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FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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Coherent Poetry

by H. SWABEY.

The Italian poet Torquato Tasso aroused the enmity of his ruler and was confined for seven years in an asylum. This happened in the days of the rack and bonfire, but Tasso had a couple of rooms and some degree of comfort. The American poet Ezra Pound criticised his ruler and has already been detained nearly ten years, on similar grounds, but without any such amenities as Tasso enjoyed.

Astonishingly enough, Pound still composes poetry which even the American public cannot disregard. Recently he has made a lively translation of Sophocles's *Women of Trachis*. This, he claims, "presents the highest peak of Greek sensibility registered in any of the plays that have come down to us." This is high praise, for in his *Antigone* Sophocles distinguished between Law and laws, in the *Philoctetes* he rated force and fraud, and in *Oedipus the Tyrant* he brought the tyrant down to ruin and disgrace. Euripides, another tragedian, disgusted his contemporary, Plato, "because he praised tyrants."

Some translators are said to interpose a thicker barrier between the reader and the original than the Greek language. But Pound presents readable poetry that increases respect for both poets.

Moreover, Sophocles has a special religious ("binding back to reality") interest. This play is, says the translator, "nearest the original form of the God-Dance." A few lines show the wit of the poets:

"if he taught you to lie,
the lesson you learned is

not

a nice one.

And if you taught yourself to lie,
thinking some good would come of it,
you saw cross-eyed.

You come out with the truth, the whole
truth. Now.

It's no compliment to call a free man a liar,
When a free man is called a liar it's no pretty compliment. . . ."

Successive American governments have shown no conscience about the detention of Pound or shame for the modern form of rack applied to his person. He has survived these indignities, but no politician has risked votes by advocating his freedom.

The public, whether appreciative of poetry and economics or not, should note the vicious determination of America's unchanging rulers to expunge the individual. And, if fault there has been, this inability to exercise Christian forgiveness or to extend honourable mercy, for great services to poetry. Great sciences these days are

evidently confined to damnable destruction and concentration of power which, incidentally, 'solves the unemployment problem.' The end of work, said Aristotle, is leisure and the end of war is peace. The tyrant, he added, must remove eminent citizens.

Pound, indubitably a greater poet than Tasso, picks out the phrase, *It all coheres*, as the key to the play. The phrase is worth more attention than better known Greek tags like, *Everything flows*. A writer's work should cohere if he has anything to say, and a strange fate evidently overtakes poets if they say too much. Politicians are incoherent mostly because they do not follow principle and merely exercise conditional power. And only with clear insight and integrity can we form a coherent idea of what is really happening.

The publication of a version of the Yalta Conference suggests that Roosevelt was not exactly as he appeared anyhow. A politician partakes of unreality, but a poet partakes of reality; and Pound undeniably is a poet who has refused to limit himself to the byeways where a smaller man could have been safe.

Centralised Government

From a correspondent in Western Australia we have received notes and press cuttings on the amalgamations of local government bodies in that State. The pattern is similar to that followed, and still being followed in the Eastern States.

The Local Government Minister, Mr. Fraser, said that the alterations of municipal borders, which the Government had already approved to operate this year, were only the first step towards closer amalgamation.

Both North Fremantle and East Fremantle Municipal Councils lodged ratepayers' protests against amalgamation with Fremantle City Council.

North Fremantle Council has been in existence since 1895 and it was felt that the district's interests would be served better as a separate municipality than as a ward of the Fremantle City Council.

In 1954 a referendum of the East Fremantle ratepayers resulted in an eight to one majority against amalgamation. However, the Government has taken advantage of the provisions of Municipal Corporations Act 1906-1947 to over-rule the wishes of the ratepayers.

Ecclesiastical History

"Only I would that the virtue and sincerity of [ecclesiastical history] were in accord with its mass and quantity."
—Francis Bacon in *The Advancement of Learning*.

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A Fragment of Douglas

A Rector of the Church of England in Australia has given us permission to publish the following letter he received from Major C. H. Douglas in 1932:

"Your letter of May 12th., gave me much pleasure to receive, and I can assure you that while, as you suggest, my mail on the subject of Social Credit is considerable, I am always glad to hear from anyone with a grasp of the wider implications of its point of view.

"You may be amused to hear that in breakfasting with the Archbishop of York [that was William Temple] some months ago I had a great deal more difficulty in obtaining assent to the moral implications, which you put so clearly and which I think are unquestionably those which are implicated in Christianity, than in regard to technical matters. The idea of monetary thrift is so ingrained in current religious ethics that there is no doubt that it comes as a mental shock to people to hear it questioned. 'Take no thought for to-morrow' is, like so many other sound economic principles which have been laid down, regarded as a pure abstraction instead of a scientific proposition.

