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"The New Civilisation"

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The destiny of mankind is unknown. Therein is the very stuff of freedom. Here is a statement, not to be contradicted, which countenances a large hope but does not define it; rather, it gives to hope the boundless contours of a majesty not clouded by vague imaginings or limited by any shape of things to come, but large and pregnant with an undiscovered reality. It stands for a sane faith which for ever can keep pace with the expanding universe.

We cannot tell if there is some divine, far-off event to which the whole creation moves. If there is, it may well be infinitely remote in astronomical time, and such as must abash the countenance of imagination at the crass levels of man's present powers. But a realistic view of the universe and of the vital processes at work in it establishes a single fact which is the key to destiny. That fact is that mankind is free. Freedom connotes simply freedom of choice, and it is possible to choose only one thing at a time.

Man can choose what direction he shall take; he is not bound or fashioned by a rigid ecology, but creates his own environment. The long-drawn evolution of man the creature, of society, and of institutions, is witness to the fact that, alone among living things, the race of men has emerged into freedom.

All action has consequences, which are determinable. Action and reaction are constant. So that, although he is not exempt from the repercussions of error, and despite the hiatuses in human knowledge, man is not precluded from free choice by ignorance. He is free to make trial, to profit by experience, to choose what direction he shall follow. He need not wander in a grey or golden mist of expectancy, in which blind faith is merely an abandonment of the compass. He can press on to the goal of his choice, shaping destiny instead of awaiting it.

There is much bewilderment in most modern thinking which arises from non-realistic precepts. The changing face of ideas, so far as it does change, wears an expression of alarm, breaking into strained grins as expedient follows expedient in contorting the lives of men and the current of events to conform to a relentless pattern. The pattern is that of a dead, or dying, civilisation.

The type of civilisation must change. Evolution is a constant response to variable stimuli, and man has himself applied the stimuli which are bursting his institutions. Anything other than free response is conflict. The present

attempts to evade free response by shuffling expedients may delay, but it cannot defeat a due consummation, which is indeed the final end of a type of civilisation, and the beginning of a new order.

Anything less than that is an understatement, because we are approaching the end of a historic process. Whatever strands of colour embroider history, the ground fabric since the beginning of recorded time has been a warp and woof of economic struggle, and now the background of struggle of that kind is fraying out. This woven background of crossed threads represents two antagonisms, man the creator against natural environment, and man against man.

The contest with environment has proceeded so far that victory over scarcity conditions is complete, and further development in that direction lies in the endless refinement of scientific and industrial method under conditions of cosmic armistice. Perhaps it is a false figure to describe man's essays against frugality in terms of hostility between himself and nature. But it is certain that he has always regarded himself as wresting his fortunes from sea and soil; he is a toiler, not merely a gatherer. Finally, however, he has eased toil. With the cajoleries of scientific method and applied power he can reap an increase up to the limits of his own choice, and deal with such increase as he will, transforming by manufacture or utilising by novel application wealth which he has won by scientific obedience. This is a tremendous fact.

It is mainly for this reason that the impending critical change is a supersession of the existing civilisation, not merely an extension of it. The reason why civilisation evolved along the lines it did was in order to produce the conditions which now exist, and which provide a jumping-off ground for a new project; for spending power as much as for accumulating it, and in preference to sterilising it. The point at which civilisation now wavers is the peak, or near the peak, of a chosen line of development. It represents the culmination of movement towards material abundance.

Between and throughout those monarchic and martial crises which are the substance of academic history, the steady policy of mankind as a whole has been to escape the rigours of poverty and toil. This has been done. The historic environment has been transformed. In place of scarcity and uncertainty there is controllable plenty; in

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From Week to Week

“Many of the worst ills of organisation and outlook from which we suffer today in medicine are due to two quite different processes occurring in society as a whole. The first is the growth of strongly centralised administration, and of associations, trade unions, or parties which impose strict rules on their members. These result in an important, and to my mind serious, disease which may perhaps be named compulsory uniformity. I regard this as a serious disease partly because I cannot think that it can be to the ultimate good of mankind, and because it expresses extremely powerful forces which we understand dimly, or not at all, and which we have no immediate prospect of controlling. The second process is a very different one. It is the growth of science and technology. This has produced a series of relatively minor disorders, many of which we could remedy, if only more of us realised the need. . . .

