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DEMOCRACY AND INDUSTRY

To
T.R.G. and A.E.C.G.
and K.T.V.

Democracy and Industry

by

CONSTANCE REAVELEY

and

JOHN WINNINGTON

1947

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LONDON

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Preface

IT is realised today that humanity has reached a cross-roads. Either we must learn to live together as one society, or we shall exterminate our race in revolutions and wars. The civilisation that is the fruit of age-long co-operation is, in our time, at the mercy of evil passions which we had not understood to be as powerful as they are. Modern invention has virtually abolished distance, so that any war is almost bound to become a global war. There is more need than ever for strong solidarity among the normal civilised people who have to meet the appalling challenge of the danger of global war and atomic bombs.

Yet at this very time existing societies have no secure cohesion but are riven with internal estrangement. The specialisation of functions which has resulted from the industrial revolution, and the way modern cities have grown, with the professional classes living in one quarter and the working classes in others, have made it more true than ever that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives, nor how it works. Indeed, this is true for far smaller fractions than halves. The friction and hostility which is generated by this lack of mutual understanding is a brake on progress ; but today it is more than that. It might so divide us as to paralyse our effort to restore civilisation and stability.

It is with these grave thoughts in mind that we offer a very small contribution towards a better understanding within our own nation. ~~In this book~~

PREFACE

we have attempted to interpret something of factory experience to those who do not know it.

The book is a fragmentary study of a certain aspect of a large subject; it was written in small snatches of time by two people whose jobs allow them little leisure. In publishing our observations of a certain aspect of industrial employment we are not supposing either that our study is exhaustive or that other types of employment have not similar or equally urgent problems. At the last census it was found that about seven million people were engaged in industry, a number large enough to make a significant contribution to the morale of the nation and deserve study; and we hope the inadequate literature devoted to their problems will grow. This book is based on experience in the engineering and certain allied trades in the Midlands and the South. In these industries there is a mixed population drawn from various regions and various industries, and this variety creates a rather different range of problems from those of an industry, like cotton or cutlery, which has a long tradition and a local habitation.

We wish to say that the book is not an indictment of any class. Nor does it imply an assumption that any class is blameless. It is an objective study of what we have observed. We believe that, far more than sinful human will, the system of unlimited competition in a limited market is responsible for what has gone wrong. Behaviour is the reaction of personality to environment. The saint can achieve goodness in any environment, but ordinary ungifted men and women often behave much worse than is natural to them, under the strain put upon them by

PREFACE

an unfortunate system. And this is what we believe is happening today in industry.

Finally we should introduce ourselves. Constance Reaveley was before the war a college lecturer, teaching political philosophy; during the war she worked in various factories as machine operative, progress chaser, and welfare officer. John Winnington, after serving his apprenticeship and experiencing unemployment during the depression, worked his way up in various firms from the lowest-paid jobs to the managerial grade. The book owes its origin to Constance Reaveley's conviction that political philosophy would be a more enlightening and valuable discipline if the study of the abstract ideas that underlie the constitutions of various states were correlated with more concrete studies of the experience of life which enables men to operate governments of one kind or another; and that this awareness of actual conditions is necessary not only for the student but to the citizen. John Winnington has collaborated throughout, and also written Chapter 2 of Part II.

Our thanks are due to Mr. C. B. Young, of Edinburgh University, and Prof. H. G. Wood, of Birmingham University, whose comments were very helpful when the manuscript was in an embryonic state; to Miss Diana Murry Hill and Miss Frances Buckland, whose encouragement and criticism were valued at a later date; and to Sir Henry Clay, Warden of Nuffield College, and Sir Raymond Streat, Chairman of the Cotton Board, who read it and commented with candour and attention, but without, if they will pardon the understatement, entire approval.

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INTRODUCTION

The Significance of Purpose in a Free Man's Life

POLITICAL democracy makes heavy demands upon individual character. Democracy is an attempt to provide a political structure which will protect the freedom of the individual in carrying out his own purposes, and it rests on the capacity of free individuals to co-operate voluntarily in corporate purposes. When there is no scope for individual purpose there is no freedom as democracy understands freedom; real freedom includes freedom to act. Purpose is personality in action, it is the main-spring of a free man's life. Without freedom of purposive action, a man may develop certain qualities, of submissiveness, patience, diligence; but if he simply does what he is compelled to do, by habit or coercion, without thought and without initiative, he loses the conception of himself as a creative person with a responsibility to use his mind and exercise persistence. If his natural purposiveness is continually frustrated, he will steadily become less and not more of a man. Then democracy itself will falter and lose direction; for democracy depends upon the support and pressure of public opinion and public feeling, and these in turn rest on the purposes of the people.

It would be possible to study the development of the type of character which democracy demands from many points of view, considering climate,

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racial inheritance, history, education, religion. But it is the thesis of this book that nothing has a *more* powerful effect upon character than the kind of work men have to do; the qualities that are constantly demanded by daily work are bound to be developed to the best of our capacity, those that are useless on the job that occupies the major part of our time tend to atrophy, unless we have ample resources for leisure. The qualities of maturity in judgment and responsibility, of sympathy and balance, of drive and tenacity of purpose, are strongly developed in some kinds of work and not in others.

The question is often brought up of what a man ought to bring to his work, and the Puritan ethic, which has exercised so profound an influence on our people, teaches that he has an obligation to give his whole industry and fidelity to it. There is another question which is important, namely what the work does for the man. It ought to be the making of him. It ought to make him fit for democracy. That is what those who have the best jobs get out of them, and know they get out of them—the full development of mature energetic personality.

We propose, therefore, to examine the effect of industrial work upon personality, and to study it especially in terms of the scope it offers to purpose. We offer this study not because it is comprehensive; there are other types of work that are characteristic of modern society and which deserve study. We simply speak that we do know and testify that we have seen.

Purpose functions at different levels. This may be illustrated from the life of a doctor. A doctor is

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aware more or less that he is the servant of the community, there is a common purpose that he shares very widely, with scientists, patients, patients' relatives, the Government, the public who subscribe to the voluntary hospitals—the purpose of promoting health and fighting illness. Within this embracing community purpose there is a corporate purpose shared with his hospital, to maintain the traditions and standards of that hospital. And again within that purpose he has his private purpose as an individual, the long-term purpose of doing a certain kind of work, becoming a specialist in the department that most interests him, the short-term purpose of curing each patient as he comes along; and a kind of overall purpose of supporting his family by doing this kind of work. When these several purposes interlock satisfactorily the man is having a good life; he is experiencing the freedom of expressing *himself* in the work he has to do, he is likely to grow in spiritual stature, and in the self-reliance and energy that are needed in a citizen.

We propose to ask whether in industry there is sufficient demand upon a man's capacity to form reasonable purposes and carry them through to bring him to personal maturity and good citizenship. The environment to which character is exposed in industrial work is an intense struggle for existence. We shall first, therefore, examine the function of competition in modern industry and then the effect on character of competitive mass production.

