools on the land and in workshops. There is as much cause for hope as for gloom, and I think that the escape from automated leisure in and through fellowship work groups is a probability.

### Work in Fellowship

The broken fellowship of authoritarian work life and democratic social life bespeaks the schizoid disease of our culture. But this is not seen as a root problem of community life but, rather as a problem of education for leisure. We are going to become artists, handicraft men, do-it-yourself specialists and what have you, so that we shall not become a decadent society living under the compulsion of the unconscious wish to regress to that primitive indolence, against which Freud and Jung warn us. This work in which we have to be educated is free work, and it is known to be a personal and social good.

But why not also have the work we do *now* as a personal and social good. The way forward for man is the way of free work in fellowship. Erich Fromm puts it thus, when writing of man as a free, spontaneous creature:

"Love is the first component of such spontaneity; not love as the dissolution of the self in another person, not love as the possession of another person, but love as the spontaneous affirmation of others on the basis of the preservation of the individual self.

"Work is the other component—work as creation in which one becomes one with nature in the art of creation." (14)



## Workshop Floor Groups

Numerous attempts have been made to solve some of the problems stated earlier. One of the most widely publicised of these is the use of Joint Councils in which primary worker-appointed representatives meet management-appointed representatives in, usually, monthly meetings. Although a joint council may work admirably within its terms of reference where top management has faith in the method, experience of the method and competent research indicate that the first promise of joint consultation is sadly unfulfilled. Professor Ronald Edwards, writing on the electricity supply industry has this to say:

"Experience has shown there is a gap between the local advisory committee and the shop floor, and this is now being filled by the organisation of small working groups within each management unit . . ." (15)

The work of Dr W. H. Scott (16) and of Lisl Klein (17) repeat in other language what has been discovered in the electricity supply industry, and a recent book from the Industrial Welfare Society on joint consultation presents at best a sorry spectacle. (18)

To make joint consultation work a very important step has been taken by the electricity supply industry. The extent of this advance is indicated in the annual report of the Electricity Supply Industry Joint Advisory Council (19) in which it is stated that in 1963, of the 471 local advisory committees in the industry, 142 were in some way associated with the operation of primary worker group meetings in works time with payment during attendance. I have not seen any of the group meetings at work and dependence is here on a useful meeting with Mr Garnett of the Yorkshire Division of the Electricity Council and on information supplied by Mr M Skinner, Secretary of the Electricity Council. From them I have learned that the workshop floor meetings now cover about one fourth of the industry's employees. A brief statement from Mr Skinner, who is also Consultation Officer to the Electricity Council, outlines the operation of the primary groups:

"These informal group meetings take many different forms depending on local needs and local organisation structure. In general, however, it can be said that the working group meets regularly, but not too frequently, usually in its normal place of work, and in working hours. The proceedings, which are informal, are chaired . . . either by the group's foreman or supervisor or by a more senior officer who has some responsibility for the work of the group. It is a cardinal rule that the group's representative on the local consultative committee should always be present. Sometimes groups meet prior to the meeting of the local consultative committee so that they can give their views on items to be discussed at that meeting, but in other cases there is no time link with the formal committees. Group meetings are valuable as a channel of communication. They also succeed in solving many work problems peculiar to the group and often give rise to matters of greater importance which are the proper subjects for consideration within the formal

machinery."

The primary group meetings were initiated in the Yorkshire Power Stations about five years ago (20) and have since spread throughout the industry. The effect of these meetings on morale is undoubtedly good, if only for the reason that primary workers as a whole are directly involved in the consultation process and because their significance as persons is positively recognised. So far as the productivity of the meetings is concerned, the following seems to be typical: in the Tees No 2 Area the subjects discussed in nine meetings were, Efficiency 42, Welfare 26, Training and General 25. There is, in passing, no compulsory attendance at group meetings.

There is a large difference between these shop-floor meetings and the free group meetings in that a member of the management team, may set the pace for the meeting by bringing forward certain problems. Over the last twenty years we have had many shop-floor meetings of the kind used in the electricity supply industry, but whereas we now attempt to interlock the foremanship function with free group activity by suggesting the foreman attend for a group agreed time to state local management problems, our experience is that if the atmosphere of the meeting is not permissive, the basic we-they attitude existing in the work situation will not alter because, as is shown later, it is essential if reasonable co-operation is the aim, that the individuals involved in meeting should feel free to express their deep assumptions even if these are irrational. For example, many times we have had from the free groups the statement that management and especially top management is only an expensive overhead which the primary workers have to carry; to us this was an opportunity to exhibit the educational aspect of free group discussion with excellent results.

