

THE SOCIAL CREDITER

FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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"Vital Lies"

An English woman writer of distinction, praised by Anatole France for her exceptional intelligence, once wrote an article (was it for *The Westminster Gazette*?) with the above title. She borrowed the phrase from a play by Ibsen, who had put into the mouth of one of his characters this explanation of his conduct in undermining the integrity of another—"What are you doing?—I am fostering the 'vital lie' in him".

We are familiar with the nature of the 'vital lie' upon which depends the continuation of civilised states by Finance. Not everyone is, although most individuals have their own personal 'vital lie'.

Mr. Daniel J. Boorstin may be aware of the more comprehensive example. He doesn't show it. His attention seems to be absorbed by the brood of offspring of the "Vital Lie"—he sees that the patient has measles, but can only see the spots. The disease, as in the case cited, remains invisible and undisclosed.

These melancholy reflections arise from a close reading of a paper-back called *The Image*, first published in the U.S.A. last year, re-published in the same year in England by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, and recently, for four shillings and sixpence, by *Pelican Books*.

A new preface complains that "The British . . . while not failing to develop at home some characteristically British problems, have come to rely on Americans to provide them with the vocabulary of their self-criticism". Mr. Boorstin does not stint us. The original Foreword begins:—"This is a 'how-not-to-do-it' book. It is about our arts of self-deception, how we hide reality from ourselves." Very well—*tu quoque!* We will let Mr. Boorstin off with that. He goes on to say that "One need not be a doctor to know one is sick, or a shoemaker to feel the shoe pinch. I do not know what 'reality' is. But somehow I know an illusion when I see one".—*Some illusions.*

If anyone should ask, "When is a lie not a lie?", the answer seems to be "When it's an image". *Admiring Friend*: "My, that's a beautiful baby you have there!"—*Mother*: "Oh, that's nothing—you should see his photograph!" Precisely! So nowadays there is nothing—everything is 'nothing': there are no religions, no political parties, no Prime Ministers, no crimes, no 'values' no 'desirable residences', no foods, no clothing which clothes—nothing. There are only images. The political parties, of the Right (but there is no Right!) or of the Left (but there is no Left), no Truth—only images. "Fact or fancy", says Mr. Boorstin, "the image becomes the thing. Its very purpose is to overshadow reality. American life becomes a showcase for images, for frozen pseudo-events." There are no events, only pseudo-events: Time's clock has stopped to make the day's work longer.

"Here are some characteristics of pseudo-events which make them overshadow spontaneous events. (1) Pseudo-events are more dramatic. A television debate between candidates can be planned to be more suspenseful, for example, by reserving questions which are then popped suddenly. . . . (2) Pseudo-events, being planned for dissemination, are easier to disseminate and make vivid. . . . (3) Pseudo-events can be repeated at will, and thus their impression can be reinforced. (4) Pseudo-events cost money; hence somebody has an interest in disseminating, magnifying, advertising and extolling them. . . . They are therefore advertised in advance, and re-run, in order to get money's worth. (5) Pseudo-events, being planned for intelligibility, are more intelligible and hence more reassuring. Even if we cannot discuss intelligently the qualifications of the candidates or the complicated issues, we can at least judge the effectiveness of a television performance. How comforting to have some political matter we can grasp! (6) Pseudo-events are more sociable. . . . (7) Knowledge of pseudo-events—of what has been reported. . . . staged, and how, becomes the test of being 'Informed'. (8) Finally pseudo-events spawn other pseudo-events in geometric progression. They dominate our consciousness simply because there are more of them, and ever more. . . . counterfeit happenings tend to drive spontaneous happenings out of circulation."

We cannot agree with the author that 'the human pseudo-event', a celebrity, is made by the people—in this sense, 'the people' is itself a pseudo-event. We agree that the celebrity is a tautology, and that by imitating a tautology, we become a tautology standing in for what we stand for, reaching to become what we already are. To hold our attention the few remaining heroes must be re-cast in the celebrity mould.

So far, we have only reached (haltingly) page 84. There are (with index) 314 pages. Thirty-one of these (in small print) give "suggestions for further reading (and writing)".

Mr. Boorstin explains how, just as pseudo-events have replaced 'spontaneous' happenings, the tourist has replaced the traveller. The difference? "The traveller brings home disturbing ideas." The tourist doesn't. Mr. Boorstin quotes an advertisement by the United States Lines reminding the tourist that "You're just fifteen gourmet meals from Europe on the world's fastest ship"—and when he gets to Europe, (or India, or Africa, or Russia)—"Go Now, Pay Later!"—he is, and expects to be, 'insulated' from any encounter with the natives: dog-kennels, swimming pools, restaurants and 'romance' insulate him aboard ship, while in the air "every flight is a charming, informal Continental Supper Party" supervised by a "Madonna of the Air", a stewardess of "gracious background, poise and charm, intelligence and education who, of course, speaks perfect English".

