

CLOTH CAP IN HAND

LAST WEEK Barclays, Midland and Lloyds banks announced their pre-tax profits for the year. For them, the Government's wages policies and growing expansion of the economy have brought embarrassingly high profits. They are up 75 per cent over the same period last year for Barclays, 78 per cent for Midland, and 96 per cent for Lloyds. So while certain restrictions have been placed on employers, the banks have been allowed a free hand to charge and pay interest.

It is against this back-cloth of record profits that the stage has been set for further talks between the leaders of the trade unions and the Tories at Downing Street. Despite the obvious fact that these talks are a total waste of time as regards defending the real interests of the membership of the trade unions, the leaders will trot along like lambs to the slaughter. We've had recently both Scanlon, that left wing double act, pleading at their union conferences to be allowed to attend the talks. The idea that you can put the trade unionists' point of view and get somewhere is completely ludicrous. At least the members of Scanlon's union recognised this and voted against his attendance.

Jones' stage-management of the conference proved successful and so, cloth cap in hand, he will be attending along with Vic Feather and his cronies.

If the trade union leaders could have achieved anything by talk, we would have had the social revolution years ago. As it is, despite the talk all they have produced is a ferocious attack on the living standards of the working class. By inviting the TUC leaders along to Downing Street, the Government involves them in the decision making of policies which will assist the employers to cream off the profit from the labour of others. Employers today are enjoying a strawberry and cream bonanza. Government interference, which so many opposed, has given them the chance to keep down wages increases and finance the expansion necessary for the next bonanza.

The willingness of the trade union leaders to talk to the Tories will mean that they will be a part of the Phase 3 and involved in that policy. This sort of co-operation and willingness to sit round and talk with those in power is nothing new in the trade union movement.

It basically stems from an identity of interests by leaders over people. They all fear that people will take things into their own hands and act for themselves. If the leadership of the unions refused to talk it would release an irritation from the rank and file. As it is now the majority have a 'wait and see' attitude. Talks will only strengthen the Tories and the employers.

Downing Street is not the place to oppose the Government. The strength of the working class lies at their places of work. Industrial action brings results, in spite of the efforts of the leadership to head off any form of direct action under their control. It is not at this level that workers must organise against the forthcoming Phase 3. The Government has a whole host of legal sanctions to use against trade unionists, but sectional support and solidarity will always force the authorities to back down. The working class has the power and the ability to defeat the Tory policies and to abolish the system of exploitation of man by man.

P.T.

A SNEAK VISIT

THE MASSIVE security operation to protect Dr. Caetano, the Portuguese Prime Minister, on his visit "to celebrate the 600 year old alliance" with Britain, cost between £80,000 and £150,000. The demonstrations that dogged Caetano wherever he went resulted in a total of 17 arrests and were effective as an indicator of the unpopularity of the visit.

Throughout, allegations of massacres and torture in Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau and in Portugal itself, were brought to light or reiterated from earlier reports. Instead of looking at the pattern of allegations the media concentrated on the allegations originally made by Father Hastings in the Times, whilst Frelimo issued evidence claiming over 650 deaths in Mozambique in massacres over the last three years.

Undoubtedly Portugal has suffered an immense series of blows to its already tarnished reputation and one notes the discredited politicians and others who were willing to defend Portugal in the circumstances. Among them were Labour M.P. Albert Roberts and Lord George-Brown, the former (as Richard West notes in the New Statesman 20th July) "while in Angola won some valuable architectural contracts on behalf of his well known fellow-Yorkshireman, John Poulson".

Meanwhile, Reed International and the British owned Sena Sugar Estates in Mozambique (£1.42m profits in 1972) turned not a hair, for capital investment cares only for the profit that can be made from cheap African labour.* The means whereby African labour is kept cheap are

not considered of relevance.

Way back in October 1964 I wrote in Anarchy 44:

"We may yet see the day when the end of white supremacist rule in Southern Africa coincides with the African people awakening to the ideas of anarchist communism as they appreciate the similarities of the white settler rulers and the black rulers. One only needs to add that these twin events in Africa would involve the Iberian peninsula in a resurgence of the anarcho-syndicalist struggle set off by the overthrow of Salazar".

Today Caetano has replaced Salazar and the massacres in Burundi show that European terrorists are not the only perpetrators of atrocity on the African continent - yet there is little overt evidence of anarchist communism having

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THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

AMONG THE fascinating pages of the Press the financial pages often give the real truth behind events. Often, too, they descend to despair and a lack of belief in the abilities of economists to forecast future trends or the results of any monetary policies.