The free group meeting aims at reducing dependence on figures of authority who know all the answers; that is, we attempt in social-psychiatric terms to reduce leader-centredness and to foster maturity and independence. On the other hand, my experience of psychiatric groups indicates that if the group conductor does not take the lead but, in Laotse's words of 2,500 years past, seems to follow, the results will be somewhat akin to those aimed at by those who sponsor free group meetings.

## Free Group Theory

Basic in free group theory is the idea that if we want willing obedience from a man we must first obey the man: that is, we must maturely comprehend the laws of the man's nature as expressed in his material, psychic and spiritual aspirations in fellowship with other men.

That we should be able to treat a man, not as a mere means to economic or other ends, but as a self-transcending person, that we should be able to listen to what another man *is*, and not merely to what he says, is a counsel of perfection which smacks of do-goodism. But the problem of authentic relationships is my own ever-present problem, the



solution to which comes only in moments, and without warning.

Now, there is no point in idealising either the primary workers or the managing workers in the process of stating free group theory; what is meant is that we cannot expect 100% support for such a theory. Managers are involved in matters of personal status and power, and they have a fair percentage of selfish and prejudiced individuals. Primary workers have a similar percentage of selfish and prejudiced individuals, and if I dare to estimate how many will refuse to take responsibility under a free group system I would put 30% as a figure based on experience. About 30% will welcome responsibility, and the remaining 40% will be influenced largely by local operating circumstance which, by and large, is in the domain of management and of worker group leadership. Among those who refuse to take any responsibility are the egocentrics, the many who have a masochistic dependence on big brother manager, the cynics who just don't believe management is capable of sharing real power, and the ones who don't care what happens. Self-interest is a factor which cannot be ignored, and if group operation is tied to group economic reward, the groups will operate more actively than on, say, individual piecework. Such rewards as group bonus, profit sharing, perhaps, on the basis of distribution to units of, say, not more than 300 people whose activity is related directly and not remotely to profit, and the development of a sense of co-operative property are all aids to free-group co-operation. I have not found that formal co-ownership has much more than a superficial effect if it is not accompanied by individual, direct involvement in the managing process. The ideal, of course, is the small, co-operative group of managers, technicians and primary workers owning (or renting) capital and justly sharing the proceeds after meeting technical and social obligations.

The free group method requires a multi-way communication system for the method's effective operation. On the whole, a company will be as efficient as its communication system is effective quantitatively and qualitatively. If the communications are not free then the company is to that extent ineffective in the long run. Orthodox management's communication theory is a limited one. Communicated information, such as is given here, may change attitudes, but attitudes change information, a fact which educationists are aware of, but of which management seems largely unaware. Management seems to accept what Dr M. L. Johnson (21) calls the jug and bottle theory of education which takes the learner to be an empty vessel ready to be filled from the management bottle. Given that the bottle is uncorked (which it sometimes is not) and the neck is not too narrow (which it sometimes is), all that is necessary is that some of the contents of the jug get into the bottle, when it is taken for granted that the substance in the bottle will be similar to that poured from the jug. Alas, both the management bottle and primary worker bottle contain powerful emotionalised assumptions and attitudes which change the substance poured from the jug, if, indeed, any gets into the bottle at all. Most of us, it has been shown by research (21) are as unconscious of our assumptions as we are unconscious of the earth's movements. We can, however, discover that the

earth moves by comparing it with other heavenly bodies, and we can study our own assumptive world by comparing it with somebody else's, and are thus in a better position to change our assumptions if they do not lead to socially effective action. The permissive atmosphere of free group discussion makes this change possible, for in a permissive atmosphere we can expose our irrationality without feeling that we are making fools of ourselves, and the bases of our assumptions can be examined in a supportive group atmosphere. This is true of primary worker and supervisory groups.

### Free Group Structure and Method

The free expression or informal group method is a kind of joint consultation in depth but it may also be an integral part of an interlocking management structure as when the local supervisor with group consent regularly attends local group meetings for such limited time as is required for him to put his local problems to the group for its consideration. Or, of the method of having a *trained group conductor* present is preferred, (not a chairman, it is important to note), the conductor may attend for part or the whole of the meeting, according to his mature discretion and the sense of the meeting. The idea of the trained group conductor has been mentioned earlier under the description of the electricity supply industry's shop-floor groups; our experience shows that of the group conductor is not a permissive person, is not mature, the groups will be and do better without a conductor.