Part I

Industrial Competition

A. The Theory of Perfect Competition

THE mainspring of modern production is competition.

The function of trade is to supply the needs of civilised life, to raise the standard of living, and to maximise wealth. It performs these functions most effectively when supply and demand are in equilibrium; for when the equilibrium of supply and demand is disturbed, either things are being produced which are not in demand, and they are therefore wasted, or else there is unsatisfied demand, which means that things could be produced, which would meet a real need and produce wealth, which are not being produced. There is a continual tendency for equilibrium to be lost; the corrective which restores it is competition. For when some product, say refrigerators, is in great demand and is, therefore, fetching a good price, there is an inducement to produce it; and the result is generally some degree of over-production. Competition corrects this; for over-production leads sellers to compete with one another by reducing their prices. Reduction of prices either stimulates the demand by bringing the commodity within the reach of a less wealthy class of buyer, or else it makes the further production of refrigerators unprofitable. Then production in the end abates, and the product will become scarce. Again competition redresses the disequilibrium; for there is now competition to buy; scarcity sends prices up, and this is an inducement to produce. The cycle

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begins again. In a healthy state of trade, therefore, production will oscillate somewhat, near or around the level of demand, and the agent which operates perpetually to restore equilibrium is competition.

In order that competition may do its work properly, that is restore equilibrium as quickly as possible, elasticity is needed, all parts of the complicated organisation of supply and demand must respond sensitively to one another: any rigidity in any part will delay the movement into equilibrium. We can illustrate this by considering the function of elasticity of prices, wages, labour supply, flow of money, and demand.

The elasticity of prices means, as we saw, that shortage of supply causes buyers to compete; when buyers compete prices rise. This rise in price itself supplies the corrective, by attracting production. Increased production relieves scarcity and brings prices down. If this movement goes too far, there is over-production. This means that sellers are competing; they compete by lowering the price. This may have some or all of three effects: it may stimulate demand, thus inducing equilibrium; it may drive capital away into other products for which there is more demand, thus again inducing equilibrium; it may bring ruin to firms that cannot adapt either by reducing their costs to match the fall in selling price, or by switching to another product. This ruin is economically all to the good: it eliminates the less efficient firms in favour of the more efficient who can meet demand, and again equilibrium is restored.

Similarly with wages. Rising wages attract

THE THEORY OF PERFECT COMPETITION

labour into the trades that can offer them; this movement provides a greater supply of labour in these trades, and so reduces wages. When on the other hand there is over-production, wages must be free to fall; for a fall in wages means a fall in the cost of production, which means lower selling prices; lower selling prices either stimulate demand or cause production to shift to another commodity for which there is more demand.

Elasticity of labour supply means that when wages sink too low in any industry, or inefficient firms fail, labour will migrate to other more profitable industries. Perfect competition needs another form of elasticity of labour supply, namely a pool of unemployed; such a reservoir enables manufacturers to respond quickly to movements of demand, by taking up some of the surplus labour which is there ready, and again, when trade is poor, to save themselves labour costs by discharging their operatives, so bringing down their selling prices to meet poor demand.

Elasticity in the movement of money is required in order that capital may be available to go where it is most needed, that is into equipment or renewal of plant for the production of the commodities for which there is most demand. Shortage of money means that chances are lost; old-fashioned and uneconomic plant cannot be renewed, so that prices cannot be reduced to meet the demand of the less wealthy buyers; new products which would create a healthy demand cannot be developed, unless there is capital available to start them.

It will be apparent from what has been said that the elasticity of demand is variable. There is a

theory that you can sell anything if you are prepared to sell it cheap enough. This is not quite true. If one has enough of some things, bicycles or bread or reels of cotton, for instance, one will not buy any more of them, however cheap they are. Nevertheless the readiness to buy is almost inexhaustible provided the inducement is good enough, and that means among other things, varied enough. Changes of fashion keep the volume of demand elastic, but they in turn require the other elasticities we have discussed; production must be able to adapt to shifts of fashion by means of the mobility of labour and capital.

B. Competitive Mass Production

The reciprocity of the movement of supply and demand would work well enough in simple production. A market gardener, for instance, who finds that the demand for tulips is better than the demand for daffodils, or that spinach fetches a better price than celery, can adapt his production in no long time and to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The business of keeping the huge populations of modern states alive and in comfort is desperately more complicated.

Large populations can be supplied with the necessities of life by means of mass production only. Mass production means specialisation of labour and machinery. Once the plant is there, mass production

COMPETITIVE MASS PRODUCTION

is cheaper and quicker than anything else; but the plant requires very heavy outlay. This outlay has to be made ahead of demand. When we want a shirt (cf. Sir Henry Clay, *Economics for the General Reader*, ch. 1) we expect to find one, in fact a large selection, ready in the shops. This means that great expense has been incurred months and years beforehand by those who raised the sheep, made the machinery, worked the mills and transported the goods. This outlay may be made out of profits on former sales; but a great deal of such outlay is in fact made on credit, that is on the confidence which bankers and buyers of shares may happen to have in someone's guess that at a future time there will be profits to be made out of selling shirts or refrigerators or what not.

These guesses are not always right. When they are wrong, they involve loss or ruin for those who have invested their money in enterprises which fail to pay. Such guesses do not depend on any exact science, but on the flair which successful men of business develop by experience. The effect of mistakes in anticipating demand and other conditions is immensely magnified by the fact that, as Sir Henry Clay says, the money market has all the characteristics of the herd. Confidence is catching and so is failure of confidence. All movements are exaggerated by their effect on confidence, that is on the readiness to invest, lend or borrow.

There is yet another factor which magnifies the effect of fluctuations of demand, and that is the excitement generated by the pursuit of wealth on the grand scale. This is something that not everyone can understand. The weekly wage earners and men

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who work for modest salaries have a certain standard of living in their minds, and when they have attained this they lose interest in money; they prefer the enjoyment of leisure. Those who believed that you could increase war production indefinitely by means of bonuses were nonplussed to discover that when the ordinary worker has earned what he thinks necessary, he prefers leisure to further payment. But those who are handling enormous sums of money are exposed to enormous risk, and cannot afford to slack off when they have made great gains, because they have sunk a great deal in their plant or other investments, and may be ruined if they make a mistake next year, or if somebody in America has an invention which revolutionises taste or methods. Further there is the intense excitement of competition itself, and an appetite for gain which is whetted by success. In time of good trade, therefore, risk may not deter an investor if great gains are hoped for; his losses may involve many besides himself in ruin.

Finally, as we have said, these operations involving thousands of pounds and the welfare of thousands of families are at the mercy of acts of God, events which cannot be insured against, like new inventions or discoveries; the history of modern industry is a continuous series of catastrophes of this kind.