“ . . . It seems to me that the essence of a lively and interesting society is the absence of unnecessary rules and restrictions. Too many rules and regulations carry the penalties of producing a very stereotyped form of existence, and of abolishing initiative. Life, in fact, becomes dull; and that, I think, is tragic because life should be such an exciting adventure. . . .

“It is quite beyond my capacity as a sociologist to trace the causes of this excessive appetite for legislation and regulation. In Great Britain, it is no doubt related to the conception of the Welfare State which grew out of the tragedy of unemployment between the wars, and the enormous and temporarily necessary growth of detailed centralised administration during the war. But there is undoubtedly a strong movement to introduce more uniformity into our educational system because, it is argued, education confers privilege, and privilege should be abolished. . . .”—From an abridged version, published in *The Lancet*, December 3, 1955, of the convocation address entitled “Disorders of Contemporary Society” delivered to the American College of Physicians on April 27, 1955, by Professor G. W. Pickering, University of London.

To understand the spirit of an age, it is not enough to know its real and hidden forces, but also its illusions, its fancies, and its errors. What is often referred to as much

in derision as in hope, as the Social Credit ‘Movement’ outside of the Secretariat understands—or thinks it understands: tells the world (“from the housetops”) that it understands—the real and hidden forces. But the illusions, the fancies and the errors it merely shares: shares wholly and unconsciously, as a cell shares the life and fortunes of the animal body of which it is a part. This is not enough.

The *agent provocateur*, who is, by definition, not a Social Crediter by any means, is, of course, completely satisfied with his own illusions, fancies and errors, and has no wish to understand anything particularly apart from the ghastly trade of selling them to others.

When we say ‘Secretariat’ in the above, we are not referring to anything collectivity of individuals whose names are known but to the many who, persistent, dogged and often silent, assess for themselves the meaning of the clatter which uselessly and offensively assail their patient ears.

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Probably without exception, readers of this journal are familiar with the doctrine, reiterated by Douglas, that action and action alone can materially affect the historical situation with which Social Crediters desire to influence. The idea is really only a paraphrase of the assertion, also Douglas’s, that ‘History is crystallised policy.’ The stuff of history is action. Cautious action. Whose action?—Willy nilly, everybody’s. What action—All their actions. In a narrow sense, writing is not action. At best it is just inducement, provocation, recommendation to action. *Aggressive* controversy-polemics. What ever came of it? It is stillborn: a locomotive. Exhausting itself through its whistle: a side-show drawing off the leftovers when the playhouse is full. And the bankers’ playhouse is full.

The Times in its so-called ‘literary’ supplement—often the most openly political of that dangerous journalist’s hydroid extensions—has been (?) commiserating with Mr. Wyndham Lewis over the ‘defeat’ of his optimism. “The Human Age” Book II and Book III, by the obstetrics of the B.B.C. delivered twenty-seven years late, is (listen for the mirthless laughter of the politicians!) “manifestly one of the great prose works of our time.” It is *satire*: Satire on man “inherently stupid, violent and self-destructive,” of rulers all of whom are dishonest, of intellectuals all of whom betray themselves (and others) and of the “great faceless moronic mass.” “It is . . . an expression of the anguish and disillusionment suffered by a man of genius.”

Is that—it is on a higher plane than polemics—is that action?

We recall a letter from a friendly Jesuit kept for its wisdom, and finding it we quote:—“I love satire, am devoted to Swift; but nurse it rather as a secret vice: it is a negative thing. Those who enjoy [satire] find their pleasure in its wit and imagination and memorable imagery. Satire it seems to me is not constructive; it springs too much from frustration, is almost an admission of defeat.”

Reality (*i.e.*, authority) does not contemplate defeat. Indeed it is the only thing that cannot be defeated or threatened by defeat.

"The New Despotism"

"In 1950, in the case of *United States v. Moorman*, the United States Supreme Court was called upon to construe a "disputes clause" in a contract between a Contractor and the Federal Government. The Court construed the clause to provide that, in the event of a dispute, the Government's Contracting Officer could finally and conclusively determine all questions of *fact and law, with no right of appeal to the courts*. The Supreme Court upheld the validity of such clause on the ground that the parties freely entered into such a contract and that they were, therefore, bound thereby. In reaching this conclusion, the Court noted that clauses in building contracts between Owner and Contractor which provided for the arbitration of disputes by the Architect were valid. The effect of the Supreme Court's decision was to make the Owner (here the Government) the final arbiter of any dispute which arose between itself and the Contractor, unless the Contractor could show fraud or bad faith. . . .

