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FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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“ . . . Neither Do They Spin . . . ”

by BRYAN W. MONAHAN.

IV.

Work, the curse of Adam.

Is there any point in labour-saving machinery, and if so, what is the point?

In the most fundamental sense, work may be defined as the activity necessary to support life. This definition at once raises the question, why live? And this question points to a beyond to life as such.

Even the most cursory acquaintance with history shows the striving of man to rise above “life as such.” It is what a man can do after he has satisfied his personal necessity for food, clothes and shelter that, in the last resort, counts with him. It is what he can make of himself and do with himself which matters. It is in the extent to which he must devote himself to the mere provision of necessities that work is the curse of Adam; the more closely he is bound to this necessity, the less he is free to fulfil that destiny, the evidence of which lies in the art treasures of history.

This, then, is the point of labour-saving machinery: to set men free to find and achieve their individual destinies.

It has often been calculated that in a modern industrialised community the basic needs for an adequate material standard of living could be satisfied by the employment of a few man-hours per head *per week*. In fact, these basic needs *are* met by the employment of a few man-hours per head per week, but the fact is almost completely obscured because those few hours are entangled with a far greater volume of employment in other industrial activity. It may assist in clarifying the situation to classify economic activity in general.

1. Primary production.
2. Processing of primary production.
3. Distribution of raw and processed materials.

These three items comprise the production and distribution of ‘food’ and ‘clothing.’

4. Production of raw materials of building.
5. Processing of building materials.
6. Building units of domestic housing.

Items 4, 5 and 6 comprise ‘shelter.’

7. Building of factories for production of consumer goods.
8. Building of factories for production of capital equipment.

9. Public works
 - (a) of immediate utility;
 - (b) of potential utility;
 - (c) of remote utility.
10. Production for a surplus of exports over imports (‘favourable’ balance of trade).
11. Production of munitions.
12. Services—armed forces, *etc.*
13. Administration.
14. Advertising.

It is obvious at once that such a classification as the above is inexact and not comprehensive. There is overlap between one category and another, and doubtless there are omissions. But it may also be noticed that the lack of precision becomes more marked as the classification moves from the earlier items, which represent the interests of individuals, to the later. The production, in some form, of food, clothing and shelter is an immediate and comprehensible necessity. But the further we move from that sort of production, the more a case has to be made out to justify further activities.

By and large, some sort of a case can be made out for everything included in the classification. But what of the enormous activity represented by administration, advertising, and deliberate artificial obsolescence—*i.e.*, of manufacturing articles to have a deliberately limited ‘life,’ so as to ensure the necessity for their continuous replacement?

The omnibus answer is Full Employment.

V.

The fundamental idea of Full Employment is that everybody *ought* to be constrained by necessity, and remote control, to be occupied fully in the pursuit of food, clothes and shelter. The necessity for remote control arises, of course, from the introduction of labour-saving machinery. To the extent that labour-saving machinery is applied to the provision only of food, clothes and shelter, men must correspondingly be left “at a loose end.” Hence the need for gadgets, obsolescence and advertising. The question is, is the possession of a household full of gadgets a better thing than the pursuit of a vocation?

It is very probable that under modern economic conditions the construction of, for example, the old beautiful cathedrals would be a financial (or economic?) impossibility. Yet how were they ever built?

Yet this problem of being “at a loose end” is a very real one. The cathedrals *were* built *because* even before the introduction of modern labour-saving machinery, and

(Continued on page 3.)

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Democracy

Democracy is frequently and falsely defined as the rule of the majority—a definition quite sufficient to account for its unpopularity with many persons whose opinion is not unworthy of consideration. As so defined, it is a mere trap, set by knaves to catch simpletons; the rule of the majority never has existed, and, fortunately never will exist. If such a thing were possible, it would be the ultimate Terror, beside which, the worst individual despot would seem a kindly patriarch. It is under cover of this definition, however, that unscrupulous men in every country are enabled to evade the consequences which anti-social intriguing would bring upon them, by working up a spurious, because uninformed, public opinion, which is the greatest barrier to effective and rapid progress known to the hidden hands of finance and politics. Real democracy is something different, and is the expression of the policy of the majority, and, so far as that policy is concerned with economics, is the freedom of an increasing majority of individuals to make use of the facilities provided for them, in the first place, by a number of persons who will always be, as they have always been, in the minority.