The changes which the war has brought about will work out in alternations of prosperity and loss no less tremendous. There is no prospect whatever of tranquillity.

C. Efforts to Modify the Severity of Competition

The theory of perfect competition has a logic and symmetry which give it a great appeal in the eyes of the economist.

The only thing that is wrong with perfect competition is that in practice under the circumstances of today it is too painful to be endured. At every point the people involved have tried to protect themselves against the distresses it brings upon them. In order to understand this it is necessary to translate some of the technical terms of the economist into the terms of human experience.

I

Elasticity of wages means that there is nothing to impede their rise and fall. Carried to the ultimate conclusion this would mean that the unemployed would die. In a time of rising birthrate, when the supply of labour was virtually inexhaustible, this would not matter from the economic point of view; it would reduce the supply of labour, and this would send wages up to the subsistence level, thus restoring equilibrium. Something of this sort must have happened in the past, and happens today where there is no provision for Poor Relief. But in England for centuries there has been such provision, though the Poor House (described by Arnold Bennett, in *Clayhanger*) operated as an inducement to seek work only less powerful than death. In the nineteenth century some of the trade unions took on the responsibility for their own unemployed. This might have been expected not greatly to impair elasticity of wages, because the drain on funds would

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make the unions ready to agree to reduction of wages in order to get their members back to work. Actually, however, the unemployment pay was devised as a means of forcing wages up; a man with no resources would have to take work for what he could get; if the union wanted him to refuse a wage which would undercut what was regarded as the proper pay for the job, it had to support him. This policy was successful in many of the great unions*. They have been able to stabilise wages somewhere near subsistence level. Stability, however, is another word for rigidity, or inelasticity, and the unions have been held to account for aggravating unemployment, by refusing to allow wages to fall so as to bring down costs to the point at which the willingness to buy would be stimulated (or demand could recover elasticity).

Recent researches, however, have brought to light the fact that even the stabilisation of wage levels has left many families below the poverty line. The conception of a poverty line† was arrived at by calculating the cost of the minimum amounts and kinds of food which medical opinion held to be barely necessary to health, plus a minimum addition for other needs based on the cost of living. By this reckoning it was found that a large proportion of working families are below the poverty line while their children are too young to earn; in fact, that 50 per cent of children are probably living in families which cannot afford to buy enough food for health. In these families the mother often goes short for the

* Cf. Beatrice and Sidney Webb, *Social Democracy*.

† See Appendix 1.

EFFORTS TO MODIFY SEVERITY OF COMPETITION

children, but it is an accepted principle that children must go short if necessary in order to maintain the health of the breadwinner. Children live on bread and jam in poor families. Accordingly various services, such as free milk for nursing mothers and for babies, meals for school children, and many others (most recently, Family Allowances) have been established as a device for keeping wages low without mortgaging the nation's physique too heavily. By this means the cost of maintaining health is paid not by the father of the children, nor by the employer who makes his profit from the father's labour, but by the community as a whole, who pay for it in taxation. Money which is paid in taxes cannot be used to renew obsolete plant or invested in new industries; in short, taxation introduces inelasticity in the flow of money, and handicaps the movement of industry into equilibrium.

The elasticity of labour supply entails unemployment, of which more is said in the next chapter.

Shortly before the war of 1914-1918 it was decided that it was not in the national interest to leave the unemployed to be supported by trade unions, especially as many of them were not union members. Lloyd George's insurance scheme was devised to assist men during intermittent unemployment, out of a fund derived from the joint contributions of employed and employers. The prolonged unemployment after the war strained the scheme beyond anything that had been anticipated, and at the same time made it plain that the State would have to continue to shoulder the burden. Unemployment Insurance was supplemented by Unemployment Benefit. This scheme introduces

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another rigidity noted by certain economists as impeding the operation of competition to restore equilibrium. (Cf. Professor Robbins, *The Great Depression*, p. 83.) Unemployment *without* State assistance is an inducement to accept lower wages and it also increases the mobility of labour, so restoring equilibrium.

The mobility of labour we saw is one of the elasticities which are required for perfect competition. When wages in one industry fall, owing to over-production or other causes, labour tends to move into other work. This migration of labour used to mean that if a man was not doing so well as he once was in his trade, or had long spells of unemployment, he would not put his son into it, but would find an opening for the boy in a trade that seemed to have more promise. The movement of labour from the building of locomotives to the motor trade may have been mainly of this kind. There was a considerable shifting of labour from the north to the south of England during the depression. But with the violent changes which have characterised the last decades, the mobility of labour requires that a man must be willing himself to leave the trade in which he has skill, train for new work with a lot of boys who have never had any standing at all, and perhaps move to a district where he is not known and begin all over again to work his way up from the bottom. This would mean moving his family out of a district where they perhaps had got employment. In the 1930s the Government, which offered a man a training, could not guarantee him a job, still less any security that the trade he moved into would keep him employed for very long. The

EFFORTS TO MODIFY SEVERITY OF COMPETITION

general instability at that time was so great that the Government could not offer any reliable forecast of the future outlook in any trade. Perfect mobility of labour thus means that a man must be willing to move his home and begin again in work which is strange to him, and in which he is a stranger, again and again. This kind of experience tends, of course, to make men think that skill is more of a handicap than anything else, and certainly not worth the sacrifices which it costs. They determine not to apprentice their sons, but to put them to work which will bring in wages as soon as possible (especially if they have a large family), whether the work seems to have any future or not. The path of safety seems to be to become the unskilled or semi-skilled labourer who can turn his hand to anything, and has no pride and no interest in any particular kind of work. The pleasure and responsibility of skill are something the poor man can hardly afford; he must impoverish his whole experience of life in order to keep his family alive.

II

Thus the working class devised some defences against the impact of unmitigated competition.

Competition is found intolerable also by the capitalist.

In the first place, it tends to over-production. A number of firms acting against one another in time of boom are likely to overstock the market; it is against the common interest for every firm to produce as if it alone intended to supply the whole demand or most of it, because it follows that a pro-

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portion of what is produced is wasted, but it is not in the interests of any one firm to hold back and let the others get ahead*. Again, competitive advertisement costs an immense amount, which is met by the prices paid by the customer. Further, competition tends always to bring prices near the cost of production, because if any firm puts its prices up, it thereby sends its customers to other makers of the same or nearly the same article, who are willing to sell cheaper and make smaller profits on each article in order to sell a larger number. There is, therefore, a strong movement to form combines in order to secure monopoly.

Monopoly means that the whole market can be surveyed and production calculated so as to meet it without uneconomic over-production. It means that time and energy which would otherwise be spent on competition can be devoted to the proper management of a business. A director of a large firm said lately, to one of the writers, that he reckoned he spent 80 per cent of his time getting contracts, only about 20 per cent running his business; he ardently desired to be rid of competition, come to reasonable agreements with his rivals and give his time to his own business. Monopoly means that inventions and economies can benefit the whole range of production and, therefore, the whole range of customers; as things are, if one firm makes a discovery that cheapens manufacture, it keeps this as a trade secret and continues to sell at the market price, thus making higher profits than its rivals, or else undersells and ruins them. Further, as John Winnington has shown (Ch. 2), monopoly tends to bring security

* Cf. Barbara Wootton's *Plan or No Plan*.