In the Guardian (23/7/73) for example, there is an article headed "Panic Flight from Money" by Frances Cairncross which starts, "Mr. Heath, embarking on yet another batch of talks with the CBI and the unions on the Government's prices and incomes policy, looks uncomfortably like King Canute. The problem he is up against - turning the tide of inflation - is certainly bigger than he is and probably bigger than all of us." She goes on to chart the possibilities of inflation into 1984 which, on the present scale would mean a loaf of bread would cost 30p.

Not that we need necessarily worry about this (although prophecies of inflation are to some extent self-fulfilling) for, months before, in the Guardian (Business section) Anthony Harris wrote: "How much do economists know about the future? To judge by their public arguments, they think, at any rate, that they know rather a lot - although no two can agree about what it is that is known." He then goes on to demolish the pretensions of economists to plan and forecast future economic trends.

Instances abound. We have the absolute failure of the majority of economists to predict the Wall Street crash of 1929, the inexplicable co-existence in the late sixties of increasing unemployment and inflation, and the continuing inflation despite Government attempts to control it, attempts no doubt sponsored by economists. The economists seem to be liberally supplied with cloudy crystal balls. For another example, Andrew Schonfield in British Economic Policy Since the War (Penguin 1958) writes: "The great inflationary crisis which came to occupy the centre of the political stage in 1957, is thus of fairly recent origin, and there is no mystery about its proximate causes... It is clear that what happened to prices in the first postwar decade was chiefly determined by the rise in the cost of food. There were shortages and there was a great upheaval in the world pattern of supply and demand. It now looks as if the decade of world food crisis may have come to an end."

* * *

IN PLACE of solid facts, since economics appears to be a form of theology rather than an exact science, we are continually assailed with myths such as the crying need for capital. That the capitalist system cannot run without capital is a self-evident fact but capital is only available if the interest is high enough. True, if the wages paid eat into the profits too much, capital will not be forthcoming; but if no wages were paid the profits would be higher but since some sections of the workers are the ultimate or penultimate consumers there would be no customers either.

The economic growth which we boast of, is mainly in quest of profit. Obviously with technological improvements a worker can produce vastly more goods in shorter time than he did previously so he should share in the wealth of increased production. But since productivity is concerned with quantity rather than quality it is the 'scale' of living that has increased rather than the 'standard'. The worker as consumer consumes more of the gross national product, not better product. Indeed, by adulteration, deliberate shoddiness and contrived shortages in the spheres of food, clothing and shelter the standards of nutrition, durability and convenience have declined.

Despite Andrew Schonfield's confident assertion we are, so economists assert, facing an inflation caused by food and raw material shortages. Whether this is produced by nature and climate or is due to man's manipulation in search of further profit is not completely discernible. However, it is still obvious that fortunes are to be made or lost (as witness Rowntree's £1million flutter) in trading in food. A further example is the panic to buy shares in Sainsbury's, my friendly neighbourhood socialist's supermarket. Food is still profitable.

Meanwhile the destruction of food still goes on with the Sahara edging up. The drowning of chickens, the withdrawal of land from cultivation, the rooting-up of apple trees - all in the sacred cause of profitability.

The mountain of butter still remains but the old-age pensioners have been given a lick of it. The Tory government have set their faces against food subsidies since they claim they would be indiscriminate and not help the needy - as if that ever mattered to Governments! Even the ultra-capitalist U.S.

Government helped the farmers - and themselves - by issuing to the needy relief food stamps exchangeable for farm surpluses.

Yet the social services are still persisting in their quaint belief that where there is need the State has a duty to remedy that need. The latest shuffle in family allowances and income tax completely accepts the principle of family allowances, which is far removed from Conservative ideas of self-reliance. It is not to be wondered that workers have been known to refuse jobs which utterly or ultimately paid out less than social security. If the financier has a right to withhold capital from investments that pay insufficient dividends, the worker has an equal right to withhold his labour from work which pays insufficient for his labour.

The monetary-profitability argument of the whole capitalist financial system is false. The money is only a symbol of wealth. Real wealth is in the starved, arid land, the hands of the unemployed or uselessly employed worker and not in the text-books or market quotations. "Real wealth is life". The worship of its symbol, and the love of it is the root of many of our evils.

Jack Robinson.

SNEAK VISIT contd. from P.1

caught on amongst the African people. Frelimo's social policies are admirable in some ways but we are back with the struggle for national liberation containing the desire for independence but a questionable attitude to freedom.