(continued on page 4)

THE SOCIAL CREDITER

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Service

The essential difference between the civilisations of the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Century is that service in the former was predominantly that of one human being to another, while that of the latter is service by an individual to an organisation. The idea has been subtly indoctrinated that there is something degrading about the former, and something elevating about the latter. *Demon est Deus inversus.*

Lifting the Lid

Just occasionally the most rigidly governmental newspapers allow some of the questions and misgivings, ignored by complacent politicians, to appear in their columns. So, in the *Daily Telegraph* of August 15, the editorial deplores the trouble in the French Congo, adding that the fall of a dictator cannot necessarily be welcomed when all the new African leaders are dictator figures. Elsewhere in the same issue we read of disorders in other "new" countries.

A manly letter enlivens the correspondence columns which derides our present attitude of weakness and of shedding our responsibilities. Somewhere in the same issue I believe there is a note about Soviet-American co-operation—in the sphere of outer space.

And Peter Simple, whose column is often worth the rest of the paper, comments acidly on Canon Warren's reported declaration to the Anglican Congress in Toronto that "godliness" may be traced in Marx and Freud. He points out with little difficulty that if godliness is to be found in these authors, the word has lost its meaning.

I do not for a moment suggest that this newspaper gives faultless direction to its readers: within a few days of this number, a back-handed attack was delivered on Major Douglas over the signature of "Peterborough", when contrasting the "pragmatic" social credit, as he called it, of Premier Bennett of British Columbia with the theories of Douglas. But the comments that do appear reflect to some degree the uneasiness of a section of its readers.

I should think that the remarks of Canon Warren, as reported, had the same sort of impact on the respect with which the Church is regarded as did the Great Train Robbery on the reputation of the security services. But even if he had used another word than "godliness", which is plainly ridiculous, the commendation of Marx and Freud should provoke the same degree of response as the robbery did from the police force.

For these two writers strip the individual of soul and of personality and leave him exposed to the deceit of the tyrant. There is no need to look as far as Africa to find people who want absolute power. Canon Warren of course is offering a substitute for the Christian Gospel, and has evaded the only possible use that the Church could have made of atheist writers: which would have been to expose their diabolism and to discover the truth about economics, politics, finance and the needs of the individual for abundant life.

I mentioned to a bookseller the other day the book "Honest to God" and he said that the cleverest man he knew could not understand it, but that he knew a religious publisher who would have printed it if it had been revised. So I concluded that carelessness of the kind displayed by the author and his publisher was unlikely to advance clear thought, and that perhaps this was not the object of the book anyway.

Apart from these indications, there would be little hope of enlightenment: but they suggest that there is a responsible body of people who are unwilling to throw away all their heritage for a further point's rise in inflation. (I remember a Canadian businessman saying that he liked inflation.)

But this vague attitude of being all things to all men and finding nothing incompatible with Christianity suggests that the Church either has little distinctive to offer or else has forgotten its own teaching and inheritance. If anyone took all his views from the B.B.C. and the popular press, it might be permissible to suggest that nothing had happened, intellectually speaking, since Marx and Freud, but something more exacting is required than a solemn pronouncement or a skimmed book: what is required, in fact, is to apply the Gospel precepts to the facts of modern life and production, and to distinguish these means from the end of life.

H.S.

Feeding Great Britain

The Times (August 21, 1963) published a report, by a correspondent, of a meeting of a large group of farmers in north-east Essex. It was declared that: "British agriculture staggers from one expediency to another".

Mr. John Ford, of St. Osyth, said: "We are particularly concerned about frivolous imports which cause a glut in home markets and make deficiency payments necessary".

Mr. Victor Gray, from near Colchester, chairman of the local branch of the National Farmers' Union, said: "We want a chance to provide the bulk of our country's needs with imports only making up the deficiencies".

Perhaps the farmers in north-east Essex might agree with Mr. Jorian Jenks' view that "even Britain can live in the sense of having enough to eat without imports and therefore without exports".

Cole on Laval

Another book on Laval might have little interest but Mr. Cole sheds light on the devious ways of politicians in general. The book* opens with a detailed account of the nauseating execution of Laval, and then turns back to his career.

We read how Laval responded, in September 1931, to an appeal for financial help by saying to our Chargé d'Affaires, Sir Ronald Campbell, "I will throw my country's vaults wide open to you", to which Campbell replied, "My country will never forget you".

