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VOICE

INTEGRITY
FREEDOM
RESPONSIBILITY

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The Church and Policy

An article in *The Church Times*, July, 20, 1956, entitled "False Equality," criticises the Labour Party's document called *Towards Equality: Labour Policy for Social Justice*. The writer says that as our next government may well be "Socialist," the document requires close attention. And the kind of attention that the document receives marks, I believe, an advance in *The Church Times's* attitude to politics, which it notices now and then, because the writer discusses questions of *policy*.

Now the newspaper cannot be labelled as an opponent of the "Left Wing" or as a particular admirer of the present holders of office, whom it has taken to task quite sharply on several occasions that we have mentioned. Indeed the article we are considering notes that "pioneers of British Socialism include many great Churchmen, such as Maurice, Scott Holland, Gore and Temple." The writer of these notes recalls an elderly clergyman who had followed these eminent churchmen towards "socialism," and when it arrived he said that all his life he had waited for the great moment, but his dream had turned into a nightmare. This would have been some ten years ago.

The author of the article says that in the document "it is hoped and intended to iron out, by compulsory State action, those inequalities which the Party finds so objectionable, and to produce a society of social and material uniformity . . . the Labour Party policy is now developing along lines which are, frankly, as alien to basic Christian principles, as they are contrary to common sense and the natural law."

We emphasise that the *Church Times* contributor attacks the document because the policy it represents is unchristian. Politicians, of course, will say anything to catch votes and make extravagant promises. It has been pointed out elsewhere (*The Sunday Express*, July 22, 1956, by Crossbencher) that several leading socialists have sent their children to public schools. And another debating point would be that the document advocated the greatest *inequality* of power. But *The Church Times* objects to the policy as unchristian. We in *Voice* have for long assailed various policies as unchristian, and welcome this writer's agreement, and consider it worthwhile to examine the rest of his article closely.

"Outrageous Assumptions"

The writer says that although Christians hold that every person is of equal value in the sight of God, "they have never been such fools as to think that all are equal in aptitudes and gifts." Whenever it has been attempted to expel nature, "nature has simply returned by another way." He next criticises the assumption that "the State has the right to do exactly as it pleases with the possessions and life

of every individual." He insists that the "outrageous assumptions" concerning the superiority of the State over the individual should be questioned without delay.

At this point we might call for a little definition. What, for instance, is this "State"? On the face of it, any politician who can appeal sufficiently to the envy of a number of voters can then handle the legal machinery of the country, without let or hindrance, and enforce his ideas—if indeed they are his ideas—through the police force. Originally, as Cicero pointed out in an excellent manual on *Duties*, people looked to the society in which they participated to protect their possessions, but nowadays those in temporary control of the social mechanism have arrogated to themselves the right to confiscate and rob. It has been held in more recent times than those of Cicero that the State was created and exists for the individual, (and not the individual for the State,) which would appear as a deal more "democratic" than allowing some political nonentity to dictate to the millions exactly how much they may retain of their property or cash.

The bankruptcy in creative political thinking here for the last fifty years is notably shown, the writer continues, "in the failure to attack and explode a view of the State, which has simply nothing to commend it before the bar of reason, morals or expediency." We would say that some people have thought their thoughts on politics within the last half century, but that such creative thoughts have been wholly disregarded by every organ of publicity, which convey the impression that no thinking was done before Marx and that none has been accomplished since Marx. It might almost appear that some interests desired to retain the Marxian views (if nonsense can be called a view) concerning men, mind and money.

There is, he says, "no Christian doctrine, nor is there anything in the natural law" to justify the assumption of such "unlimited rights by the State over the individual," and the assumption is not only inexpedient but immoral. Christianity in fact, we should add, contends for the greatest possible freedom of the individual in order that he may develop as a child of God and not be utilized, according to some tyrant's whim, as a cog in a juggernaut.

"Idolatry"

We should probably thank the Labour Party for this document because it shows us where the politicians are leading the country, for the depreciation of our purchasing power over the last five years has brought all nearer the servile abyss, and there are the widest areas of agreement between the parties on how man "ought" to occupy the best part of his time: not in prayer or poetry, in contemplation or in charity, but in "gainful employment" for someone or something else. As Religion and Ethics and Constitutional conviction recede, the politicians ride roughshod over more

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and more of our lives, take more and more of our decisions and of our money. We agree with *The Church Times* that Christians should look with the greatest care at "the implications of such a policy," and ask where the infinite exaltation of the State is leading. Unless a halt is called, the writer concludes, the rights of the individual and the canons of justice and morality "will go down completely before a subservience to the bureaucratic State, which is nothing short of idolatry."