None the less, the sneak visit of Caetano was another blow to the rule of terror in the world.

J.W.

* Adam Raphael in The Guardian 24.7.73: [Sena Sugar Estates] "is paying some of its 5,000 agricultural workers basic wages as little as £10.40 a month. This is the minimum allowed by Mozambique law... The Investor's Guardian... was told by [the company's chairman] Lieutenant-Colonel John Burnung that he realized the wages were poor. 'I would gladly pay more if they did more work. Productivity is low and once they earn so much, they are not interested in earning any more.' ...[He] denied allegations that Sena's black agricultural workers were forced to work against their will. He said the company had its own recruiting officers who went round to the village chiefs to recruit labourers."

VIEWPOINT

DEMONSTRATIONS OR COUNTER-DEMONSTRATIONS

We see in the Contact Column an appeal from the '13 Defence Committee' for help with fines and expenses arising from an 'Anti-Fascist' demonstration in Liverpool.

We know that some of the accused are anarchists, and have been actively engaged in rent-strikes, and struggles with and on behalf of fellow-workers.

We hope readers will help to pay any fines (that is, those who believe in paying fines, in any case) and help somewhat to alleviate hardship which may come from this prosecution.

It can be observed that right-wing extremism is on the increase in this country. Perhaps Colin Jordan, against whose meeting the Pier Head demonstration was held, is the least significant of the right-wing extremist groups and the one with the least backing.

But one can seriously question whether this is combatting 'Fascism' or helping it on its way.

"The fascists," the 'Liverpool 13' appeal says, "are a menace to all working people." They are a menace because they may deceive working people as to who and what is their enemy, because they may corrupt some people by deforming their potential virility for struggle and self-assertion into an appetite for bullying, because they may delude some into not seeing the difference between joining together in equal brotherhood and surrendering to equality in obedience to Big Brother. It has been quoted from Karl Marx that "anti-semitism is the socialism of the stupid man" and even Hitler had to include "socialism" in his catch-all party title.

Hitler also captured many 'of the working people'. The massed squares of disciplined bully boys at the Nuremburg rallies and the hordes that ravaged Europe in 1939-45 were mostly working people. Lots of us if we'd been born at the time and in the place and hadn't had the good fortune to meet with a better idea would have been among them.

Perhaps if their early meetings had been broken up, you may say, they might have given up trying to get adherents to their bad idea. In fact their early meetings were broken up, Hitler had to flee and was eventually arrested. That was when he wrote *Mein Kampf*. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.

The National Socialist bully boys were confronted by Commun-

ist bully boys and each (as with Mosley in Britain in the thirties) thrived on the other as the reason for their existence. Eventually they both centered on the social-democrats as being the enemy and a temporary truce and alliance followed (preceding the Hitler-Stalin pact) and the Communists believed Hitler would not last. "After Hitler--us" they said . . . and they were right.

This is all old stuff but we have had a manifestation of the same battle in France where the extremists of both political wings (Ordre Nouveau and the Trotskyite Communist League) have both been banned. Admittedly the English police are rarely so impartial.

However, *Le Monde* quoted the general secretary of the Federation of Police Trade Unions writing of the meeting organised by Ordre Nouveau which led to the ban:

"Under democracy, was the meeting at the *Mutualite* legal? Surely not! The subject of that meeting was openly racist, therefore contrary to the law, and we [the police] have the right to ask why it was authorised. The organisation which called this meeting is known. Its helmeted and armed 'security forces' are well-known: this also is against the law and here again it is surprising that nothing is done to put an end to principles contrary to legality.

"On the opposing side, there are those who counter-demonstrate or those who take advantage of these counter-demonstrations using the same means, that is to say helmeted and armed security forces, whose violence our colleagues [the police] have suffered, and even if their ideas differ, we regard both as of the same stamp. The government knows this as well as we do, no doubt. Then what interest drives it to put its police in such difficult situations? It is not the first time that we have been present at this kind of demonstration and counter demonstration; they [the government] cannot therefore plead surprise!"

A simple-minded police functionary cannot be expected to see the politically obvious fact that as long as the extremes of the Right and Left continue to battle with each other and as long as the Left believes the main menace comes from the extreme Right, so long will governments get away with putting forward the same policies as the Right in democratic, liberal or even socialist terms. In Italy the same thing obtains, in America it is learned that Trotskyites and Communists are in open physi-

cal combat. We should remember our anarchism and hesitate before plunging wholeheartedly into these demos.