However, there was misunderstanding at Stresa, when Mussolini assumed that the French and British were not opposed to his Abyssinian plans. Laval visited Moscow and on his return met Goering at Warsaw, who told him that the Russians wanted others to make war on their behalf, "preferably war between France and Germany. Then they'll walk in and pick up the loot". Mr. Cole remarks that Laval's basic weakness was his belief that he alone could handle the Germans but in fact "he completely misunderstood their character". Laval would haggle like a peasant but believed that when a bargain was struck it would be kept.

In June 1935, Britain signed a naval treaty with Germany, on which Laval remarked to Sir Ronald Campbell: "I may not be a gentleman, but I would never have done a thing like that".

Laval was anxious above all to avoid driving Mussolini into the German camp but the Hoare-Laval plan failed partly due to a "leak", and Hoare and Laval had soon both resigned.

On Laval's resumption of office under Pétain, Mr. Cole notes, "The struggle between France's self-appointed and ill-assorted Messiahs—de Gaulle, Pétain and Laval—was to bring her great grief and her allies much confusion . . . but it was Laval who paid in the end".

The character in the book who combines loyalty with intelligence and dignity is in fact Madame Laval. She protested bitterly at his involving himself in a government of defeat; she distrusted Pétain and told Laval, "the Germans are crooks, they will cheat you". Laval, returning to power in 1942 after his dismissal in December 1940, was "sincere in believing it was his duty because he was the only man in France who could save her. His road to hell was paved with good intentions, and he took that road because of sinful pride". At least, his wife's good sense came a poor third behind M. Laval and his patriotism.

Laval was "violently opposed" to racial persecution and saved a good many Jews and many Frenchmen from deportation. While Laval was out of office, the incompetent Darlan pushed himself forward, and "in one bound he had taken the step that Pétain and Laval had managed to hold back from—military collaboration with Germany". De Gaulle meanwhile was busy at Dakar and in Syria, where "the horror of hand-to-hand fighting between Frenchmen had begun".

So it dragged on until "what Churchill had described as 'the unnecessary war' had been ended with the unnecessary bomb". And the conclusion is inescapable that politicians are not to be trusted, and that the more freedom the individual can retain for himself the better. Then let him see to it! Lower taxation would increase his freedom. By increasing

taxation and allowing perpetually expanding forms of tax, the politicians are drawing all power to themselves—or to their backers.

H.S.

Pilates Incorporated

An editorial broadcast by the Association of Friends of the West, from Radio Portugal—Lisbon:

Writing fairly recently one philosopher defined the connection between cause and effect in a very pointed manner. The crimes of the people—he said—stem from their own mistakes, in rather the same way that action in man is always the repercussion of thought.

In exemplifying his theory, this writer points to the manner in which the application of principles such as those that touched off the French revolution in 1789, must inevitably lead to terror such as broke loose in 1793. Between these two dates of course there was 1790 when the whole world swore an oath of loyalty to a Federation, but it was on the very spot where he had been acclaimed that, twelve months later, La Fayette gave the order to open fire on the crowds.

More recently, a similar train of events has been set in motion. In 1958, France decided to proclaim that her Republic was on precisely the same footing as that of Central Africa—and in the midst of the Algerian revolution issued a solemn statement at Solferino upholding the principle of nationalities. It is at such times, of course, that the counter-revolution is forced to work underground—this being the reason why our philosopher assured his readers that the intelligentsia who had staged the revolution in the 18th century would undermine it in the 20th.

Only rarely do we moderns appreciate the history that is being written from day to day. Anatole France underlined this belief with a biting satire that he be included in one of his stories. In *The Procurator of Judea* he makes one of his characters question Pontius Pilate as to whether he had ever met a man called Jesus. Pilate considered the matter for a moment before he answered that he never remembered having seen anyone of that name.

The moral of the story, of course, is that Pilate regarded the Passion as no more than the trial of a troublesome Jewish agitator, who differed but little from many others that had been brought before him. Many years later Queen Victoria took rather the same attitude to Karl Marx as he spent each day working in the British Museum. And how many Parisians gave a second thought to Lenin?

But that is history—secretly nourishing its heroes in the midst of an indifferent crowd. How does this fit in with the

THE UNSEEING EYE

Oration delivered at the London School of Economics on Friday, December 6, 1957, by

Sir Hugh Casson, R.D.I., M.A., F.R.I.B.A.

"... if we can borrow from the Social Credit enthusiasts their slogan—'Full enjoyment rather than full employment'—as an objective, then we might create between us a civilisation based upon freewill in which all men are artists and there will be no need, thank goodness, to talk about it." (Concluding sentence.)

Price 1/6d. from K.R.P. Publications Ltd.