"Subsequently, the United States Supreme Court, in the case of *United States v. Wunderlich*, reaffirmed the position it had taken in the *Moorman* case. In the *Wunderlich* case, the United States Court of Claims had determined that a decision of a Contracting Officer was arbitrary, capricious, and grossly erroneous. The Supreme Court, by a vote of six to three, upheld the Contracting Officer's decision, on the ground that there was no proof that such decision was fraudulent or made in bad faith. The majority held that the Contractor had *no recourse, even though the decision of the Contracting Officer was arbitrary and capricious*. Three Justices of the United States Supreme Court dissented in a strongly worded opinion, which stated, in part:

"Law has reached its finest moments when it has freed man from the unlimited discretion of some ruler, some civil or military official, some bureaucrat. Where discretion is absolute, man has always suffered. . . ."

"The instant case reveals only a minor facet of the agelong struggle . . . but the rule we announce has wide application and a devastating effect. It makes a tyrant out of every contracting officer . . . he has the power of life and death over a private business even though his decision is grossly erroneous. Power granted is seldom neglected. . . . [Our emphasis.]"

"The principle of checks and balances is a healthy one. An official who is accountable will act more prudently. A citizen who has an appeal to a body independent of the controversy has protection against passion, obstinacy, irrational conduct, and incompetency of an official. . . . The rule we announce makes government oppressive." —Bernard Tomson in *Progressive Architecture*, October, 1954.

The Seven Against Thebes

It is timely to re-publish the following which originally appeared in The Social Crediter, October 19, 1946:

It will not have escaped the notice of any critical reader that there has been, progressively, with the exploitation of mob judgment masquerading as the voice of supreme wisdom in the community, a corresponding encouragement to all classes to recommend the pursuit of any chosen policy, however disastrous and detestable, with the assertion that it is "scientific." The term has a purely functional connotation; and to say that any course of action is 'right' *because it is pursued scientifically* is like saying that war is an inestimable blessing because it is pursued "explosively." It is probably the confusion of thought illustrated in this instance as much as any other that accounts for the ascendancy of the doctrine that ballot-box democracy is "right" in any sense of the word. The ballot-box is merely a method of counting, and has little reference to what it is that is counted, let alone what it might be desirable to count, in the interest of the counted, or of anything else. There is nothing ultramontane in the emphasis placed in the Social Credit movement recently upon the insufficiency of individual judgment for the purposes for which the right of individual judgment is claimed. It is essential that, before all things, the existence of principles not amenable to decision by a general election should be recognised, and that the importance of such principles should be recognised at the same time. The stand for such principles, wherever it is made, is the test of political soundness, and its success or otherwise will determine the future of human society.

John Stuart Blackie began his introduction to his translation of *The Seven Against Thebes* of Æschylus with the words: "One of the most indisputable laws of the moral world, and, when seriously considered, perhaps the most awful one, is that principle of hereditary dependence, which connects the sins of one generation, and often of one individual, by an indissoluble bond, with the fortunes of another. In the closely compacted machinery of the moral world no man can be ignorant, or foolish, or vicious to himself. The most isolated individual by the very act of his existence, as he necessarily inhales, so he likewise exhales, a social atmosphere, either healthy so far, or so far unhealthy, for the race. Nothing in the world is independent either of what co-exists with it, or of what precedes it. The present, in particular, is everywhere at once the child of the past, and the parent of the future . . . the *Delicta majorum immeritus lues* of the same poet (Horace) remains a fearful reality in the daily administration of the world, which no serious-thinking man can afford to disregard . . . awful in its operation . . . often sweeping whole generations into ruin, and smiting whole nations with a chronic leprosy . . ." The individual tyrant is now replaced, as instrument if not as author, by the multiple tyrant, the "Majority" expressing itself, so it is alleged, in the ballot-box. But the change does not suspend the law.