EFFORTS TO MODIFY SEVERITY OF COMPETITION

and better conditions to the workers, to create a kind of middle class of workers who know where they are, and can plan their lives and their children's lives without crippling anxiety about the future.

From the point of view of the community, however, there are drawbacks to monopoly. The aim of the combine is to secure the largest possible profits. Sometimes this can be more effectively done by restricting production and getting scarcity or semi-scarcity prices than by selling a larger number of articles cheaply. The combine can only restrict production, however, if it includes all or nearly all the producers. This it cannot easily do if foreign goods are coming in cheaply; it is hard to form combines that cross national frontiers, though when such an amalgamation is formed it can be immensely powerful. British combines, therefore, seek to get their home market protected for them by tariffs*. Thus rigidities of prices and supply are set up which may well be of great value to the firms concerned, and their shareholders, but prevent the recovery of equilibrium and harm the community as a whole.

In summary of this section, we may say that while perfect competition tends to restore the equilibrium of supply and demand and so to promote the maximisation of wealth, it does so at a cost to human lives which it is not right for the community to exact. It costs, as this book will show, the attrition of moral personality by anxiety and exhaustion, a loss of responsibility for the worker which handicaps the attainment of ethical maturity. If in this age as in former times there was no alternative but to subject

As in the Steel Trade in the 1930s.

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the majority of men to utter bondage of labour in order to keep human societies alive, we should have to accept this necessity. It was the belief that this was in fact the case that prevented us from legislating to control the severities of the Industrial Revolution much sooner than we did. But the belief was false. There are alternatives.

The alternatives so far attempted in this country have consisted partly in the self-protective measures of the parties involved in it, namely capital and labour, each acting naturally only in their own interests, and partly in measures taken by the community to assuage the worst sufferings. Professor Durbin (to whose book, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, the present writers are indebted) points out that the effect of these instinctive adjustments is to prevent the system from working as it should. It is as though one had a complicated machine which would work if it was well lubricated, so that all its parts could move freely in combination with one another as they were designed to do ; but we are taking great trouble to cause each movement to jam and fail to complete itself. We now find the machine does not work satisfactorily. Competition is what keeps its parts working reciprocally.

The answer is to design a new machine, which will not depend upon perfect competition, and will, therefore, not inflict the suffering of perfect competition, nor fail to work if the suffering is alleviated. The Russians have one alternative design; Beveridge has another. Others are possible.

Part II

*The Effects of Competitive Mass
Production on Personality*

CHAPTER ONE

Unemployment

MODERN mass production has entailed and indeed almost required heavy unemployment. The experience and dread of unemployment form the background in the worker's mind that persists through all experience of full employment. This abiding fear is not always taken account of, when we attempt to interpret the experience of life which work under competitive mass production brings to the worker and the effect on his character of that experience.

Sir William Beveridge has shown in his *Full Employment in Free Society* (Appendix A) that there have been waves of cyclical unemployment in industry at least as far back as 1785. But the recent unemployment in the 1930s was different. Cyclical unemployment may be likened to an epidemic of influenza from which there is good recovery, but the depression of the 1930s seems to have been more like encephalitis lethargica, a violent disease for which the organism was unprepared, and which may dislocate the whole balance of personality and leave permanent or at least lasting damage behind it.

On the type of unemployment which was characteristic of this depression we may quote some figures from Sir William's book*.

"In September 1929 nearly 90 per cent of the
* *Full Employment*, p. 66.

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applicants (for benefit) had been unemployed for less than six months and less than five per cent had been unemployed for twelve months or more. In August, 1936, the number of persons with short unemployment (less than six months) was much the same as in September, 1929, about 850,000, but they constituted less than 64 per cent of all the unemployed: those unemployed twelve months or more were one quarter of the whole . . . This mass of chronic unemployment . . . even in August, 1939, included nearly a quarter of a million people."

Normally unemployment is a misfortune, often a grave misfortune, but there is the expectation that it will end soon. When this confidence is broken, and the mind is invaded by fear that it will go on indefinitely, the impact of the experience is very different. Further, in this depression, as Sir William says (p. 6 of his *Summary*),

"The short-term unemployed do not know that they are short-term unemployed until their term of unemployment is over."

This experience befell a very great many people. Sir William, in his *Summary* (p. 6), says that during the years 1924-1932 two out of every three work-people of all ages made a claim to benefit. This period included some good years; if such a count were made for the years 1930 to 1936 it would undoubtedly be found that a far higher proportion than two out of three had experienced unemployment. At the peak, in January, 1933, nearly three million were on the registers; this was after the number had been much reduced by the imposition

UNEMPLOYMENT

of the Means Test. Many more than three million must have been out of work.

We must now study the kind of experience which unemployment brought to the large number who went through it.

We said that purpose is the mainspring of a free man's life. Men's confidence in the significance of any purpose whatever, their own or their employer's or the State's, was profoundly shaken by the experience of unemployment. Morale has not yet recovered from the shock of it and is not likely to recover for many years.

To those who have not experienced it this may seem an exaggerated statement, but it is not. It may be argued that from an objective point of view unemployment is indeed rather like illness. A man may be out of work for six months or a year owing to illness; but he recovers. The experience does no indelible damage to character. Yet it is analogous to unemployment in many ways; it involves impoverishment, anxiety, idleness, dependence on others, and a kind of debility which is mental and moral as well as physical. Unemployment also involved impoverishment, anxiety, idleness and debility. The debility especially is an indignity; young men found they had to give up Keep Fit classes during unemployment, because on the dole they could not buy enough food to satisfy the hunger which exercise induces, even without Keep Fit there was debility arising from hunger*. However, granting all this, and granting it was a misfortune, that time has passed. Why has morale not yet recovered?

The answer is that illness does not degrade.

* Cf. *Men Without Work*, Pilgrim Trust.

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Unemployment does. A man who has felt himself degraded does not forget it. A man may know that it is luck that keeps some firms going and causes others to crash, and that if he is discharged from a firm that has failed he is unlikely to pick up another job, because other firms are liable to be turning people off and none will want to take on strangers. But nothing will stop him from feeling that in a struggle like this the best man wins, and if you are out of a job, it may be because you have failed somehow in sense or guts. He knows that this is what society at large is very ready to think.

When an unemployed man is hungry, thoughts pervade his mind continually and irresistibly which are not compatible with dignity. This is not the case with all hunger; there is no trace of any such experience of shame in the diaries of the men who died of hunger on Scott's expedition to the South Pole, although their minds were haunted all the time with thoughts of food. Men who have known the hunger of unemployment never forget it; the dread that the humiliation may return remains with them.