* *Laval—a Biography* by Hubert Cole: Heinemann, 35/-.

myth of the winds of history? Is there anyone who has not yet realised that it is not the fast flowing river which matters—but the spring which provides its source?

Art Movement

We gratefully acknowledge permission to reprint the following editorial from *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 31, 1963:

"All art," said Walter Pater, "constantly aspires to the condition of music." Not any longer: today all art seems to be constantly aspiring to the condition of machinery. The invention of the cinematograph no doubt helped to start this trend. Music, mechanised, began to aspire to the condition of painting in the "colour symphonies" of Scriabin. The film reported by developing a mechanical voice and aspiring to the condition of drama. The drama, not to be outdone, turned its back on authors and began aspiring to the condition of opera or ballet or puppetry. Literature began looking longingly towards the comic strip.

Now everything aspires to the condition of everything else, with the machines which make aspiration possible steadily getting deeper into the act. Film-makers, bored with the "talkie", have already made at least one "smelly"; the "feelies" morbidly imagined by Aldous Huxley 30-odd years ago cannot be far off. Music, composed not by ear but by slide-rule, is now either "electronic" or "concrete". The French playwright, M. Arrabal, who recently visited Sydney, has composed—engineered, perhaps, is the more exact word—a drama without actors or words, for moving machine-parts.

At present Sydney can see an exhibition by Peter Foldes of "motorised" paintings. Motors behind his abstract canvases revolve discs behind water-filled glass containers so that images reflected in the glass are constantly changing. Here surely is a challenge which no rising young painter or sculptor can afford to ignore. Entries for the Archibald next year should certainly incorporate a long-playing record, preferably of the subject's stream of consciousness. Then at last we shall have a speaking likeness.

So We Believe

"A poet has certain natural loyalties—say, to a village where he spent his childhood, to a University where he was well treated, to a regiment with which he saw active service, to his family if they respected his intransigence. Such ties of affection need not prejudice his critical judgment, and he must take care never to join an organisation where he will be expected to condone actions or attitudes of which he disapproves; or be told where he must live, how he must dress, and what sort of friends to avoid. A young poet down from University is often tempted to go in for broadcasting, or publishing, or literary journalism. Yet he would be well advised to ask the B.B.C. for a job only as messenger or sound-technician, or the publishing house for a job as a packer or van-man, and the literary weekly for a job in the circulation department. Any position that makes him condone the printing or broadcasting of poems which he himself would not choose to print or broadcast is a dangerous one."

—Robert Graves, *The Crowning Privilege*.
(The Clark Lectures, 1954-1955.)

"VITAL LIES" (continued from page 1)

Let us pass over a section of 59 pages called "From Shapes to Shadows", and indeed to others, "The Search for Self-Fulfilling Prophecies" and "The Self-Deceiving Magic of Prestige" to rescue, nevertheless, from the last-mentioned the following, which says as much as many pages could:—

"Not long ago I met a public-relations adviser who held a responsible position in a large and influential firm. His speciality was writing—speeches, articles, letters—for public figures. I asked him how much he consulted with his clients. He explained that of course he had to meet and know the men for whom he wrote, in order to be able to write like them. But, he said, a difficulty in working for the same clients over an extended period was that, if you were successful in writing for them, it became harder and harder to know what they were really like. His clients, he said, had an incurable tendency to forget that they had not written their own speeches. When he asked them in briefing sessions what they thought of this or that, they were increasingly inclined to quote to the public relations adviser the very speech which the council had supplied them a few weeks before. It was disturbing, he said, to hear yourself quoted to yourself by somebody else who thought it was himself speaking: you began to wonder whether it was your language after all."

Mr. Boorstin's long section on "more to read and to write" is symptomatic. Why read any more? Why write any more? To do either, surely, merely extends the problem, which he hasn't diagnosed. All he has told us is what some of the 'spots' look like. What is the disease? Why any disease at all? "Our problem is the harder to solve because it is created by people working honestly and industriously at respectable jobs. It is not created by demagogues or crooks, by conspiracy or evil purpose. The efficient mass production of pseudo-events—in all kinds of packages, in black and white, in technicolour, in words, and in a thousand other forms—is the work of the whole machinery of our society".

Now, is that, or is that not just another 'Vital Lie'? At the last election our postman asked us whether we were going to vote. Since he lived in a mountainous district, we countered by asking him whether he ever climbed the great mountain nearby and, particularly, what advice was given to climbers caught in a mist. He said it was often fatal if they moved from the positions in which they were caught: however uncomfortable, the best course was to do nothing, stand still and wait for the mist to clear. Asked whether he did not think the same rule was valid for elections, he said in horror: "Yes—but YOU MUST VOTE".

THE NATURE OF DEMOCRACY

by C. H. DOUGLAS
(*New Impression*)

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