Any other conception of democracy simply does not take cognisance of the facts, does not believe in human nature as it is, and consequently, taking its stand on the doctrine of original sin, requires as a first postulate of improvement a change of heart which is expected to make all men and women over again, so that a standardised world will be uniformly attractive to all of them. A standardised world requires someone to set the standards, and it is to this authoritative democracy that the capitalistic governments of the world are willing, if they must, to resign the sceptre of Kaiserism and plutocracy, knowing quite well that it will avail nothing that Labour has its administrative councils, its shop committees, its constituent assemblies, or even its Soviets, so long as the control of credit enables the real policy of the world—the policy which controls the conditions under which mankind obtains board and clothing, without which the mightiest genius is more helpless than a well-fed idiot—to be dictated from the sources out of which it now proceeds.—C. H. Douglas in *Credit Power and Democracy*.

The Power of the Minority

The disastrous results produced by the modern party system and by the use of the mass vote to destroy and eliminate the more intelligent vote, have influenced political thinking to such an extent that certain factors vital to the control of governments have escaped their proper emphasis.

Democratic government has come to mean, in common parlance, the "counting of noses," and hence it is assumed that if the "counting of noses" is introduced into a country like India or China, a democratic government has been installed. This is a major fallacy. The British parliamentary system of government, in the day of its greatest success, that is, before the rigid party system came into force, rested on the power of independent members; also, parliamentary systems of government are maintained within bounds mostly by outside criticism and by pressure exerted by a large number of different types of voluntary organisations, which have had long experience in self-government, and whose executives have had the necessary training in the complicated business of the political and semi-political worlds. It should be remembered, too, that few other countries have had the intensive and the long experience in local government as has Great Britain.

All governments, even dictatorships, must submit to the pressure of public opinion; that is why dictators and would-be dictators consider propaganda so important. Dictators go further than this; they consider it not only necessary to "condition" the minds of the majority, but they consider it essential that the minority, even if it be but a minority of one, which thinks differently, should be silenced. In doing this, they rightly discern that all new ideas and all new movements must start with a minority of one.

What people do depends upon what they think about things, and it is cheaper and more effective to make people believe that heavy taxes are necessary than to collect taxes by means of brute force. Ideas, therefore, are powerful, and that is why only men with certain chosen ideas are selected to speak regularly over the National Broadcasting Stations.

Most of the population is not seriously interested in politics. A large section of the male population of the city accepts little responsibility even in their own domestic affairs; all their problems are handed to someone else to solve. Only the women and a small percentage of the male population are experienced in the acceptance of responsibility. Yet society is organised on the basis of this acceptance; this can easily be seen in any workshop, union, or home.

Faced with a crisis or a problem, the majority say: "What are THEY going to do about it?" and wait to see. The responsible minority say: "What can I do about it?" and then do it. In the latter case the link between thought and action is born of self-assurance, and has become automatic through use. These are the men on whom, instinctively, all rely.

In a political crisis, the members of each little group go to their active member for advice and guidance. They probably have not the slightest idea what all the bother is about; Bill, the foreman, knows, so they ask Bill. And what Bill says goes. It is a matter of trust and integrity—

Bill's integrity—established over a good many years. So that, given the facts, and a fair chance to discuss and decide the matter, public opinion will be largely the result of what responsible men think—what Bill thinks.