One has not to go far before one realises that there are current in all communities more or less well-defined concepts of law and sanctions. Our community is particularly distinguished at the present time—or, perhaps, we might

say particularly during the period between 1880 and 1938—by the currency of conceptions of a mechanical order, of the operation of the so-called laws of motion, and so on (which it is disastrously misusing), and all communities, however primitive in their customs, recognise limitations set upon human activities by weather, season, seed-time, harvest, and so on, as well as limitations which may or may not exist otherwise than in the minds of those who invoke them to explain the conduct of themselves or of other people. "Man does not live by bread alone," although he cannot do without bread, using "bread" as a term indicating his basic sustenance; and it would be rare to find a human individual who would assert that the material interests of life exhaust its possibilities. As the interests of Life have expanded, so there has spread the recognition that Law operates on other planes than those which are the special interest of physicists and chemists, as such; and that such Laws are as inviolable as any others. But it is as generally recognised, perhaps, that assessment of the mode of operation of these Laws is difficult and uncertain in proportion as the individual lacks experience of their consequences, while their range and time of action outspans the lives of individuals, who are nevertheless subject to them. It may be that the charting of this cumulative experience of mankind is subject to distorting agencies—that the social credit is, in this respect falsified, as in so many other cases. But the very existence of a Social Credit movement is evidence that the effect of this distorting agency is not absolute.

It is not a matter of speculation but of fact that there have been relatively settled times in history, when men seemed to advance towards their dimly perceived but real goal, when Life was more abundant, when manners were inspired by a general if not an universal apprehension, or intuition, of the sources of satisfaction, when Faith ("the substance of things hoped for") was wider spread, and "the evidence of things unseen" more credible.

We are not theologians; but it is not outside the province of Social Crediters to enquire into the features which distinguish such times, to discover, if possible, the nature of the inspiration which guided them or made them possible, or what forces overturned their benign projects.—T.J.

"THE NEW CIVILISATION"—(continued from page 1.)

place of scarcity there is overwhelming variety of wealth; in place of exacting husbandry there is the tool-box of mechanical invention and the prodigal energy of power-plant. Of set purpose man has won economic freedom, which is at once a reversal of the historic environment and the culmination of a policy.

This consummation has not so far eased the parallel struggle for acquisition. The struggle in which man is pitted against man is unabated. Indeed, the contest intensifies and grows more bitter day by day. Yet the struggle for a livelihood, the struggle for markets, the last futile struggle of armed warfare which employs death and destruction as a means to livelihoods, and conquest as a means to markets, are all stagnant anachronisms in the light of the victory already gained. The folly of struggle

is more pointed when it is realised that civilisation as we know it simply halts because it cannot squander those gains which men, classes and nations tussle to acquire.

It is obvious, therefore, that if civilisation is to eventuate in renewal instead of suicide, the present crisis merely awaits a decision regarding direction. Mankind is faced with a crucial choice, an obligation laid upon him by the freedom he has achieved. What use will he make of his opportunity? It is ridiculous to contend that any crisis has occurred before in history which is comparable with the present issue. If such a crisis has occurred, it predates any record, and certainly goes back to that remote age when man forsook the forest and walked upright. The freed hands and level eye have produced their utmost, and brought him face to face with another juncture of even greater importance.

The main feature of the choice now confronting the world is plain. It is a choice between realism and idealism. The Renaissance produced the scientific spirit in Europe, and empirical method wedded to an existing ambition eventually pricked men on to a versatility which could not have been envisaged at the time it began. From that intellectual and manipulative versatility was born the power of prosperity. Prosperity is the direct outcome of the inductive type of thinking, but side by side with this has grown a moralistic body of thought which has garbled the straight laws of nature (verifiable through their unvarying instances) with artificial "laws" which are mainly the impositions of privilege upon powerlessness. The ability to administer the moral law implicit in caste-riven society has passed from the priestly class who devised it in early civilisations, and from the military class which assumed it at later phases, and from the autocratic and plutocratic classes who plundered it, to a mean and subtle and very restricted group, operating in super-imperial fields through the instrument of modern coercion—the monetisation of credit. The important aspect of this development is not that it is a concentration of power amounting to world patronage in the hands of a few superior office boys. The important point is that such a concentration imperils freedom to the point of loss, and stultifies the profitable contract made with nature by obedience to her laws.

Through stultification the moralistic basis of the present civilisation is crumbling. Freedom is jeopardised by tying men to a work-for-wealth idealism in place of the realistic distribution of leisure as a machine bonus. Profitable association with nature is rendered sterile by enforced non-participation in increments of wealth not directly due to conversions of raw material by human energy, or linked somehow to work idealism.

The difficulty of maintaining an idealistic order of subsistence-standards, in contradiction of the demonstrable fact of plenty, has led to the super-idealism of State-worship, just as the refusal to admit the fact of possible leisure has led to the extravagant moral idealism of work for work's sake.

(To be concluded.)