The structure of the method is roughly as follows:

1. Each group of twelve to twenty individuals, drawn from a specific work-place if possible, meets for a certain time once each month in work-time, if this is feasible.
2. The groups operate only after the matter of group meeting has been put to the groups and consented to.
3. Each group appoints a group chairman and a secretary.
4. The secretary keeps minutes of group deliberations and these are published in the monthly communications journal along with the names of those attending the group meeting.
5. The group chairman attends a monthly meeting of a Central Management Board, Joint Consultative Committee, or Junior Board consisting of elected members who are in touch with the small groups and representatives of management.
6. A communications journal is published which gives minutes of small groups and of the central group meetings so that each member of a group knows what is happening to group ideas and what is management's general policy application.
7. Where there is a personnel welfare worker the final choice of this worker, after academic and other necessary qualifications have been



scrutinised by management, may fittingly be left to the groups, as the practice shows. At L. G. Harris Ltd, one of our first steps was to have the personnel worker, Mr Ramsay Eveson, put his name to the groups for rejection or acceptance by secret ballot. At Aston Chain and Hook Ltd, Birmingham, the choice of Mrs D. Critchley was finally a group decision, as was the choice of her successor, Mr Cooper, when she retired. A similar procedure was carried out in the early days of groups at Best and Lloyd Ltd., until the P.W.W., Mr Jesse Hartland, died, and the groups decided that the structure was such that a personnel worker was not needed.

8. It is held by some of those interested that a profit-sharing or co-partnership scheme is an effective seal on genuine co-partnership. These schemes by themselves accomplish little, it seems, in the improvement of morale, but with a participating group system at base they take on meaning. Thus L. G. Harris Ltd and Best and Lloyd Ltd have profit-sharing schemes.

The first six points are the important ones. Of prime importance for multi-way communication is the publication of a communications journal of which each member of the company receives a copy.

9. Management should each month put at least local problems to the groups, or, if the local supervisor attends his local group meeting at the start of the meeting, he should be the mouthpiece of such problems.

10. For groups made up of persons eighteen years old and under, it is worth considering having a management-appointed and group-agreed adult secretary who would assist the young groups in their deliberations.

11. Group meetings should be about one hour in duration and should be carefully scheduled in advance by the personnel worker or a member of the management team.

12. For best results group members should not only be engaged in jobs in close proximity, but if possible the job operations should be closely related and the bonus earnings for task performance should be a group and not an individual bonus. Or an effective profit-sharing scheme may be preferred. If individual bonus or piecework is in use, a start may be made by splitting the total bonus earned so that a percentage is paid out on the basis of individual earnings and a percentage on group effort—this combination system is usually quite acceptable.

### Fifteen Years of Group Discussion

It is often said that primary worker groups discuss trivialities; the following analysis of subjects discussed by the groups at Best and Lloyd Ltd over a period of ten of the fifteen years free groups have been in operation may correct this impression, although it is true that non-adult groups do tend to discuss what in terms of pure economic efficiency are trivial subjects if the groups have not some adult guidance.

I should have liked to include whole copies of the Aston Chain and Hook Co.'s monthly *Communicator*, and especially that number in which

SUBJECT DISCUSSED	TIMES DISCUSSED
General quality control	26
Finishing processes and quality	6
Best and Lloyd News	2
Canteen (run by the groups)	28
Day-work pay system	14
Co-partnership policy	28
Design (and saleability of designs)	42
Estimating	17
Expense control	5
Explanation of accounts	14
Holiday organisation	40
Small group procedure	48
Planning	30
Management and Management Board	32
Personnel problems	9
Office-works relationships	15
Job of Personnel Welfare Worker	11
Price policy	5
Capital expenditure	37
Publicity for group scheme	9
Batch production as cost reducer	9
Works rules	4
Sales and advertising	18
Self-discipline and the group system	14
Stock control	2
Possible suggestion scheme	3
Wages and allied matters	11
Welfare, social club and safety (largely controlled by groups)	44
Young people's training	7

the Tool Room Group asked the managing director for permission to re-organise the tool room, and did so with excellent results. And, at the same company, the discussions in the groups when they were involved in drawing up a new Works Rule Book. But space forbids reproduction of many group minutes. Here, however, is one from L. G. Harris Ltd.'s brush works, which illustrates frank talking to the extent that the reader might think that the firm is in the economic doldrums with the managing director brought to judgement by the groups. (In fact, the company is developing so fast that there is continuous difficulty in maintaining established routines.)

The adult groups are quite able to discuss intelligently matters of capital expenditure; this is evident in the Group Minutes from Aston Chain and Hook Ltd., and Best and Lloyd Ltd. companies in which there is a good proportion of skilled craftsmen, whereas at L. G. Harris Ltd., there is a high proportion of young female workers. Here is a minute from a group discussing capital expenditure:

"The members of the group would like to know if the figures stated are competitive, and if tenders have been invited. The new lathe was not considered necessary at the present time; the polishing spindle was urgently required."