Unemployment lasting more than a few weeks dislocates a man's morale, because it undermines his long-term purpose of supporting his wife and family*. When this fundamental sense of being essential to the family and responsible for it was damaged, it was difficult to keep up any morale. Men lost direction. The unemployed man had so few obligations, it was seldom necessary to be

* *Punch* had a joke about this. A man is quarrelling with his wife. "What don't I do for you?" he says. "Don't I go and get the dole for you?"

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punctual, it was more and more difficult to be tidy. Men did not like to meet their friends, they did not like to be seen in the clothes they had to wear. They lost the tonic of encounter with people who were not under a cloud.

Most purposes involve the expenditure of some money, and the unemployed had none to spare. But a sense of futility pervaded the whole of life so that even purposes that cost nothing, like reading in the Free Library, often seemed useless. Men who are busy and confident in the ordinary activity of life covet leisure, so that they may carry out some project or other, in the garden or at the club or with the children. It was difficult for the unemployed to find any project attractive or devote himself to anything. That many men survived this time with self-control and made such a recovery that you would not guess what they went through, is a great moral triumph. Many did not come through without moral impairment. None forget.

These troubles, which are unavoidable in prolonged unemployment, were exquisitely aggravated by the Means Test*. It is hard to believe that if the community had realised the humiliation which the Means Test imposed on normal people, we should have insisted on saving money at that human cost. Doubtless some came for relief when they could have managed without. But to be suspected of this when you were quite incapable of it, to be obliged to submit your house and possessions to the examination of a public official who probed into your private life and then decided whether you were to be given the means of subsistence or not, was an

Appendix 2 on Unemployment.

unbearable indignity. Sooner than submit to it, many removed themselves from the register. It does not follow that they did not need assistance. How they managed may be illustrated by the story of a young man known to the writers. He told how at one time he got a job for a week at a theatre as part of a crowd; for this he was paid 12s. 6d. He was paying half a crown a week for his room and living on porridge and jam. At that standard of living, he said, 12s. 6d. lasts "quite a long time." The same feeling is disclosed in a story in Sir Ronald Davison's book, *British Unemployment Policy* (p. 69). The Unemployment Assistance Board suspected that many of the homes of the unemployed needed new equipment, such as bedding, and instructed their officers to make grants for this purpose. But the people were "too slow or diffident" to apply for this grant. The Board, therefore, undertook an enquiry into 14,000 cases which were thought to be in need, and in 10,000 of them found that there were indeed "exceptional needs" and grants were made. What held them back was simply natural pride. Everybody who experienced the Means Test felt that it expressed unmistakably the readiness of the community to doubt the integrity and self-respect of the unemployed.

Even more painful was the enquiry into family means. A man became dependent, say, upon his daughter for part of his keep; she was saving up to get married, and as long as she helped to support him she could not save. If he went away and lived somewhere else, the regulations permitted him to cease to be a burden on her. He became aware that she wished he would. So a man might feel obliged

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to quit his home and go and live in a doss house in order not to be put to shame by dependence on his child. Or else the child left home. Or the girl dropped her young man.

Those who did not experience unemployment attributed it to world forces which were not understood, and, therefore, not to be controlled. To a certain extent this view was shared by the unemployed themselves, and this has made it impossible for them to lay aside the fear of its return. But other thoughts were mixed with this conception of impersonal causation. Within a few years we had cured unemployment by spending ten to fifteen millions a day on war. The inference is irresistible that we could have spent our way out of unemployment sooner if we had thought it worth while*. That the economists whose opinion carried weight at the Treasury were in 1931 unconvinced that State expenditure would do any real good, is something which the working man had not sufficient education to appreciate, if he had known it, but he did not know it. Had he known it, he would probably also have known that economists of world-wide repute held the opposite view. The Coalition Government's White Paper announced a change of view in 1944. This cannot but be thought to confirm the belief that unemployment could have been considerably relieved if the community had cared to take the trouble to understand it and spend the money.

Sir William Beveridge, on the title page of his book, *Full Employment in a Free Society*, quotes from Charlotte Brontë, "Misery generates hate."

Cf. Appendix 2 for an account of what we did spend.

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The misery and bitterness of unemployment undermined men's confidence in the decency, let alone the generosity, of the community to which they belong. It is not forgotten that other countries, New Zealand, for instance, showed far more courage and generosity in like circumstances. The shock of unemployment affects not only the unemployed themselves but many others in a wide circle, most of all their children. It will take years to overcome the fears which the bad time brought, and the mistrust of the community which failed in so signal a manner to rescue those on whom the blow fell.

CHAPTER TWO

The Task of Management in Competitive Mass Production

I

IN a society which insists that free and open competition is a corollary of freedom and is therefore to be retained at all costs, the individual factories in each class of industry will be forced to strain every nerve in order to return and maintain a profit. The way in which an industry will be conducted will be governed very largely by the intensity of competition in its field. For the intensity of competition varies very greatly from one industry to another. Changes of process, inventions, combinations and many other factors are continually operating to shift its pressure. It is most intense where there are either too large a number of small independent concerns in the same field, or a small number of unassociated large concerns competing for monopoly.

So intense has competition between concerns become in some fields that we speak of "cut-throat competition." Competition has so reduced the margin of profit, even in the largest industries, that competing companies are being driven to form protective associations, such as price rings and cartels, in order to control its useless and destructive forces.

How does competition affect the organisation of a factory and the lives of the people who work in it?

What types of purpose engage their thoughts and energies?

In the main, competition in industry forces movement in one or more of three directions:—

- (i) Improvement in design.
- (ii) Increase in quantity of production, with or without disproportionate price increase.
- (iii) Reduction of manufacturing costs.

(i) Improvement in design is subject to the limitation that frequent improvement involves costly plant alterations. (ii) Increase in quantity implies greater output from plant and labour force. (iii) Reduction of manufacturing costs implies one or more of three things:—

- (a) Reduction of material costs.
- (b) Greater output from plant and labour force.
- (c) Reduction of wages.

(a) Reduction of material costs is limited in the main by market prices.

(b) Since the maximum productive capacity of a machine is the output obtained when the machine is run continuously at its maximum speed, with an allowance for maintenance time, the limiting factor in output, given adequate supplies of material, is the ability of the labour force to operate the plant at its maximum speed.

(c) Wage rates are affected by the degree of skill required to operate the plant.

We find, therefore, that competition in industry resolves itself into a struggle to obtain greater output from plant requiring the minimum of skill to operate it. These are the two ends, then, to which the

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greater part of managerial activity in competitive industry is directed: the provision of plant which can be operated with a minimum of skill, and of a labour force which shall operate that plant as nearly as possible to its maximum capacity. It follows that the internal organisation of a factory, and through it the lives of the people who work in it, will be governed by the relative urgency of the need to attain these ends.