Political propaganda is designed to confuse Bill so that he is not sure where he is. If the scale of political problems can be enlarged so that they concern vast multitudes, and if the power of decision can be taken away from Bill's locality, then taken away from his State to Canberra, and then from Canberra to Washington, Bill, and everybody else, is in complete confusion. Bill doesn't know where he is. If, on the top of that, you can confuse him with talks about Russia (which Bill has never seen, nor is likely to see), and swamp him with books on dialectic materialism and other pseudo-scientific nonsense, then Bill begins to feel that the world he knew has passed away. The link between thought and action has been severed; the forces of evil have captured the fortress. That is why it is so desperately necessary that we should control as much as possible our own lives locally. Everywhere the "internationalists" have been the enemies of society.—James Guthrie in *Our Sham Democracy or The Majority Vote Racket*.

The Creation of Credit

A recent Gallup Poll disclosed that a majority of electors are opposed to a policy of credit restriction. It is obviously realised more generally today that credit policy governs economic policies. When this journal first started publishing in 1935, comparatively few people understood the facts concerning credit creation. However, if it has done nothing else, and it has, the Social Credit Movement has successfully shattered the old myth that there is only a fixed amount of money in existence and that the banking system operates on the profits it makes from lending money obtained from depositors.

When we first started to publicise the facts concerning credit creation by the banking system we were bitterly opposed by so-called authorities who claimed, amongst other things, that we were destroying that delicate thing called "confidence." But today Mr. H. W. Whyte, Chairman of the New Zealand Associated Banks, can tell the New Zealand Monetary Commission the facts about credit creation without any risk of being labelled a crank. Mr. Whyte said:

"The banks do create money. They have been doing it for a long time, but they didn't quite realise it, and they did not admit it. Very few did. You will find it in all sorts of documents, financial textbooks, etc. . . . today I doubt very much whether you would get many prominent bankers to attempt to deny that banks create credit. I have told you that they do; Mr. Ashwin has told you that they do; Mr. Fussell (Governor of the New Zealand Reserve Bank) has told you that they do."

During the war years we drew attention to the significance of the fact that suddenly it was generally admitted by bankers, economists, and other "experts," that banks were primarily manufacturers of credit. We pointed out that it was obvious that the enemies of Social Credit were preparing to implement a policy of "managed money" and to intensify moves towards the Welfare State. Even money reform became respectable so long as it was not suggested

that money control be effectively decentralised amongst all members of the community.

The very term "managed money" implies that a few managers will dictate to the individual just how his money shall be spent. And this is what is happening today. So long as the majority accept the "full employment" objective, new financial credits will be made available only to ensure that individuals are employed on those activities approved of by the central planners. Unless halted, this must lead ultimately to the complete Socialist State. The fundamental financial and economic issue today concerns the control of credit not the creation of it.—*The New Times*, Melbourne, December 2, 1955.

"... NEITHER DO THEY SPIN..."—

(continued from page 1.)

the harnessing of power many times greater than the total manpower of a given community, men were free of the necessity of devoting themselves entirely to the provision of food, clothes and shelter. Out of this freedom arose the sense of vocation.

The contemporary problem should be stated, not as one of Full Employment, but of Full Vocation.

VI.

There is abroad a great fear of idleness. Not for oneself, but for the other fellow. The man who wins a lottery or football pool is not worried by the prospect of idleness. He thinks that now he will be able to do all the things he has always wanted to do. Others, it is true, may disapprove of what he does; but still they envy him his good fortune.

It is doubtless the case that vast numbers of people, educated but little above illiteracy, dulled by years in narrow routine employment, misinformed and conditioned by propaganda and advertising, entertained by commercialised sport and lowest common denominator films, canned jazz and nationalised broadcasting, would be at a loss if faced with much leisure. But is this any reason for persistence in a policy which produces such caricatures of human beings? Charles Curran (*Spectator*, January 20, 1956) describes them thus:

"From September to May one or more members of the household will devote an evening every week to filling in football coupons with forecasts of match results. The private daydream of winning a large sum of money in this way is all but universal. You can start a conversation on any doorstep by asking 'What would you do if you won the pools?' It is a question that almost every adult has pondered in detail.