When the free discussion group is initiated there is a release of historic criticism which, to the immature manager, may be very disturbing:



## JOINT BRUSH MAKING AND BRISTLE SECTION GROUP MEETING 18.3.64

Chairman: P. J. Clarke Guest: The Managing Director

Members present: (29 names)

Business of the Meeting:

Bonus: The Bristle Dressing operators, who have to be experienced, feel that they should have more bonus especially when they find that operators on the brush making machine are receiving more bonus than they are.

Pipes: Could the air pipe be put back on the bristle dressing machine please?

Minutes: After our last meeting, which was a considerable time ago, we were asked to omit some of our minutes. This we refused to do and in consequence none of our minutes were printed, obviously because the Management did not approve of them.

Is this supposed to be free discussion?

Mr. L. G. Harris was called in to discuss various grievances and complaints which are affecting workers' outputs. The main grievance was that there are insufficient tools to enable us to reach our output figures by causing considerable delays. Also the labour position (shortage of operators and misplacement of personnel) was fully discussed. Mr. Harris kindly agreed to look into these matters for us immediately.

Trays: Members asked if they could be supplied with more trays for the bristle dressing machines.

Cones: More tin cones are also required and Mr. Harris agreed to look into this also.

That concluded the business of the meeting: (Signed) P. J. CLARKE.

"The trouble is that we get no real understanding from management."

"The trouble with our company is that when the Managing Director says 'Black is white' then black is white."

"Management is just an overhead which the workers have to carry."

"How do we know that the free group system is not just another trick? . . . If we say what we really think we will soon be out on our necks."

At a first meeting at Aston Chain and Hook Ltd this was said to me: "You say Bond (Bond-Williams, the Managing Director) really believes in this free group idea as plain commonsense management—perhaps he does, but we don't know him and we doubt if he wants to know us. We'll see."

The three companies mentioned employ 100, 300 and 500 people respectively, and the electricity supply industry, mentioned earlier, employs some thousands. Each company tailors its system to its own liking; each has strong points and failings in my opinion; but all of them are alike in that they are fostering a new concept of work relationships.

From some large companies I have been met with the argument "We are too big for the free or informal group system," and while it is true that in a firm of more than, say, 500 people, the group system is apt to become a formal method, the huge electricity supply industry, with its groups operating in fairly small management units, gives an effective answer to the "we are too big" argument. Decentralisation is the rule rather than the exception in very large companies, and in such companies decentralisation of group structure in management units, each with its own communication journal, would be essential. A pilot unit to prove or disprove the system would be valuable.

When the free or autonomous groups were first started in 1948 at Best and Lloyd Ltd., we aimed at interlocking primary worker groups at workshop, office and technical levels with management through primary group representation on a Management Board and not, it is important to note, on a joint council separate from, though perhaps influencing top management organisation. Best and Lloyd Ltd. is a very old company engaged on making high-grade craft-work lighting fittings and metal work, and it is the smallest of the companies using the free group meeting system. On the Management Board are three elected group members, and three management-appointed group members with Mr Robert D. Best in the chair, (in recent months Mr. J. W. Davies). It may be thought that the management board is dominated by Mr Best who is the owner of the business, and that power sharing is only nominal. While it is true that most power is vested in the owner, the following from *Best and Lloyd News*, in which group and Management Board minutes are published monthly may illustrate the spirit of the business. The company, with the consent of the groups, abolished piecework bonus and initiated a high day-rate system. At about the same time a profit sharing scheme was initiated which, in a small firm, has much the same effect as group bonus. The basis of the profit sharing scheme, it was suggested, should be changed so that more money would be available for capital development and considerable discussion in the groups seemed to lead to an impasse which the Chairman would use his power to decide. Here is the Chairman's handling of the situation:

"When you are dealing with a product such as ours, which has a fluctuating demand, the company is entitled to more than from a gilt-edge investment, to enable it to plough back a reasonable amount for plant, tools, future development and inflation. But having said that I am sure that after ten years, we are not going to fall out over a matter of this sort. I don't want to be grasping and neither do the co-partners, I know. If we cannot agree there is one way of reaching a reasonable decision, and that would be to find somebody impartial outside this business and ask him for a reasonable opinion as to what would be a fair distribution."

Mr S. Jenkins (group elected member of the Board): "I would like to say that the dominant factor of the group discussion was the sounder foundation of the firm."

As the foreman or supervisory group, the office group, and the production worker group are represented, with management appointed representatives on the Board, it is clear that in Best and Lloyd there is here interlocking group management, with multi-way communication through the *Best and Lloyd News*, and appropriate spread of decision-making. The term "interlocking system" is from writers on cybernetics such as Beer (1956, 1959) and Pask (1961) and the statement on communication and decision-making above is included in the cybernetic theory of an effective self-organising system (22).