Concerns which do not operate under the pressure of intense competition have not the same need to attain these ends and their organisation can be directed at least in part to other ends.

This division of industry into two separate and distinct classes, operating under conditions of competition which differ greatly in degree, must be clearly understood if we are to follow the effects of competition on the industries most subject to it. On the one hand, we have those concerns holding monopolies, or concerns which are protected by price rings, etc., and, on the other, industries subject to intense competition. In the former the saving of time and money has ceased to be the paramount interest, and management is more often concerned with maintenance of the standard of quality of its products. Markets are more stable and assured, and this in turn provides continuity of employment for personnel. The greater sense of security engendered by continuity of employment attracts a better and more responsible type of employee, and this in turn induces a higher standard in management.

These concerns are the breeding ground of industrial experiment. Works Councils and partnership schemes are tried out. A great deal of time and

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thought is often given to the general welfare of the workers. Much time and money is often expended in compiling data for the guidance of management in the more humane methods of handling labour. So much so that not only have we come to take it for granted, and even to expect it of these concerns, but we tend to judge the progress of industry in general by their progress. At least, we hold them up as shining examples to the rest of industry. We assume that what they have done can also be done all through industry, and we take it for granted too readily that the reason the rest of industry is less progressive is that it lacks the will.

This is by no means the whole truth. The conditions governing competitive industry often preclude all but the most meagre attempts to give purpose to the work of the employee, or consideration to the effect of his work upon his life and character.

We have said that in competitive industry the greater part of managerial effort is directed to the attainment of maximum output from plant requiring a minimum of skill to operate it. How is this interpreted in terms of organisation and what part does it play in the frustration of purpose in these industries?

If maximum output is to be obtained from plant requiring the minimum of skill to operate it, we must first provide such plant, and then so arrange and plan the work to be done on it that it can be carried out in the shortest possible time by labour having the minimum of skill. So to begin with, our organisation must provide us with the services of a number of highly skilled technicians, whose task it will be to eliminate as far as possible the need for

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skill and time-consuming effort, such as thought and movement, on the part of labour. In short, these men must foster automaticity. Next we must try to find labour to whom automaticity is no burden. This labour force should have sufficient intelligence to carry out instructions and no more; otherwise it will soon become bored and troublesome with consequent loss of output. However, despite all our precautions, there will, of course, be troubles both mechanical and labour, and these we must overcome in the shortest space of time. Further, since few men are capable of exerting or willing to exert themselves to the limit of their capacity continuously, we must, if we are to obtain maximum output, provide a means of inducing them to do so. This we will do by introducing bonus schemes and by providing suitable overseers.

So much, then, for the skeleton of our organisation. Broadly speaking we have classified our personnel into three categories, technical personnel, supervisory personnel, and labour force. For the technical personnel we have provided work requiring a high degree of skill and judgment, and an up-to-date knowledge of modern processes, materials, and methods of manufacture. For these men at least there are sufficiently engrossing purposes. How will the second class, the supervisory grades, fare? Theirs is the task of maintaining discipline and of extracting the maximum effort from the labour force. The purpose which their job compels them to pursue may sharpen their wits but morally it will be marred by the harshness of their task. For the labour force there can be but one purpose, the monetary reward for its labour.

II

Let us now look a little closer and try to see how this organisation works in practice.

Our technical men we will find working quietly and happily in a corner absorbed in experiment and abstruse calculations. For the purpose of this enquiry we can forget them. The burden of production falls elsewhere; it is the job of the supervision and labour force. Here is concentrated most of the suffering and frustration of purpose in competitive industry. These conditions we will try to illustrate, but first we must know what is meant by supervision and also something of the conditions which competitive industry imposes upon it.

Supervision as applied to industry is a term which denotes the lower grades of controlling personnel. The amount of supervision and the form that it takes vary in different factories and classes of industry. In its most usual form it covers the grades of leading hand or charge hand, foreman, senior foreman and superintendent. A leading hand or charge hand is usually allotted to each group of ten or twenty workmen. Similar grouping carries responsibility through the grades of foremen, senior foremen and departmental superintendents, in that order, to the works manager. Between them these are the men who control the day-to-day activities of hundreds of working men and women. Collectively, as we have seen, they are primarily responsible for the extraction of the highest possible output from the plant and the labour force. That responsibility makes its own demands upon the supervision. The supervisors must be able to anticipate troubles and difficulties and when they arise overcome them in

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the shortest space of time. Discipline, an increasingly important factor in high-speed repetitive industry, must be maintained. Obviously much of the supervisors' time will be taken up with the control of labour.

The marshalling of a large flow of varied parts through all their separate operations to a planned time schedule is a task of considerable complexity, but the full utilisation of plant and labour which is necessary for maximum output is only possible when each section of the factory is running to that schedule. It will be realised that when all these sections are so interdependent, a stoppage on any one of them can seriously affect a number of others, and may even bring some of them to a standstill; and since neither men nor machines are so perfect that they never give trouble, and since modern production demands a great deal of complex equipment, the number of different ways in which a stoppage can occur is very considerable. As a result of all this the individual supervisor has continually to be giving fresh instructions which, moreover, he must make sure are carried out.

So the task of supervision, if it is to be carried out intelligently with proper regard for the individuals being directed, calls for qualities of leadership and initiative on the part of the individual supervisor. Leadership is compounded of many qualities, some of them hard to define. Of the more obvious an innate sense of justice is perhaps the most essential. The true leader must before all else be able to weigh fairly the pros and cons of a case and give a just decision. Real leadership is not a matter of giving autocratic instructions but rather of probing to find

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the truth and then acting according to the findings. Snap decisions are the opposite of true leadership. If this be true, then good leadership must not grudge time. But the saving of time is the god that competitive industry serves, and so for this among other reasons real leadership is at a discount in competitive industry, and autocracy finds preference. But any form of despotism must necessarily wield an effective weapon. In competitive industry that weapon is the power to dismiss a man instantly, and, with unemployment as we know it, this can indeed be an effective weapon.

And so we find that the chief qualifications required of the supervisor are exceptional energy and drive and the ability to enforce the carrying out of instructions.

Now part of the need for these qualities arises from the fact that the management is seldom if ever satisfied with the output from a factory. It is always demanding more. It has to; because competition compels the firm to do everything possible to maximise output. The supervisor with threats and shouts passes these demands on to his labour. Occasionally, to show he means business, he uses some trivial incident such as the length of time a man has been away at a lavatory as the starting-point for a scene, which is intended to end in the man being dismissed. It usually does. As the workman well knows, an appeal to a higher authority will avail him nothing, because managements fear the loss of discipline far too much to dare to reverse the decisions of their foremen.