In *Le Monde Libertaire*, the paper of the French Anarchist Federation, July-Aug 1973, Joel Gochot writes:

"Should we have taken part in that counter-demonstration or not?" [21st June]. "Our groups did not participate because

- 1) It was a provocation that we would have been unable to turn against its instigators.
- 2) The problem of violence, which we use only in legitimate self defence. [See Malatesta]
- 3) We refuse to amalgamate with 'leftists'. We reject the amalgamation which could be made between anarchists and leftists. We reject all power, including that of the Left.
- 4) We refuse to join in the 'Wild West' game of rightist-leftist.
- 5) We refuse to leave to the enemy the choice of date, place, and weapons. If we had to fight, we would do so without a General Staff giving us orders or advice.
- 6) In a country in course of becoming fascist, we prefer . . . to develop libertarian propaganda and establish against authoritarian lines, anarchist subversion."

We largely share these views

Jack Robinson
Mary Canipa (who also translated)

SUPPORT ALL PRISONERS

THE LACK of sympathetic reaction by the Left - anarchists included - to last year's demonstration in prisons all over Britain underlined the narrow perspective of most "revolutionaries". Some of the self-appointed ideologists of the working class managed to spare a few grudging words of solidarity after reflecting that prisoners were, in the main, "working class". The self-righteous, authoritarian and moralistic attitude of the Left ensured that sympathy was usually reserved for the armchair-terrorist cult heroes, the "political prisoners". Not surprisingly, this has resulted in a highly justified cynicism about Left clichés amongst the ex-prisoners of PROP (the prisoners' union).

A new pamphlet*, "Political Prisoners and Prisoners' Unions: Conflict or Co-operation?", by a member of South London PROP Group, records the sorry story of the Left's obsession with "political" prisoners and "poli-

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Squatters

Part 4

WE SQUATTERS have effectively challenged property rights. We move into an empty house and become the effective owners of it -- the here and now owners, doing in the house and to the house as we please.

So far our behaviour has not produced serious antagonistic situations. True, we did have Quartermain some years ago - but this was an isolated incident.

But in the last few weeks judges in the High Court ruled that owners should take direct action and throw squatters out by force.

What is Private Property?

What is it then that the judges - the defenders of private property - are so concerned about?

Kenny, my foreman at work, answered this question for me when he told me a story about a man with a shot-gun who was walking over a field and was stopped by a farmer.

'Get off my field at once,' said the farmer to him.

'And whose field was it before it became yours?' asked the man with the gun.

'I got it from my father,' the farmer replied.

'And where did your father get it from?'

'He got it from his father.'

'And where did he get it from?'

'He won it in war,' said the farmer.

'Right'--said the man pointing his gun at the farmer--'get off my field at once.'

Squatting is something like that too. We take over a house because we feel confident and strong. Neighbours don't like derelicts around them getting worse every year. It's better that somebody lives there -- keeps the place in repair, paints it and keeps it clean and tidy. Then there is all that sympathy for homeless people.

Trouble starts when the neighbourhood realizes that squatters are not like them and our way of life is not like theirs -- generally we lay in our beds till noon, then do nothing all day, play sounds till late into the night which only too often get on our neighbours' nerves. Of course our complaint is that their alarm clocks interfere with our sleep.

The Myth Exposed

In the 1950's there was a belief that if only we had socialism the machines would do the work for us. We would have so much time left to do creative

Blind Folly

DESPITE DIRE WARNINGS, as conveyed in the Observer (15/7/73) of a mounting fuel crisis for airlines, Mr. Heath has strongly reinforced Government commitment to three major Government projects: Concorde, Maplin and the Channel tunnel.

According to Andrew Wilson in the Observer article, figures given in Flight International of fuel price increases between

things -- works of art, literature and such like.

Squatters generally are not working and we have all the time --but I don't know of any works of art or literature produced by us.

Then the squatters' anarchist-ic way of life produces some comic consequences.

For example last Autumn when the Charrington Street squat was opening up and all those houses had their water system ripped out and all that re-plumbing had to be done, I suggested that we get ourselves a communal tool-box to do the job. I estimated that £15 would get us all the pipe-wrenches and Mole grips and a hacksaw and chisels and a blow-torch to repair the houses.

It was impossible to get people to contribute anything, though my estimate was that the 500 squatters in Camden spend a £1 per week on pot each, which means £25,000 a year. Lots of money for dope, but not a penny for tools, or for a skip to dump all this rubbish.