The Church Times, we believe, speaks with some authority, and we hope that our supporters will let its readers know that there is a body of opinion that condemns the aggression of any oligarchy against the rights of the individual, among which we emphasise *initiative and freedom of choice*, and which Blackstone specified as Life, Liberty and the owning of property: otherwise freedom is a fiction, and in its place we are treated to slavery by sentimentality. For no one is safe once we admit confiscation as legal, and equality in danger results from an arbitrary means test of this kind. Inequality of perception unfortunately remains, and after the warning about "pearls before swine" we should not be surprised, for equality when we look at it really means lack of quality.

A Roman View

No one can accuse the Roman Catholics of paying over much attention to the labels of political parties. At times their leaders have commended the "Labour" party in Australia and the "Liberals" in Canada, so that we may expect a fairly impartial view from *The Tablet*. This journal (July 14, 1956) devotes an article to "Towards Equality" which is called *Levelling Down*, and the approach is perhaps less philosophic than that of the *Church Times*. The article says that Mr. Gaitskell and his friends are reflecting a mood of "envy and resentment" and that the document really amounts to "a promise to harry the abler and more important members of the business community." Nor does the writer accept Mr. Gaitskell as a bureaucratic Robin Hood, for he says that the motive for confiscation is not to collect revenue but because inheritance and savings annoy a lot of Mr. Gaitskell's supporters.

The writer delves a little deeper when he calls attention to the distinction that the Irish bishops made between taking away property to relieve want and taking it away "merely to make certain people poorer" which "can claim no moral justification." Although we do not agree that the poor are poor because the rich are rich, and think that the Irish bishops only scratched the surface of this problem, we welcome the condemnation of the political document on moral

grounds, for robbery after all is wrong under any name, and the curious warfare on competence goes beyond discouragement to subversion.

Our readers who noted the views of Mr. Casserley, as quoted in a recent issue, will feel at home with the paragraph on Education which points to the "extreme individualism" of the document, while the State and the tax collector and inspector "cannot be given too much authority." The authors of the document are of course not the first to attack the family as a rival to absolute power. Schools are no longer seen as projections of the home, nor teachers as acting for the parents, and especially detested are those schools which draw their pupils from homes of a special kind "as preventing the uniformity of artisan mediocrity which is the barely concealed ideal." This of course might be Mr. Gaitskell's ideal, or he might think it sounded attractive enough to catch some votes, but the policy aims to reduce Britons to personal impotence and, unless it serves as a healthy warning, appears rather more sinister than anybody's "ideal."

Expediency does of course require something a little less discouraging, we may agree, and at the least a very different type of thinking. But here is the plain intention "to make England much the least attractive of the non-Communist countries for the successful man. It is to be the one where he will be most heavily taxed, and where it will be made most difficult for him ever to retire or to endow wife and family." We might add that much of this programme has already been accomplished, and only through the persistent use of abstractions (Dollars, balance of payment, service of the debt, etc.) would a people that was not demoralized or demented tolerate it for a moment.

Economic Puritanism

If financial burdens are made too heavy, the writer continues, people learn that "human happiness depends on human services and goods, not on money." This of course is true enough, and money should reflect and not condition the goods and services. However, we cannot so easily dodge the long arm of finance, although the levellers could not pursue us abroad with their "economic puritanism." The writer refers to prohibition advocates as a comparable case, and "their legislation greatly increased the evil it was meant to cure." The evil that would grow would be centralised power and, to cite Mr. Casserley again, this violates the Christian idea that power should be checked and balanced.

The writer concludes that the predatory acquisitiveness of politicians who, in Dean Inge's phrase, transferred the property of their opponents into those of their supporters, is preferable to the spirit of this document "which proposes to make a number of people poorer, not to make others better off, but as an end in itself." The "Conservatives" do not of course propose to make people poorer, but we should note that in allowing our purchasing power to depreciate, they have accomplished it. We recall the brief parable of the two sons, one of whom said he would do it and didn't, and the other refused and then obliged.

Our politicians doubtless dislike the classics as much as the Chinese government dislikes Confucius, but on the relation between justice and equality we might perhaps ponder Plato's definition of justice as each minding his own concerns, and the saying of Aristotle that equality among those who were unequal violates justice.