"To anyone who, like yourself, realises the tremendous issues which are involved, over and above mere changes in the financial system, it is clear that this battle will not be won, if it is won, without splitting the world. If it is not won, we shall, of course, retreat into the dark ages, and it may take hundreds of years for a new civilisation to arise, which will ultimately be confronted with the same problem. But after a good deal of blood and tears, I believe that this time the battle will be won."

Towards Leisure

In 1933 the famous Bata boot factory, in Czechoslovakia, reported the invention of a machine which needed only to be fed with leather and thread. Then, without human agency, it proceeds to manufacture boots and shoes, which need only the insertion of laces to be ready for wear. (The machine was not being operated; not because it was inefficient—far from it—but because it was too efficient, and would, if operated, throw too many people out of work.)

A lamp-making machine invented in 1933, would enable the German Osram Company to supply the whole requirements of the German markets in a few weeks if the new machine were allowed to operate continuously at full capacity.

From Week to Week

It is a commonplace that the standard of civilisation is falling. The roots of this lie in the philosophy of materialism, and in the policy of full employment.

Art and, more broadly, culture—and even bad art and declining culture—are manifestations of the spirit; but where this either is not recognised, or is denied, the incarnation of the idea is deformed. Thus most of contemporary art ranges from the merely unattractive to the downright repulsive.

Probably self-development of man—man's end in life—is achieved through creative activity; and from this creative activity culture arises and is developed. Doubtless culture is in some way proportional to the number of spirits free to engage in this creative activity, while the decline of civilisation is related to full 'employment.' It is only the highly exceptional man who can advance genuine culture as well as spend himself in the mere gaining of a livelihood.

Thus, what is wrong with the world in many ways may be summarised as a lack of leisure. There is much else wrong besides, but in a sense this is a root trouble, which in these coming days of automatic factories may perhaps be recognised in a wide enough sphere to lead to its rectification. Once again, *daemon est deus inversus*; and we must up-end the monster of work, and achieve the Leisure State.

What is usually referred to as a "high standard of living" is, in reality, to a large extent only a complicated standard. A great deal of it is "keeping up with the Joneses," and another large part is the 'necessity' for labour-saving devices to enable the family to go to work to pay for them.

It would, no doubt, surprise most people to find how much more satisfying their lives became if they simplified their demands to the genuine essentials, and devoted themselves then to some form of creative activity—art or craft. And if this were done on an at all extensive scale, the result would probably surprise everybody. To do this would be to give practical expression to Social Credit as a way of life; and if there were enough such Social Crediters, we should have Social Credit.

"The idea [of automatic factories] is not so completely new as the recent stories in the daily Press might lead one to think.

"In the 1920's A. O. Smith & Co. of Milwaukee set up fully automatic machinery for the manufacture of motor-car frames. This is fed with strips of steel, which it passes automatically from station to station, while it cuts, bends and presses them, and punches rivet holes. Still automatically the various parts are brought together, riveted and finally brushed and cleaned and delivered ready for painting. Each frame takes 90 minutes to travel through the machine, but a frame is delivered every 10 seconds. The total staff numbers 120, mostly supervisory and maintenance, so that the transformation from steel strip to complete chassis costs about 20 man-minutes per frame. Even if we paid the whole staff at the rate of £2,000 a year, the labour cost per chassis would be a little over six shillings!" (Dr. S. Lilley in *Discovery*, April, 1955.)

In the approbrious sense in which the materialists and their comrades used the term, 'reactionary' is now the fitting designation for that diminishing band. There is something desperate, almost pathetic, in their appeals for a renewed faith in 'Science.' That the scientific is the appropriate method for the exploration of only a limited aspect of reality is a fact being appreciated by an ever-growing body of significant thought, including that of scientists themselves, and it is against that recognition that the materialists are reacting.

Of course, the knowledge gained through scientific method is for all time part of the heritage of mankind. But only part. In principle, scientific knowledge is easy to comprehend; hence the great popularity of books and lectures on science—not to mention the marvels of children's comics. But it is quite another matter to grasp the meaning of art, of ethics, of religion.

The Churches survived the onslaught of materialism. They could survive, since they stood for something more than materialism. But unless they show a better grasp of what they stand for than they have shown recently, they may very well not survive the greater understanding of the Age in gestation now.