Why We Squat

It is not true that we squat because we are homeless and have nowhere else to live. Most of us have well-to-do parents who would be happy to have us back.

We squat because of our ideas and because of our way of life.

Most of the squatters I know - and I know hundreds - come from middle-class families and had we chosen so each one of us would have made a success in the capitalist society. Yet we have rejected the bourgeois way of life and its barren values and chosen to create a more humane way of life for ourselves.

One girl here summed it up well when she said that in the outside society you meet fifty men and you may like one of them and here you meet fifty men and you may dislike one of them. Three or four other girls told me they went squatting because they could no longer communicate with their parents.

Reverend Father Fuck DD
(to be continued)

May 1970 and May 1973 are of between 30 and 110 per cent. Concorde, which burns four times as much fuel per pound of payload as subsonic jets, is obviously a major sufferer from such price increases. Wilson says predictable increases would be "catastrophic" for Concorde. He also claims that the fuel crisis "could shatter the case for Maplin".

With increasing demand for oil in Japan and America already experiencing a fuel crisis, proceeding with Maplin and Concorde is blind folly. The Chairman of British Airways is opposed to a third London airport at Maplin and support for Concorde is minimal. The Channel tunnel is, put simply, a waste of money which will benefit only the banks and the builders.

Andrew Wilson says "the nightmare of both airlines and the oil industry is the possibility of a decision by Middle Eastern countries to restrict production to conserve their major natural resource" yet he can also claim: "The oil crisis is basically one of investment rather than reserves". This contradiction fails to recognise that reserves of oil are dwindling at a rate that will make Maplin, Concorde and the Channel tunnel practically useless by the time they are completed. George Orwell in 1984 used a sentence which Herbert Read commented "might be taken as the motif of the book": By lack of understanding they remained sane. Yet insanity is certain when there is no fuel left in the petrol pump, for that is something even Mr. Heath will understand. J.W.

PRISONS...cont'd from P.3

tical" police to the exclusion of thought about the "ordinary" prisoner and his fate at the hands of police, courts and prisons. This well documented pamphlet shows precisely why everyone should be concerned.

Despite the quality of the pamphlet I am left wondering whether it was worth producing, because I am led to the conclusion that hardly any of the Left is worth talking to. My own criticism of PROP - perhaps based on ignorance of the full scope of its activities - is that it has failed to communicate with the proverbial (yes, and reactionary) man-in-the-street. Hopefully, PROP's indifferent treatment at the hands of the politicians will turn its attention in a more creative and urgently needed direction.

Terry Phillips

*Available for 10p from
S. London PROP Group,
c/o Inside Story,
3 Belmont Road, London SW4

"The Angry Brigade", Friday 20th July, 10.15 p.m. BBC 1, Colour. Written and produced by Gordon Carr. Camera Peter Matthews, Sound Recordist Bill Norman, Film Editor John Bridgden.

THE BBC I television programme on the "Angry Brigade" presented a biased summary, full of supposition and unsubstantiated assertion. It even contradicted itself to the extent of referring to people living in a commune as being anti-society and the link up of Alberola with the Brigade was left entirely without concrete evidence. The ballistics evidence sounded extremely questionable, linking the equipment "found" at Amhurst Road with the First of May Group.

None the less the film had its good points which I hope may have helped in an understanding for some viewers. Some things came across quite well. The committed, involved, likeable nature of most of the young people who spoke with that genuineness that the straight-faced cops entirely lacked and the obvious police lie of not harassing people with left wing views was seen for the crap it is.

The historical approach gave too much credit (or otherwise), in my mind, to anarchist ideas. The Situationist influence could be described in other terms and revolutionary socialist politics rather than anarchist ones might be seen as the major influence. I have the impression that anarchism is better understood and more widely accepted now and that FREEDOM has, for the most part, failed to appreciate the position.

Naturally it was good to see familiar faces on the screen. Albert Meltzer at work with Black Flag and so many faces noticed on various demos. It was very enjoyable and compulsive viewing but for someone much as the writer it could hardly be anything else.

No doubt the majority will have seen what they are conditioned to see but let us hope something of the true nature of anarchism got through amongst the welter of nonsense about the Red Army Faction "terrorising a whole country" and the 'Angry Brigade' "attacking society".

At the end it was claimed the police understand the politics behind the Angry Brigade but I don't think even the makers of this documentary did. I still don't think the police know what on earth's going on and that no one in authority can.