In a recent book by Professor Rensis Lickert there is advanced the idea of what is called "overlapping management" in which at each



level from top to bottom of an organisation there is grouping with each lower group meeting attended by or run by someone from a higher level. Thus, a production or primary group would be run by the supervisor of that group, and the supervisor group would be run by, say, the works manager, and the executive group at works manager level may be run by the general manager, and so on up the organisation. Lickert's very readable and interesting book proves with a wealth of research data that overlapping group management is superior to the orthodox chain-of-command management. (8)

In the firm of L. G. Harris Ltd., we have some foremen attending primary group meetings for a part *only of group meeting time with group and foreman consent*, thus tending to interlock the lower supervisory function with primary group operation—the consent is not the result of a managed meeting but results from primary and foremen meetings respectively, in a permissive atmosphere. The theory of foreman attendance at primary group meetings is that the foreman should be the communicating channel for local matters coming within his daily province as well as for such wider matters as are passed to him from higher up. Thus the foreman may report on:

1. Work quality.
2. Work output.
3. Work load on department.
4. Timekeeping and the like.
5. Department development if any.
6. General situation re orders, output.

### The Free Group Contract System

Where a free or autonomous group operates to share work and the rewards of work, the *Law of Free Work* is in command; that is, the disciplines do not emanate so much from management, but are in the work itself and the work situation. This has been called the *Law of the Situation*, and it has been suggested that appeal to this law takes the place of the use of coercion. But in an unfree environment the law of the situation is an abstraction which operates to control the work process without consideration of the concrete situation in terms of relationships and of power distribution within that situation. The law of the situation will inevitably take its colour from the existing power structure and may justify extreme poverty and wealth, or domination and submission in the same economic environment; this is a truism in political science which is put very well by, I think, Anatole France, when he says: "The law in its majestic equality forbids the poor as well as the rich to sleep under bridges, to beg, and to steal food."

The free group contract system expresses in practice the psychological theory of work, quoted earlier, in Freud, Jung and Fromm, in that the work is freely done in and for fellowship with consequent growth towards maturity for the individual and for society. This to me is a most important aspect of the free group system in general and the free group contract system in particular. Freedom in work is usually supported by economic arguments and proofs about production or by

vague ideological theorising, but its chief logical support comes from psychology and sociology.

With the free group contract method in its full form within an existing work situation, man-supervision is withdrawn and transferred to the work itself, although technical guidance will be necessary. At the other end of the scale is the group contract method in which a group undertakes certain work in return for a money reward which is shared in some just manner among the group members. But even with the latter simple system there is usually freedom to arrange internal affairs and to utilise labour where it is most needed, and we have the group imposing its own internal disciplines which *spring naturally* from the Law of the Work, and, it will be clear, the group performs one or more functions which were hitherto the function of management. In the free group meeting system we have the same law operating in a wider field with the primary group interlocking with management in the carrying out of the work process.

The free group meeting system may operate without the more or less free contract system, and vice versa, but it is doubtful if the use of individual piecework or bonus is conducive to co-operative effort. True, a profit-sharing system may make for co-operative effort in a situation in which there are free group meetings, but the incentive of profit sharing may be too remote to have any direct effect on the work.

The vital importance of free or autonomous working at the actual work-point in terms of the social and personal benefits to be gained from effective grouping, as well as from output, indicate that wherever possible the group bonus system should be encouraged. My experience indicates clearly that, on the whole, primary workers resent individual bonus to the extent that, given a choice, they would prefer group bonus. There is not much research on this, but the following from a machine tool firm may be interesting:

	For	Against	Indifferent
Individual piece-rates or bonus	21%	70%	9%
Group bonus with group sharing	61%	32%	7%
Individual and group bonus with 30% of individual earnings shared	38%	55%	7%

Group bonus is to be preferred from the human standpoint to individualist bonus, and its fruitful use is indicated in the following situations:

1. Where primary worker morale is not all it should be (this is commonplace in work).
2. Where skill and experience is high and the use of refined work study and operation planning techniques is expensive with consequent increase in cost of management.
3. Where sub-tasks within a task have job times which are so different that there is a serious problem of labour allocation within the task.
4. Where it is possible to derive a contract time or price from the costing estimates and to use this time or price as the contract with the group, thus saving much documentation, considerable applied operation



timing and planning techniques. In these days of increasing administration costs this is important.

5. Where labour cost is low compared with material cost in a job and it is not worth while using expensive work study and like techniques and the method of 4. above is suitable.

6. Where the primary workers' desire is for group bonus.

7. Where the costs of man-management are high or are increasing and/or top managers are enlightened enough to wish to gain the benefits of the spread of decision-making to the work-point. The full benefits will be gained by a group pay system with the group contracting to do the needed work under the control of the group-appointed leader but with technical foremanship as a parallel (but interlocked) procedure. This is the *free group* contract system with the group leader as contract negotiator and taking responsibility for group discipline, work progressing within the group environment, internal allocation of skill and effort, and output. A penalty clause for non-performance may be included in the contract as with ordinary commercial contracts if that is agreeable. Group meetings will be regular with the technical foreman in, at least, part attendance. Terms of reference for group leaders: age, experience, etc., could be agreed.