Correspondence

"Nonsensical Reasoning"

Sir,

Isn't it inconceivable that a man of Sir Anthony Eden's calibre should display such utter unawareness of the fundamental reason for labour-saving devices, i.e. devices to save wage-paid work in Industry and Agriculture? Sir Anthony declared at Norwich on 1st June that "*automation gives us the chance to do better work and to produce more.*" Certainly it enables greater output but, in all sanity, how does it enable us to do better work where wage-paid work is no longer required? Automation enables the burden of Atlas to be progressively reduced, i.e. the reduction of wage-paid labour, monotonous work on the conveyor belt, and "*to concentrate on jobs that call for skill and responsibility.*" (Eden).

Exactly! But how on earth are these jobs to be paid for? There are a great number of people who are engaged in such jobs, and unheeded, because they are fortunate enough to have a private income. I refer to such people as scientists, inventors, those engaged in research. But how does Sir Anthony propose to finance those displaced through no fault of their own or their employers, to enable them "*to concentrate on suitable work that calls for skill and responsibility*"?

Again Sir Anthony Eden at Norwich made it perfectly clear that we are engaged in economic war to the death in the fight against other nations to capture foreign markets. Other nations are doing the same. And the inevitable end to it all is either national disintegration or—war.

Sir, I believe that *Voice* is getting increasing support from "the Church." Will not "the Church" denounce all this nonsensical reasoning in High Places, and mobilise to save the Country from the inevitable consequences?

J. Creagh Scott (Lt.-Colonel).

"Collective imbecility"

Sir,

English and U.S. publishers' advertising has not brought us indication of any serious criticism of philosophy, of literature or of history, apart from some current scandals, which are seldom placed in perspective, though Paul Peters keeps digging away in the Augean stables. No one not as steeped in neoplatonism as was Psellos would have been able to give us a measuring rod of perceptive man's difficulties when faced with individual folly, as one now is when faced with the collective imbecility of demos led by a myopic press.

J.D. (U.S.A.)

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Some Opinions

(Concluded)

Much might have been said which was not said because one had to remember that people had come to sketch and not listen to a lecture. That people are happiest when struggling to achieve, for example, invited comment. Achievement surely means that what one struggles for is eventually attained. In the case of the man who had built up a business and passed it on to his sons, the latter obviously could not find the same happiness in struggling to achieve the same thing which had *already been achieved*. It is very probable that the father's fight to achieve had been so intensive that it had made him lose sight of real values. In the modern world business success to many people is the only worthwhile thing to strive for and having gained it, they find themselves on a dull, flat plain without any exhilarating hills to climb. Yet there *are* other hills, but there is no fun in repeatedly climbing the same hill. Probably none would have advocated the successful father voluntarily ruining his business that the sons might find happiness in struggling to achieve success in it anew!

Several thought that happiness was to be found in the simple life and appeared to consider this synonymous with poverty, which does not simplify life but complicates it. The woman who tries to do a part-time job, run a home and look after her family because she cannot make ends meet on her husband's salary or give her children the opportunities she desires for them, does not live simply; neither do those who take a cottage in the country without amenities, with no electricity, gas or running water, and try to live largely on what they can grow. "Believe me, the simple life is about the most complicated anyone can lead," said an old lady who had tried both an involuntary poverty and afterwards comparative comfort when an uncle died and left her an adequate income.

A man who has a revolver is not obliged to use it, he can keep it in his holster; but the knowledge that it is there does protect him against attacks on his life and liberty. The possession of a sufficient income does not compel anyone to keep a car if he prefers walking. It does, in fact, give him opportunities for walking which he might not have in all probability without it, if he were so fully engaged in getting a living that every minute counted and transport by bus or car "saved time." An income not dependent on work would enable a man to decide how he would live. There could be no surer safeguard against attacks on the liberty of the person.

Most agreed that professions were overcrowded and manufacturers suffered from intense competition, but thought that "clever people" could always discover new professions, could invent new wants and advertise them. If happiness is to be found in simplicity, exactly where would the inventors and manufacturers of new wants find markets for their wares? Are we not already bombarded with advertisements trying to persuade us that we cannot live decently and preserve the respect of our neighbours or even the love of husbands and wives without their products, few of which we should ever have thought of requiring if left to ourselves? If simplicity is desirable—and surely it *is* for most of us—why should it be continually

attacked; why should there be ceaseless attempts to turn it into luxury for the sake of providing other people with "work"?

Alfred the Great, Archbishop Stephen Langton, Bishop Wilberforce, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Florence Nightingale and Hannah Fry are a few only of those who found that their environment offended their conscience and refused to adapt themselves to it.