J. W.

Letter

Victory over Chrysler's*

NOXIOUS INDUSTRIES

Dear All,

It's very easy to affirm one's opposition to various generally noxious industries, such as cars and chemical warfare, by calling for a complete shutdown here and now, of the factories concerned, by permanent stay out strikes. However it's not very useful because it is to ignore both the reason these things are made at all and the people involved.

Car factories are noxious because they make things in the interest of a minority; and we can't stop this because they, not us, control the factories. The same applies to all production, and in this context why select limited but nevertheless quite impossible demands when the issue is who controls production? Militancy and shop floor organisation within any factory is our main means of working towards social control of production -- and it is similarly our main means of achieving shutdowns of such large scale productive operations. So I fail to see how making an impossible demand of the car workers (N.B. this is not the same as making impossible demands of the state) is relevant to "our present needs and future aspirations" when it is so clearly irrelevant to theirs, which like the rest of us is to have a decent standard of living in all senses of the term.

It is "unseemly" to put forward such a demand at the same time as denying the means of making it possible and relevant. This will only happen when the car workers have the organisation and the motivation to control the car factories to do something else with them. Porton or Nancucke may be small enough for direct action from outside to seem, or even to be, effective: but when I think of the whole mighty anarchist movement sitting down outside car factories to bring them grinding to a halt . . .

*see article FREEDOM 30/6/73
letter 7/7/73

Politics isn't about striking moral stances, or proclaiming humane values in a corrupt world. It's about relating our "present needs and future aspirations" to that very real and material world out there, and trying thereby to find out how to do something about it.

So let's celebrate what concrete advances we do make, and remember that our ideals/theory are for furthering our real gains -- not for making ourselves feel that we are the only ones in step, and everyone else is to be ignored.

Faternally,

Pete Roberts

MENTAL PATIENTS' UNION

Six members of the Mental Patients' Union have just returned from a conference in Paris. This was planned by three French groups, "Cahiers pour la Folie", ARM (Assoc. against repressive medicine), and GIA (Group for Information about Asylums). The conference was attended by over 300 mental patients including members of the former Socialist Patients' Collective (SPK) in Germany and members of a Spanish group.

Discussion focussed around five topics: psychiatric treatment, the law relating to mental patients, the concept of madness in a sick society, alternative forms of care, and the function and organisation of patient groups. All groups unanimously agreed on their analysis of mental 'illness' as being a reaction of the oppressed class to their situation of appalling social and economic conditions. They all agreed that mental patients must unite to fight the causes of their repression such as social inequality, poverty, bad housing, unemployment, etc. That such organisations are seen as a threat to the State was confirmed by the German group who reported that many of their members are among 80 prisoners now being treated as political prisoners in Germany in total isolation from each other and from other prisoners. They are on hunger strike and are being force fed and denied water. On the second day of the conference patients demonstrated outside the German Embassy whilst a statement was handed in signed by all groups deploring the situation and its concealment by the German press. The French groups also spoke of the repression of their activities. Their efforts to visit patients in hospital are prevented by the French police.

GOVERNMENT BY COMPUTER IN CHILE

Stafford Beer and the Quest for a Philosophy of Technology

IN A RECENT lecture at Brighton Polytechnic, Stafford Beer, the architect of Chile's cybernetically-programmed computer government system, gave the first informed and detailed explanation of the system's workings to reach this country. The sixteen-thousand word text of his lecture has not yet been published in full, but copies which have circulated amongst the scientific press have brought alarmed if not actually terrified reactions from "Science for People", "Undercurrents", and "New Scientist".

Stafford Beer's system consists physically of a central computer with telemetry links to practically all centres of production and distribution in the country. An immensely complex computer programme sifts and filters this mass of data, analysing trends, disregarding the unimportant, and generally selecting through a hierarchical system mimicking the human nervous system, those matters which are of sufficient importance to be presented to the highest "levels" of the system - the Economic Council, for example, or Dr. Allende himself. In addition to this the different levels of the hierarchy are capable of modifying the behaviour of the levels below, through a process of "algedonic feedback" (reward and punishment), which he does not define in detail. There is a high degree of flexibility in the relations between different levels of the hierarchy giving them a built-in ability to adapt to changes in conditions to be observed anywhere in the pyramid. The very highest level of government is carried out in an "operations room", where seven men sit at one of the world's most advanced "computer interfaces", surrounded by "Space Odyssey" style visual readouts, moving displays and remote-control slide-projectors to assist them in visualising their fantasies. "Paper," he says proudly, "is banned here". Full use has been made of available data on human perception in the design of the room, and every other science which could possibly have any relevance.