It is understandable that many managers will be somewhat startled by these proposals, and especially that which suggests that man-management be left to a group-appointed leader. In an earlier book (1948) I suggested the formal separation of thing-management (technical foremanship) and man-management (morale leadership) but, though there is plenty of evidence in the social sciences as to the superiority of morale leadership to imposed management, I have had only two experiences of primary workers appointing a foreman; in both they picked the man whom management previously thought would be best for the job.

It was while on a foundry job that the method of primary worker selection of a foreman was first attempted. The group was a tough group of fettlers (casting dressers and cleaners) and getting a foreman to stay with them was quite a problem. I suggested to management we try letting the men decide which member of the fettling team they would like for a foreman; management was extremely doubtful and seemed sure the team would pick firebrand X, whereas Y was obviously the best man. The group picked Y by secret ballot, whereupon Y called a meeting and told the team what a lot of shirkers they were, etc., etc., to the team's great delight. I have, as said, only one other experience of this kind, but the experiments indicated that a group of adults will pick the man best suited to the situation; as was undoubtedly true when our small free groups made the final selection of personnel managers in three separate instances.

As said, the technical foreman should interlock with the labour foreman throughout the day as well as at group meetings, for the free group contract system would ultimately integrate with the group meeting system. In the small company employing, say, 100 people, or in a small department with the same number of people, one labour foreman could

handle the job of management, depending on the terms of reference agreed for the job. In the large company there might be a number of labour foremen and a labour manager who would interlock with the works technical manager. The process would stop short, as Dubreil (23) remarks, at the level of general manager, whose function would be co-ordination and control of effort with the difference that he would not be merely a manager but a manager-leader.

My experience of the simple group contract system is considerable, but of the free group contract system in which the group takes over considerable man-management, it is much less. Dubreil, in his classic book *A Chance for Everybody*, tells of a group of engineers who with management consent worked out job rates for each job and successfully took on the whole group task on contract with group responsibility for results: this was some thirty years past.

Some years ago I was called upon to help reorganise a fifty-man foundry engaged on craft-work production of one- and two-off heavy and light intricate castings. The moulders themselves controlled sand-fetching and mixing, mould-box selection, moulding method, metal pouring, and mould opening. Based on the manager's experience, my checking, and discussion with the moulders, who on heavy work were in gangs or groups, we set a rate per ton for a number of different classes of work, but without any detailed work study, which would have been very expensive indeed. There was no man-management of the moulder groups, but only very general control by the foundry manager, (there were no full-time foremen), the moulders took on group replacements where necessary, there were no clock cards for clocking in and out, and the moulders had control of group internal labour movement and allocation. My experience of foundry work (I had written a book on the problems of foundry organisation—24) told me that these moulders were equal or better than other moulders operating under orthodox management organisation and control, in terms of cost per ton and of quality. I had a somewhat similar experience on high-grade one-off sheet metal production.

In passing, one skilled group of moulders left the firm to go to a car factory where wages were much higher, but came back after a few days with the comment that "A man isn't a man in that blurry place, but only a blurry machine."

One of the comic aspects of "scientific" individualist bonus schemes is that the working group may remain on group bonus in spite of the applications of orthodox planning and work study techniques—this among skilled men usually, but prevalent throughout the work situation. When I served a short apprenticeship in a Glasgow car works we were on individual bonus but our internal work code was such that we limited earnings on any job to a group agreed maximum. In Yorkshire, only a few weeks past I found the same "group bonus system" operative in an engineering factory which was supposed to be on individual bonus. This kind of thing is irrational economically, but if we take it deep enough we may find that the irrational is the real, and the healthy.



On the other hand, where there is no underlying fellowship in an aggregate of workers on individualised piecework, it is painful sometimes to watch the struggle for money. In one clothing factory there was an almost animal struggle for bundles of work during the slack season. As was said earlier, our economic culture rewards some of the worst of human characteristics and penalises some of the best, in the running of the economic rat-race.

### The Standard Motor Gang System

Of the two published examples of group operation with considerable group regulation and control of the local work environment, the example of the Standard Motors gang system is more complex in many ways than that of the Durham miners. Unfortunately, when Standard Motors sold out to Leyland Motors Ltd., the gang system in the form described by Melman came to an end. Whereas most applied anthropological and industrial sociological studies are concerned with group theory and the relationship of the small groups to the parent organisation, Professor Melman who wrote a very readable report on the Standard gang system (7) dealt with decision-making processes which involved the enterprise as a whole.