Socialised Atomic Energy

The following letter appeared in the correspondence column of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 27, 1955:

Sir,—The trend towards socialised atomic energy referred to by R. C. Wheeler, M.P., during the Supply debate in the Federal Parliament (*Herald*, May 26) is the inevitable outcome of administration by a Government statutory corporation.

This applies to the statutory corporation whether it is the creation of a Labour socialistic Government, as exemplified by the Government airline, T.A.A., or the Liberal-Country Party's Atomic Energy Commission.

While your report of Mr. Wheeler's speech, would, no doubt, cover the important aspects of the problem, as seen by Mr. Wheeler, it is remarkable that no reference was made by him to the dangerous tendency—certainly at the administrative level and as far as I am aware not denied Ministerially—of the A.E.C. decision to enter the educational field in nuclear engineering at the expense of, or at least in parallel with, our universities.

This tendency of certain Government statutory corporations to enter the field of education is a dangerous and unwarranted challenge to academic freedom which is so essential in the fight against socialism and Communism.

H. D. AHERN,
Legislative Council.

The Fig Tree

All the material for the delayed issue of *The Fig Tree* for December, 1954, is now in the printers' hands, and the delivery of copies to subscribers should not be long postponed.

The issue to follow, dated March, 1955, will be devoted chiefly to the unfinished work of the late Major C. H. Douglas "Whose Service is Perfect Freedom" with an editorial note on its history.

The proprietors of *The Fig Tree* deeply regret the disturbance of regularity in the publication of the journal, which has occurred through circumstances beyond their control.

Pensions and Production

Mr. Menzies, in the "Arthur E. Mills Memorial Oration," which he delivered to the Royal Australasian College of Physicians in Sydney, referred to the "problems" associated with the rise in the average expectancy of life.

From the text of his address we take the following:

"In the present century the physician, the chemist, the engineer have wrought wonders in preventive medicine; antibiotic and related drugs have eliminated some diseases and drastically reduced the mortality of others;—literally, millions of lives have been saved which 60 years' ago would have been lost.

"The effect of all this is, even now, difficult to estimate. That it has been of benefit to mankind is beyond question. That it has added to the problems of politics I have no doubt; for, though politicians, having this in common with ordinary mortals, live longer (physically at any rate) than their predecessors of the 18th century, they find increasingly that the growth of numbers in the old age groups is proportionately so much greater than that of numbers in the earning and productive age groups that the relation between Government social services and the national product is achieving a new significance, bringing with it the most remarkable changes in our social, economic and financial structure.

"I was born in 1894. At that time in Australia the average complete expectation of life for a male child was approximately 50 to 51 years. But today the average is approximately 67 or 68 years. You will at once perceive the nature of the new social problem. As the average expectation of life rises, so do more and more in percentage of our people live to what we call the 'pensionable age' or the 'retiring age.' And under modern conditions a greater and greater percentage of those of pensionable age take the pension. Twenty years ago the percentage was 33; today it has risen to 40.

"As the amount and conditions of pensions become more liberal, so does the financial burden grow. This in its turn involves two things. One is that the taxation burden grows. The other is that the task of increasing production becomes more and more important, because it is only out of the community's production that any Government can pay financial benefits. It is trite politico economic learning that Governments are creatures, not creators, and that they can spend nothing which human beings have not earned and produced. If the value of production does not increase in at least the same proportion as the numbers of beneficiaries and the relative payments made to them, then taxation must be increased, with perhaps depressing effects upon production, or payments to beneficiaries must be reduced. . . ."

Mr. Menzies failed to mention the enormous increase in production over the past thirty years, to go no further. We make good his deficiency by giving some of the facts.

The facts are simple—as facts usually are. Every time a new machine (the motor car for instance) or a new apparatus (such as wireless) is invented, new employment is of course given by its manufacture. But before long it is being mass-produced by clever machinery on such a scale that the employment it originally called forth is eventually reduced to no more than enough to give work to those turned out of other jobs by other automatic machinery. This latter process being cumulative, there are never enough

outstanding inventions of consumer goods, giving new employment, to even distantly approach the continual stream of new labour-saving devices applied to existing productive machinery which is therefore constantly requiring less and less human labour.

Between 1924 and 1929, machinery increased output per worker by 11 per cent.

In 25 years it increased 50 per cent. in the U.S.A.

Between 1919 and 1927, in thirty-five American factories, the output per man-hour rose by 74 per cent.

As an example of what Science is achieving in one field only, there are 250,000 workers whose jobs could be done better and more cheaply by the photo-electric cell or 'electric eye.'