As one reads through this frankly very demanding piece of futuristic sermonising, fired with Beer's fierce enthusiasm and obviously genuine belief in the good of cybernetic government as a sort of unquestioned absolute, the desire grows to jump up and run through the streets shouting "Down with Big Brother!", so great does the physical revulsion become.

Nowhere in the whole document has he defined his aims - his long and short term objectives and the assumptions which underlie the whole system. Nowhere does he say "we have built this system to make people happier, to give them more personal freedom, shorter working hours and more fulfilment at work, greater mobility, a widening of their life-experience, a reduction of the stresses which drive half of twentieth-century industrial man into the madhouse." There are vaguely benevolent sentiments of course, but nowhere has he defined what it is that his technically beautiful system "maximises" (to use his own term). It is patently obvious to the reader that what is maximised is economic expansionist efficiency and nothing else. A total abstraction, invented for the maintenance of privilege, whose effect has been to plunder every resource on earth, destroy the happiness of the vast majority of mankind, and finally threaten his very survival as a species.

If Stafford Beer's computer

AS MANY OF OUR READERS HAVE EXPRESSED APPROVAL OF OUR 'EMERGENCY' LAYOUT AND SIZE WE ARE CONTINUING IT, UNTIL THE END OF 1973 AT LEAST.

control system does everything he thinks it will (and here there is much debate) then it will indeed mimic the workings of an individual human nervous system - it will have the insatiable greed of a mean-spirited financier and as much regard for its citizens as you or I display for the individual cells of our bodies.

"How should cybernetics be used in the exercise of national government?" was the brief given to Stafford Beer by Dr. Allende. "The question whether cybernetics had any relevance to the problems of society and of government," Beer was careful to point out, "had already been answered affirmatively." What about the question whether national government had any relevance to the problems of society, or more specifically, the happiness and fulfilment of individual human beings?

One wonders if either Stafford Beer or Dr. Allende (assuming them both to be fully sincere, well-intentioned men) have any acquaintance with the very fine and practically jargon-free analysis of viable systems put forward by Arthur Koestler, and discussed recently in "Undercurrents". Hierarchical systems, he points

out, are indeed a successful form of organization, and they do occur in the brains of individuals, in societies and at all levels of complexity in living and non-living things, right down to the molecular level. But they do have quite clearly defined characteristics, including "altruism" of the individual sub-units (submissiveness, patriotism, obedience) and "egoism" of the system as a whole. In other words it is plainly against the whole nature and concept of a hierarchical structure to accept correction from below. The "control" from the bottom tier which Stafford Beer seems to believe enters the system in some meta-physical manner somewhere is simply IRRELEVANT to the system. Even if it can "know" the preferences of the individuals making up the bottom-most part of the pyramid it is programmed and arranged NOT to act on this information but to apply "algedonic feedback" right down through the levels of the hierarchy to bring the "deviants" back into line. Information is NOT control, however often Stafford Beer proclaims that it is, and he betrays his clear awareness of this fact in the most outrageous piece of sophistry in the entire paper. Beer describes an early meeting with Allende, where he is describing the behaviour of hierarchical systems to the President, while drawing out the characteristic box-diagram of the hierarchical state. Just as he has drawn the top-most box and is ready to say that this is the President, Allende interrupts him with the Orwellian masterpiece: "Ah - at last! The people." I need hardly go on.

Even if we accept for a moment the absurdity that Allende is Chile (just as DeGaulle was France, etc.) how does Beer guarantee that his successor will be endowed with the same transcendent talents? In fact he forestalls this obvious criticism with the really childish claim that the people's experience with computer control will make them sophisticated in information theory and teach them how to defeat the evil dictator. One can only stand goggle-eyed!

Dr. Allende is a Marxist president; therefore, like the Editor of "Science for People" we will all feel a pang of guilt if we criticize him, and shed a crocodile tear for the sake of appearances, but having bought this amazing package from Professor Beer we can surely be forgiven for wondering to which of Marxism's 57 varieties he subscribes. It is probably a good thing that few



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CHILE...contd. from P.6

Marxists go to the bother of read-
ing Marx, as it might confuse
them even further, and since mod-
ern Marxism bears as little rela-
tionship to Marx as modern Chris-
tianity to Christ it hardly matters;
but if we are to take the ideology
seriously at all we can not surely
ignore altogether Marx's ultimate
vision of the total decline of all
political power:

"When, in the course of devel-
opment, class distinctions have
disappeared, and all production
has been concentrated in the hands
of a vast association of the whole
nation, the public power will lose
its political character. Political
power, properly so called, is
merely the organized power of one
class for oppressing another."