Melman proves that high productivity and democratic practice can effectively be related, and that there are efficient alternatives to authoritarian management of production, as shown at Standard Motors, where a modern mechanised plant was successfully developed and run without the normal rise in the cost of administration and management. In the years 1947 to 1948 the ratio of administrative workers to production workers (A/P) in the car industry rose from about 13 to 20, but in Standard Motors in the period 1939 to 1953 the A/P was fairly stationary around 16.5.

The difference in ratios shown is the significant factor in the study of a management system which at Standards fostered group bonus and spread of decision-making among the primary workers and so kept the cost of management much lower than in other like companies, in an expanding market.

It has been stated earlier that with group bonus the cost of management tends to be less because the group by its very nature takes over certain management activities. Melman brings this out by a comparison of the number of foremen of local supervisors per 100 production workers at Standard and in a very similar company, with both firms expanding:

	<i>Firm X</i>	<i>Standard</i>
Number of foremen per 100 workers	2.1	0.5

It is certain that critics will assume that Standard Motors were inevitably inefficient. Here are figures for net output per employee: in the typical year 1953 net output per production worker was comparable with industry as a whole but net output per employee (including management and administration) was 10% better than the industrial average.

This latter figure is the result of low cost of management because of the spread of decision-making. In 1953 also, Standard paid dividend at the rate of 10.9% against 8.25% for the British Motor Corporation. (7) Profit on total employed assets was not high compared with say, Ford, with 26% but at 15% it was better than Rootes at 11%. Vehicles produced per £000 of fixed assets and per £000 of stock and work in progress were higher in 1953 than in Fords, Vauxhall and the British Motor Corporation, respectively. It should be noted that the level of Standard's profit tended to be lower than in other motor car businesses because about half of the units produced were Massey-Harris-Ferguson tractors on long-term contract with lower profit per unit than is gained from car selling through the normal channels.

In the year for which most of the figures given above are appropriate, electric power employed per man-hour at Standards was about 7% higher than in the motor car industry as a whole. Wages were about 40% higher, and labour turnover was 17.5 per 100 workers against 29.9 for the motor industry. Hours were 42.5 p.w. against 44 for the industry. There was criticism of Standard's policy on wages which, I think, was to some extent justified. It is true that high wages promote mechanisation such as took place at Standard motors, but one does not pay high wages in order to mechanise. Also there was a non-co-operative left-wing element among the union stewards which competed with management and favoured nationalisation with state management (dear, dear!); this attitude cut across trade union policy on mutual decision-making and, in my opinion helped destroy what could have been a magnificent experiment.

Professor Melman clearly shows that the union stewards had the job of keeping output up and costs down and did a very effective job with their gangs numbering from 50 to 500 people. Credit should go to management, and especially to the far-sighted Sir John Black, then managing director of Standard Motors. Melman, after a thorough analysis of Standard affairs concludes that there is in this experiment adequate proof that there is an effective alternative to orthodox management process and structure; a viewpoint, allowing for my criticism, with which I must logically agree.

### The Durham Miners' Free Group Project

There are two weighty reports on this project by psychologists, experts on human relationships. (25, 26) Peculiarly enough, these experts in their reports retreat behind a technico-socio-methemathico-psychologese which is at once a character armour and an omnipotential barrier to a meaningful relationship between the specialist and the ordinary reader. Names take the place of people, and the gracious mystery of human relationship is wrapped from sight in the papered concealment of statistical tabulations. Were the miners merely a group pursuing economic interests? Or were they a fellowship in which the whole worth of each person was consciously recognised and rewarded? The



latter is the truer, as is shown in their sharing of group pay on the basis of equality.

In short, in earlier days before the onset of mechanisation, breakdown and specialisation of labour, and the development of modern management theories of control and individual incentives, small groups of miners working at the coal face, shared group earnings and took responsibility for local regulation and control of the actual coal-getting at the work-point. The newer management outlook and method dealt with the mechanised practice which required larger groups of forty to fifty men in much the same way as modern management does with the application of time and motion study, sub-operation regulation and control through process planning, and individualistic incentives. This did not work either in terms of profitability or of human satisfaction in work. So, the miners themselves in a number of pits, designed and worked out a method which was a return on a higher level to the old group method, with equal sharing of the rewards of effort. They proved, as at Standard Motors, that the alternative to "scientific" and hierarchical management is group effort with group bonus and appropriate spread of decision-making within an organisation.