Such engineered scenes are an established part of the machinery which many foremen use to control

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their labour. We have often in competitive industry heard foremen announce to their intimates on arrival at the works in the morning that they are "going to shake the place up a bit today" and "sort somebody out," with the result that the first person who gives the slightest opening to the foreman finds himself out of a job. The thing is started by a direct accusation by the foreman, who then beats up the workman's emotions by using abusive language and shouting at him. The man becomes heated, says something to which the foreman can take exception, and is threatened with dismissal. More often than not, this threat induces the man to tell the foreman that if that is how he feels, he can do the job himself. This is just what the foreman wants him to say, because it places the foreman in an unassailable position and gives validity to the discharge, however weak the original pretext for it may have been.

There are two possible consequences of this method of discharging a man which are worth noting, although probably they rarely occur. Should the man apply for unemployment benefit, his Exchange will write to his firm asking if work was available for the man at the time of his discharge, and if so whether he refused to do it. Should the question be referred, as it often is, to the foreman, it is possible for the answer to be given in the affirmative, and therefore the payment of benefit be prejudiced. When the man seeks other employment his prospective employer will usually communicate with the people who last employed him, and again the foreman may decide to give an unfavourable reply. The news which soon comes to his mates that the discharged man has been denied benefit and is still

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out of a job has, of course, a powerful effect on the men he has been working with.

Whilst the foregoing is a typical example of the methods adopted by many foremen and men in supervisory grades in competitive industries, it should not be inferred that they are methods of their own choosing.

These men themselves are often subject to a tyranny no less severe than that which they impose on others. Production schedules are usually worked out on the assumption that everything will go smoothly, but it seldom does. Tools and machinery break down. Sickness depletes the labour force. Material is found to be not to size; sheet metal, for instance, may be several thousandth of an inch too thick, so that it jams in a press tool. Production often lags behind schedule. There are arguments and meetings. The foreman is told that if he cannot get the required output "somebody else can," or the works manager suggests that Mr. Smith should go and put Mr. Jones's department in order.

Small wonder that Mr. Jones leaves the meeting furiously determined "to make something move." If a man should leave his bench he notes the time he is away, and pounces on him as soon as he returns demanding to know where he has been. He goes out to the lavatory and thumps on the doors. For a week he is like a human devil. Production does go up but the workmen begin to erect defences. They study the foreman's habits and work out an elaborate system of dodges designed to protect them from being driven too hard. Someone using a drill forces it; it breaks and the person makes a roundabout trip to the store for a new one. Someone overdrives

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a cutter and the edge is burnt, and he has to have it reground by the setter. A drawing of a part is "lost."

In time the foreman discovers these dodges. His attitude hardens still further, and where once he felt inwardly some sympathy with his men, he now becomes convinced that they are dodgers and loafers. Where once his conscience troubled him when he discharged a man unfairly, he now sacks men without compunction.

Since his success depends so largely upon his ability to overcome difficulties quickly, he is tempted to adopt any expedient, however unethical it may be, which will enable him to do so. He is continually being approached by men who ask for wage increases, or who have become bored with the work they have been doing and ask for a change to another machine. The foreman has learnt from experience that it is almost impossible for him to get the management to grant even a small wage increase however justifiable the request may be. He may know that the man has done a good job, and that if he turns the request down flatly the man will lose interest and his output will suffer. So he fobs him off with a story, "leave it to me and I will see what I can do for you," "you give me the output I want and I'll get you your increase." Anything does so long as it will get the man back to work. The man applies again next week and is fobbed off with another story. The thing continues until the man becomes resigned to the fact that he will never get it and gives up asking.

A few yes-men more artful than the rest cling to the foreman and become his favourites. They feed him with tittle-tattle and gossip from the shop, and

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inform him of the latest dodges. A few more see through the whole business, feel sorry for the foreman and develop a strange admiration for him. The rest loathe him and through him the management.

This drive and forcing of the pace, which is so persistent in competitive industry, breeds distrust and a general sense of insecurity. No employee can be sure when he leaves home in the morning that he will still have his job at the end of the day. This sense of insecurity is not confined to the labour force. The very nature of the conditions governing competitive industry compels the management to hold its personnel under contracts of the shortest duration, because only by this means can it instil the fear which produces the needed drive and energy. Even the technicians and managers are all liable to be changed suddenly. In some factories the labour turnover in peace-time was such that there was a constant flow of persons being discharged and a corresponding steady intake.

III

Moreover, there is no established procedure governing promotion. Nor is it thought necessary that people should prepare for it by taking a course of instruction. For the supervisory grades, at least, promotion depends almost entirely on how one uses one's wits, and the battle which ensues is often quite merciless. Distortion of facts and misrepresentation are an accepted weapon of self-defence, and since under the conditions of modern high-speed repetitive production it is extremely difficult to maintain accurate and up-to-date detailed records, without carrying an almost

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prohibitive non-productive staff, it is often difficult to disprove such statements.

The inability of controlling personnel to give a true and unbiased account of any given situation is most striking. Seldom can a report be accepted as it stands; each statement has to be probed and tested. That this is so, is due to the fact that people are always on the defensive because they are being driven almost continuously.

Ethical qualities are not taken into account when the men are promoted purely on the ground that they have competitive drive; and it is not at all uncommon for an uneducated workman, who has no training but has this demonic energy, to be placed over men of good education, who are technical specialists. Power does not make such men more just. Supervision chosen with so complete a disregard for character, ability and integrity has a stultifying effect on the labour it controls. Favouritism, the continual passing of good bonus work to particular individuals, for instance, becomes rife.

IV

That the conditions we have described are brought about by the forces inherent in competition seems to have been proved by the experience of a large monopoly concern, which set out to market a new product in a highly competitive field. This concern had held a monopoly in its own field for many years. It was a concern of the highest repute and was well known as a progressive and humane employer of labour. Many of its employees had served in the company for over forty years and some boasted both

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a father and a grandfather who had served it longer. The relations between management and labour were sound and friendly and the former took a lively interest in its labour's welfare. Employees were encouraged to participate in a limited partnership and themselves operated a contributory pension scheme. A representative committee of workers helped to frame and to modify the company's rules and regulations governing employment. There was an established procedure governing promotion; this included a scrutiny of the man's record followed by a period of probationary service before he was confirmed in his new appointment. The duties of controlling personnel were clearly defined and made known to all concerned, and in contra-distinction to conditions in competitive industry, there was an almost complete absence of interference from above. When trouble arose in a department, the higher management did not descend upon it charged with distrust and ready to make hastily considered and sweeping changes; it called the personnel who were involved aside and gave considered judgment only when it had had an expression of different points of view from these people.

In short, although the central direction was fundamentally autocratic, it was autocracy tempered with paternalism and was not altogether blind to the value of labour's power to contribute something to efficient management.