- Communist Manifesto

Beer's cybernetic superstate, at
least on the surface, would seem
to be designed to crystalize the
organization of political power for
all time into a single great struc-
ture - barring the intervention of
a revolution!

In short, Stafford Beer's sys-
tem, like so many of the cyber-
states of science fiction, is
fatally deficient in philosophy.
This is an unfashionable word but

it is the best word to describe a
case in which action has preceded
full analysis of the situation, or
failed to take account of vitally
important factors in the problem.

Had Stafford Beer refused Dr.
Allende's brief, and insisted on
working out a system which would
ultimately make national govern-
ment redundant then our suspicion
of the motives of all concerned
might have been much less.

Could cybernetic theory have
produced Marx's "vast association
of the whole nation" - an associa-
tion not coercive but informational
in character? Of course it could
- I doubt if the computer would
even have been necessary. What
was needed was not a hierarchy
but a network - a system of con-
venient information transfer which
would make the needs and "assets"
of each production and distribution
centre continuously known to every
other centre. Little more, in
fact, than a high-grade telephone
grid. Information is not control,
as I have already said, and a sys-
tem based along these lines would
not pre-suppose central control
from some remote "operations
room", though there would be no
practical difficulty in giving the
government (for as long as it ex-
isted) access to the information in
the grid, on which any number of
analyses could still be performed.
The factor of over-riding import-
ance would be the possibility of
disconnecting the government and
leaving the system intact. Infor-
mation is not control!

A willingness to put Marx's
boldest vision to the test would
have been the crowning testimony
to Allende's good faith. It seems
to me that the opportunity has not
been taken, has perhaps been de-
liberately rejected, in favour of
a more efficient - terrifyingly
more efficient - version of the old.

When Machiavelli sent his book
"The Prince" to The Magnificent
Lorenzo De' Medici he enclosed
a letter:

"Men who are anxious to win
the favour of a Prince nearly al-
ways follow the custom of pre-
senting themselves to him with the
possessions they most value, or
with things they know especially
please him; so we often see Prin-
ces given horses, weapons, cloth
of gold, precious stones, and
similar ornaments worthy of their
high position. Now .. I have not
found among my belongings any-
thing as dear to me or that I value
so much as my understanding of
the deeds of great men, won by me
from a long acquaintance with con-
temporary affairs and a continuous
study of the ancient world; these
matters I have very diligently ana-
lysed and pondered for a long time,
and now, having summarized them
in a little book, I am sending them
to Your Magnificence."

David Gardiner

LETTER

PETROL CRISIS

Dear Editors,

The point J.W.'s article of 14 July misses out is that Nixon has just set off a multi-million dollar investment campaign to find alternative sources of energy. Add to that the fact that the major motor companies of the world have undoubtedly invested a lot of money in secret research into steam cars and electric cars, and you get a rather more ironical perspective on the petrol crisis. Capitalism drzgs itself out of golden grooves not because of the benign influence of ecologists, but because of economic obstacles, in this case the oil-producing countries. When the Suez Canal was blocked, the oil companies started using jumbo oil tankers on different routes, and made the hitherto indispensable Suez Canal redundant. Push-bikes are not yet being turned out on a new scale to meet the new demands of the ecological crisis, because the bicycle companies are still satisfied with the profits they are making from conventional output.

This does not mean that anarchists and ecologists are wrong - far from it. The last part of the CIS counter-report no. 5 on BLMC makes the social costs of the car deadly clear. It simply means that an analysis of community needs and the depletion of energy resources must not underestimate the capacity of capitalism for massive innovations in order to preserve its massive profits.

Julius.

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LIVERPOOL 13. Help wanted with fines & costs for those charged with obstruction, threatening behaviour, assault and possession of offensive weapon. Colin Jordan of the British Movement was successfully stopped from holding a public meeting at the Pier Head. Send assistance & write for further details to: '13' Defence Committee, c/o 12 Upper Duke St., Liverpool 1.

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Paul Goodman: J.G. Lergessner of Faculty of Education, Univ. of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada is researching Goodman's contribution to reform in education in the 1960's and wishes contact people now engaged in work on Goodman

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