The miners concerned were already a group, and as pointed out earlier, they behaved like any normal group of adult primary workers by organising and regulating the local work situation by allocating effort, skill, and experience where it was most needed on the job, and sharing the proceeds of the work among the group members. This, to those used to the operation of work groups is not at all surprising, but what is surprising is that the new group method was a *spontaneous growth* among the miners themselves. Nor is it surprising that output per man-hour increased and cost per ton was reduced, but what is surprising is that the authors of the reports do not stress, as Melman does, that the change brought about by the miners was a fundamental change in orthodox management theory and practice and that such a change, through sharing of group earning and spread of the decision-making process (or sharing of power) is appropriate to any organised production process with consequent increase in primary worker significance and self-respect in the otherwise authoritarian work situations.

The elite among the miners and among the managers can pilot this informative free group process to higher and more satisfactory levels. At this moment it is a candlelight in the depths of the earth, a promise. But through the extension of the free group contract system by the initiation of interlocking labour foremanship (group leadership) and technical foremanship, and the meeting of these (and higher functions) in free groups, the guild system which many miners dreamed that nationalisation would bring, might develop, and each man in a mine might play a whole man's part in the conduct of his mine's affairs.

The linking of mines by districts already exists, as does a central board, and the communication structure of joint consultation needs modification and extension in depth to create out of what is a formalised institution an organic industry with each organ serving the whole.

A first step has been taken and it will be a long way to the realisation of the guild concept of a "parliament of work" which by its very nature will dignify work, and the structure of which will interlock all industries.

The guild system has much thoughtful support in sociological, political and religious thinking (the last in, for example, the work of Archbishop Temple (27) and in the Papal Encyclicals (28)). The guild system is already in seed in work in both private and public industry, and it is for thoughtful workers to bring it to flower. For many of us it will be the revivication of past dreams, for others a newfound upward path with a far view, not of economic man, or of organisation man, or of role-playing man, but of co-operative man, be he labourer, craftsman, manager, technician, or administrator, working in and for the fellowship.

### The Wider Issues

We have taken more than the usual worm's eye view of work and its organisation, and of the relationship of increasingly automated work to the use and abuse of leisure. The problem of leisure and its effects on the individual and the social group is becoming of increasing urgency—

*If Satan idle hands as tools created,  
are idle brains his factories, automated?*

Behind this often stated problem of leisure is hidden the problem of worker and work significance and of the schizoid relationship between work life and social life; and yet deeper is the problem of the strongly individualistic and acquisitive motives which largely activate our culture. It is at this root fault in economic life that this essay is directed, for to re-iterate; our economic culture highly rewards some of the basest of human characteristics and penalises some of the best. There are larger problems than those which have been stated here, but narrow though the level of our approach is, I am unaware of any major social problem the solution of which would not be aided by the fostering of free groups in both work and social life, in the authoritarian work situation and in mass democracy. To conclude with the opinions of two social scientists: George Homans writes that

"At the level of the small group society has always been able to cohere. We infer therefore, that if civilisation is to stand, it must maintain, in the relations which make up society and the central direction of society, some of the features of the small group itself." (29)

And Wilhelm Aarek has this to say, after writing of the frustrations of mass society composed of huge institutions:

"The small groups will be able, through fellowship, to make amends to people, to give them something of a feeling that the social and international forces can be coped with after all. For it is just this spirit of fellowship in the many small groups which must, in the long run, give life and content to the large social and international groups." (30).



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## Recommended Basic Reading

Young: *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Routledge and Kegan Paul)  
 Galbraith: *The Affluent Society* (Hamish Hamilton)  
 Cartwright & Zander: *Group Dynamics* (Row, Peterson & Co)  
 Murphy, Murphy and Newcomb: *Experimental Social Psychology* (Harper)

# ABC of ANARCHISM

ALEXANDER BERKMAN

Alexander Berkman believed that "Anarchist books, with few exceptions, are not accessible to the understanding of the average reader. It is the common failing of most works dealing with social questions that they are written in the assumption that the reader is already familiar to a considerable extent with the subject, which is generally not the case at all. As a result there are very few books treating of social problems in a sufficiently simple and intelligible manner."

He set out to remedy this deficiency by writing an "ABC of Anarchism" which now appears in a welcome new edition. The author begins:

"I consider anarchism the most rational and practical conception of a social life in freedom and harmony. I am convinced that its realisation is a certainty in the course of human development. The time of that realisation will depend on two factors: first, on how soon existing conditions will grow physically and spiritually unbearable to considerable portions of mankind, particularly to the labouring classes; and secondly, on the degree in which views will become understood and accepted."

"Our social institutions are founded on certain ideas; as long as the latter are generally believed, the institutions built on them are safe. Government remains strong because people think political authority and legal compulsion necessary. Capitalism will continue as long as such an economic system is considered adequate and just. The weakening of the ideas which support the evil and oppressive present-day conditions means the ultimate breakdown of government and capitalism. Progress consists in abolishing what man has outlived and substituting in its place a more suitable environment."

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