Christianity and the Law

We are indebted to *The Advocate*, Melbourne, February 17, 1955, for the report of a sermon delivered by Rev. Father Kevin O'Sullivan at St. Mary's Church, Geelong on February 8, 1955, from which we publish the following extracts:

"One amazing fact in this amazing age is that never have there been so many who practise law, and so few who know what law is. . . .

"There was a time when our Judges were the champions and defenders of the natural rights of the 'free and lawful man' of English law. Today they deny that we have, against the State, any natural rights.

"There was a time when Christianity was part of the Common law of England. In every century Lord Chancellors, up to Lord Eldon in 1819, had expressly declared that 'Christianity is part and parcel of the Common Law of England.' In 1917 the House of Lords declared that Christianity was no longer part of the law of England. This, probably the most fundamental and far reaching change ever made in English law, was made, not by Parliament—no Parliament would have dared—but by four Judges of the House of Lords.

"There was a time when Judges of the superior courts (such as Coke in *Bonham's Case*) did not hesitate to strike down a statute that was against the divine or natural law. 'The Law of Nature' wrote Blackstone (1 Com. 27.40) 'being coeval with mankind, and dictated by God Himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe in all countries and at all times; no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this; and such of them as are valid derive all their force, and all their authority mediately or immediately from this original.' Today Blackstone's statement is called 'stark nonsense.' Commenting on the new order (but not commending it) Sir William Holdsworth, Professor of Law at the University of Oxford wrote: 'The Judges are obliged to admit that (the Statutes) however morally unjust must be obeyed.' (Vol. IV, 186). Our modern jurists have accepted Hobbes's dictum. 'Governments make the things they command just, by commanding them; and the things they forbid unjust, by forbidding them. . . . The law may be iniquitous, but it cannot be unjust.' (Vol. VI, 25).

"In the passage quoted Holdsworth proceeds to define the new role of our Judges—the one-time defenders of our

liberties: 'There was no need, therefore, for the Courts to be anything but useful servants of the Crown.' The tragedy is that our Judges have accepted their new role. 'We sit here' said Willes, J. (6 C.P. 582) 'as servants of the Queen and the Legislature.'

"Lawyers! Under our modern theory of law—rather I should say in the modern absence of any theory of law, for there is only one possible theory of law that recognises and protects the natural rights and liberties of the subject—we are being robbed of a glorious heritage, the noblest system of law the mind of man has evolved, the Common Law of England. . . .

"Commenting on the decision in *Bowman's Case* (where the House of Lords declared that Christianity was no longer part of the law of England), Holdsworth wrote: 'It is not unlikely that Caesar, now that he has deliberately abandoned the task of securing for God the things that are God's, will find considerably greater difficulty in securing for himself the things that are Caesar's.' He spoke truly. The challenge to authority in all its forms is one of today's great problems. The authority of the law has been undermined by the very ones we trusted to uphold it—the Judges of the superior courts. Authority is undermined because the only source of all authority is denied—'The fool has said in his heart there is no God.'

"The decisive contest of our day, lies not so much in politics or economics, as in jurisprudence—in our concept of the scope, function and authority of human law. Professor R. W. Chambers states the issue: 'Upon that difference—whether or no we place the Divine Law in the last resort above the law of the State—depends the whole future of the world.'

"The difference is fundamental and it is insistent. It is the difference between Christianity and Communism. It is the difference between the rule of law and naked tyranny. It is the difference in the very concepts of man. Is man a being, created by a loving God, redeemed by the Blood of Christ, destined to eternal glory? Or is he the accidental spawn of an accidental monkey, destined to disintegrate into the accidental drift from which he accidentally evolved? Which will prevail—the truth about man or the lie? Truly upon that difference depends the whole future of the world. . . .

"The framers of the Common Law saw man as a rational being, possessed of an immortal soul, created by God after His own image, destined by God for eternal happiness, endowed by God with a nature which would be frustrated if man did not live in society and under authority. They saw therefore that the State was ordained by God. It must therefore have from God all, and only, that authority which is necessary to perform its proper function—to promote the common good. In seeing all this they had one enormous advantage—they were seeing objective truth. They knew what man was, and what the State was in God's plan. And because they knew that, they knew what law was, and what it always must be. Law is that rational ordinance, for the common good, promulgated by the person or body who has the care of the community. It is that order which is necessary or convenient to the nature and purpose, both of man and the State. If a law is against the divine law—the divine will—it cannot possibly be good either for man or the State. . . ."