To leave things to evolution is to leave them to what appears to be a natural tendency towards running down; that is to say that everything seems to degenerate without continual renewal. Most agreed that we were "going backwards" at the present time but thought the pendulum was "beginning to swing the other way." None thought the Christian religion had or could have any practical application; religion generally was "intolerant" and, therefore, did more harm than good. This latter remark surprised the Social Creditor who thought that if there was one reproach more than another that could be brought against the present-day church, it was that it tolerated everything, even the moneylenders in the temple.

D. BEAMISH.

Inflation

It is indisputable that the matter of the gravest concern to the majority of the British people is the continuous rise in prices. The old people with their inadequate pensions are hit the hardest by it, and the only persons who are not quite so concerned about it are the minority, whose incomes are considerably higher than the average—Coal Board organisers, for instance, who, it appears, receive £64 per week.

Of course it is a fact that prices have been steadily rising for a hundred years or more, but it is significant that they have risen much more rapidly since the advent of the "Socialistic New Order"—nationalisation, planning, controls, marketing boards and all the rest of it. Isn't it strange that with tremendous progress prices should rise at all; one could reasonably expect them to get lower and lower.

The statement that inflation is too much money chasing too few goods has appeared frequently in various publications. Is it beyond the wit of man to prevent too much money chasing too few goods? Curiously enough, some years back it was too little money and vast quantities of goods. It should be noted that under the present economic and financial system, an enormous systematic destruction of commodities that people need and desire, but cannot afford to buy with prices at the prevailing level, goes on incessantly.

I submit that the basic cause of inflation is the financial debt system that we are under—the usurious bank loan system operated by the banks of the world, whereby banks create money by a figure entry in bank ledgers at a nominal cost for lending. Every bank loan is a creation of entirely new money called financial credit (bankers create the means of payment out of nothing—*Encyclopaedia Britannica*) and is, therefore, a clear addition to the amount of money in circulation. When industrialists borrow from the banks the principal, plus interest, has of course to be recovered in prices. Now that the Bank of England is nationalised the Government still obtain the money they require in practically the same way through what is known as the Ways and Means

Account, and an ever-increasing debt is still being piled up against us which is the basis of the fantastic level of taxation. If we own the bank, as we ostensibly do by having it nationalised, why do we have to borrow from it? How can we be in debt to ourselves? Taxation naturally has to go into costs and consequently into prices, and is, therefore, one of the chief causes of inflation.

Furthermore, the system we are under does not allow any purchasing power to be issued except such as is charged into costs and consequently must go into prices. The situation is aggravated by excessive capital expenditure, excessive exports, production of unnecessary, wasteful, and even harmful products, swollen bureaucracy, excessive wage claims, and crazy outlay on such things as ground nuts and space travel. If our Parliamentary representatives cannot perceive the fundamental and main causes of inflation, they must indeed be blind. The true economic facts are as follows:—During this century the application of power (wind, water, coal, oil, electricity, automatic power) reduces the human element per unit of production and, therefore in terms of man hours and wages cheapens production. The same effect is brought about by improved methods, discoveries, inventions, etc. If the money system reflected reality there would have been a steady, progressive, and marked reduction in the general price level; instead, there has been a steady overall inflation (a 1914 £1 is now worth about 8s. 4d.), when if the money system reflected facts it should be worth about £3 or £4. The money cost is about 24 times the real cost. Incomes on the average are not more than about 16 times the real cost. And because 16 cannot buy 24 there is debt, ever-mounting debt—and frustration.

Making ends meet

The position we have arrived at is thus—in a super-abundant world after thousands of years' experience in agriculture and tremendous progress in the industrial arts, the majority of people and particularly the aged and those on fixed incomes, are worried as to how to make ends meet with consequent strain and anxiety, causing ill-health and probably disease also, not to mention failure to achieve a reasonable measure of satisfaction and happiness.

I can confidently assert that the first and chief desire of at least 80 per cent. of the electorate is for the cost of living to be drastically reduced, and yet our Parliamentary representatives of all parties who, at the time of the General Election, stated that their first consideration would be to reduce the cost of living, not only appear to be indifferent towards it and have done nothing to mitigate it, but the Government without much opposition from the other parties have actually taken measures to aggravate it by increased taxes. Whose policy are they implementing? It is not ours! And we are supposed to be a democracy! What will happen if it is not stopped? Wages increase on account of rising prices, wages go into costs, therefore prices rise still more, causing further agitation to increase wages, and so on ad infinitum. A vicious circle indeed! Well, if it does go on to the bitter end, it will almost certainly mean an economic collapse. It happened in Russia in 1918 and in Germany in 1921.

(To be concluded).