"But even more than the football coupon, it is the reading-matter of the New Estate that gives me the key to its state of mind. It buys newspapers and weekly periodicals in large numbers; and nearly all of them (the main exception is the *News of the World*) displays one characteristic in common. They exploit the tabloid method of presentation that has become more and more popular with the British public since the war—and nowhere more than on the New Estate. . . .

"The skilled technicians of the tabloid press are giving the New Estate something that it wants urgently and

desperately: a refuge from nuclear nightmares and threatening chaos and a world of baffling problems for which nobody can provide slogan solutions. The tabloids are not pornographic, as some inexact critics suppose. They offer a simple, cheerful, manageable universe, a warm cosy place of sex, excitement, triviality, and fantasy. They supply the New Estate with an art-form of its own in the comic strip—a psychologically accurate device for providing selected strata of readers with wish-fulfilment picture patterns in which they can see themselves as potent young men or sexually irresistible young women.

“The psychological hunger of the New Estate is exhibited also in its preoccupation with the shadow personalities of radio, television, the cinema and the gramophone record—and in the large amount of space which the tabloids devote to them. Some of these personalities have now acquired a three-dimensional existence in the minds of their devotees. (Last month, for example, large numbers of people sent postal orders to Mr. Dan Archer, an imaginary character in a B.B.C. serial story about a farm, asking him to supply them with Christmas poultry.) These figures, some of them real, some mythical, are the gods and goddesses of the New Estate. They inhabit the daydream heaven of wealth, luxury and sexual attraction to which the football coupons will one day provide a ticket of admission.

“An interior life of this kind, and on this scale, is something that has not previously existed in England. . .”

To see what alternative policy is possible, it is necessary to be clear as to the fundamental facts. The chief of these is that it is possible now, and has been for very many years, for a small and decreasing fraction of the population of an industrialised country to produce all that is required for a high physical standard of living for the whole community. The second is that the *apparent* complexity and difficulty of obtaining and maintaining a ‘standard of living’ is due to the persistence at all costs in the policy of “if any would not work, neither should he eat.”

The alternative policy, then, is that men, having discharged their small obligations for their basic standard of living, should be free to decide for themselves how they shall spend the rest of their time.

Suppose, for example, that one-fifth of a country's resources of men, utilising machinery and power, is sufficient to supply the basic needs of the population for a satisfactory standard of food, clothing and shelter. Then a man is under a natural obligation to make available for this purpose one-fifth of his time. This does not mean that working hours should be reduced to a fifth of what they are; a fifth of a man's working life might be given to this necessity, working normal hours, or some other combination, or variations to suit particular cases, might be suitable.

Nor does this mean that all production other than that entailed in providing a basic standard of living should cease. But it does mean, as the late C. H. Douglas enunciated it, that “every individual can avail himself of the benefits of science and mechanism; that by their aid he is placed in such a position of advantage, that in common with his fellows he can choose, with increasing freedom and complete independence, *whether he will or will not assist in any project which may be placed before him.*” (*Economic Democracy*, 1919; my italics).

If a man is glad (or thankful) to ‘get a job,’ (or ‘any sort of job’) he is not likely to be too particular as to what that job is, and even less likely to be concerned with the ultimate consequences of his, with others, taking that job. But if he has obtained an adequate standard of living by the expenditure of only a part of his available working-time, and thus is free to decide for himself whether he will undertake a further ‘job,’ he will approach the matter from quite another angle.

This aspect, though, is probably of less practical importance than the fact that men like doing things. Practically every child quite early in life starts to make things. Some drop this practical activity in favour of intellectual pursuits; but in principle the activity is the same. When, however, the grim necessity of ‘working for a living’ becomes paramount, it absorbs the energy which previously displayed itself in spontaneous creative activity.

With a feeling of leisure, as opposed to Full Employment, this creative activity could well find one expression, amongst others, in furnishing the home with articles built from the point of view of a craftsman, instead of with the shoddy products of mass-production. And as a corollary to this, it is desirable to consider the aims and effect of modern education.

(To be continued.)

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