This company decided to enter another market, which was increasing, but highly competitive. It developed a series of components and started a new department to manufacture them. The key-men and most of the labour for the new department were

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drawn from the rest of the factory; most of them were old employees well versed in the company's methods. But although very considerable orders were received for the new component, the new department did not pay its way. Better machinery was installed and every effort was made to speed up production, but the department was still running at a loss.

Finally, when all else had failed, a change of policy concerning this department was made. The change was effected principally by the supersession of corporate effort by completely autocratic control. In the past discussion had often preceded action; now discussion was eliminated and orders were given instead. Men who were considered to be below required efficiency were removed, employees of long standing being given work outside the department. The supervision was changed without formality. It soon became evident that to question an order was to court trouble. A new controller harried the foremen, who in turn harried everyone else. Rates were cut, and a sit-down strike occurred.

Gradually all the symptoms of competitive industry began to appear, distrust and suspicion on the part of supervision, bitterness and antagonism towards the management on the part of the workers, and for both a general sense of insecurity and a feeling that one was no longer a respected employee but a cog in a machine.

Yet the new policy succeeded, and the department was soon placed on a paying footing.

The character of an institution is necessarily largely moulded by the character of the people who

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run it, but men of character and high purpose find as a rule little attraction to a life which offers neither security nor stability even to its qualified men. This question of the attraction to competitive industry of men possessing ability and integrity is one which holds the key to many of our problems. But merely to attract such men will not be enough; of equal urgency is the need for proper training in the art and science of modern industrial management. Technical training is not enough. An army which only trained its officers and its N.C.O.s in the use of their weapons would find itself reduced to a condition of chaos as soon as it started to move. The organisation required by an army of a hundred thousand men is indeed a complex one, but it may be doubted whether it is any more complex than that which is required by an industry which employs a similar number of men. Yet seldom do the officers and N.C.O.s of industry receive any training beyond such technical instruction as is required to enable them to understand and operate the mechanical equipment of their trade.

The Essential Works Order did much to induce a realisation of this need. The fact that production has in the past been mainly secured by the weapon of the threat of instant dismissal has been amply proved under its regulations. With the removal of that weapon, many men who before the war were successful supervisors were left helpless, and unable to get results which were in any way comparable with their past records. As a typical example one may quote the case of a works manager known to the writers. This man had been with his employers many years. He was, on account of his drive and

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energy, considered to be the backbone of the concern and he had in fact done much to build it up. But when confronted with the new conditions he was a complete failure. When taxed by the management he could only say: "Give me back my old power" (the threat of dismissal) "and I will give you the production you want."

Yet, however mollifying the effect of trained administrators may be, the experience in the case which has been described must raise the doubt whether the trained administrator will be even as successful as his predecessor in gaining the ends dictated by really competitive industry.

The effects of the conditions characteristic of highly competitive industry are twofold. Either men are turned in upon themselves and stifled by a sense of hopelessness and frustration, or they are forced, in order to climb out of the mess, to trample upon one another. In either case self-preservation becomes the chief goal to each and every man. There is no higher end to which men can strive, it is pure survival of the fittest for survival's sake alone.

What then can we do? Is there really no less costly way of purchasing the benefits of this industrial age?

CHAPTER THREE

The Effect of Certain Forms of Competitive Industry on the Individual and His Purposes

WE now come to the question we set out to study, the effect on character of employment in a competitive industrial system, and in particular, the scope and stimulus which there are for the creative purposiveness of the individual in such a system, the extent to which it helps him to attain spiritual maturity.

I

CORPORATE PURPOSE

(A) Nothing is more exhilarating than to be caught up in common purpose, to work extremely hard in willing co-operation with a lot of other people. The tonic of working together is sometimes very stimulating even if the common purpose is dull or vague or immoral*. Without working very hard there is pleasure in belonging to a society of people who share a common experience and enjoy a common life. It is widely believed that people get these satisfactions through working at a factory. It is not easy to estimate how much truth there is in this idea. Factory people "don't take no notice", as they say, they take what comes without much analysis, and can give little account of their experience.

* The exhilaration which German people found in devoting themselves to the purposes of the Nazi Party was very little affected by the moral quality of these purposes.

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The writers feel that at all the factories they have worked in there has been the sense of entering a society. The readiness and friendliness of personal greeting help this impression. One asks oneself whether behind the greeting there is in fact a social experience that really enhances the value of life. It would not be true to answer this question in the negative. The sign of this is that you know whether you are welcome in the society or not. There is a variable degree of sociality that provides a slight heightening of the interest of life, at the very least a desire to be "in the know" about all that is going on, which is a factor in making people not want to stay away. Especially women have found in the society of the factory a relief from the monotony of home life. But stronger feelings of fatigue or irritation or the desire to give annoyance can easily overpower a social experience which has not developed very far.

In many factories it has not in fact developed very far. It is not understood or valued by anybody concerned. There seems to be very little sense of purpose shared with the community or of a service rendered to it*. People may be working on a product which is an outstanding triumph of the human mind, but they have no notion of it. They work without comprehension and without pride; they work blind. Modern methods include a breaking down of jobs to reduce them to a few simple movements which can be carried out by cheap unskilled labour, so that nearly everybody is working on some small repetitive job which carries no significance.

* For a contrary view Cf G. S. Walpole, *Management and Men*, p. 18.

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Nobody tells them what it is all for. The dignity of service, which ought to conduce to self-respect and a reasoned sense of the moral end of labour, is continually vitiated by the knowledge that the chief issue of any man's work is to put money into another man's pocket. Men would not mind this very much if the money that went into their own assured them of reasonable comfort and security. But it often does not.

There are, of course, firms where everyone is proud of the chains they make, or the chocolate, or the soap. Such managements take pains to infuse a sense of corporate purpose by education, recreation that brings people together, welfare and so on. It is not necessary to go into motives, they may be humanitarian or merely a matter of good business. In either case paternalism probably does not stimulate independence or a democratic spirit, and it seems doubtful whether such firms are numerous enough to make much difference on the national scale.

On the other hand, it must be said that even in firms that have no urge towards paternalism, good organisation can do much to generate the sense of common purpose; everyone gets a satisfaction from the sense of urgency and achievement, and the feeling of being necessary to the community. Men even get a kick out of doing a full night's work after a full day; a crisis is a welcome change in a dull life and the sense of virtue is agreeable. But this satisfaction is sacrificed when the pace becomes too hot, and men are all the time overdriven. In the war it seems often to have happened that men were kept in on overtime to do a supposedly urgent piece of

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work and then have seen it lying about uncollected for days; this has damaged their willingness to put themselves about for other urgencies. They feel there is not really any adequate purpose behind such drives.

Sometimes a small set of men working together develop their own group feeling and their own sense of common purpose. Mark Benny spoke of this in his *Over to Bombers*; he describes how he and a few other men were on a job together for many months and got to know one another and rely on one another's characteristics and abilities. "It was deeply, deeply satisfying," he says.

This satisfying sense of common purpose and the stimulus of responsibility are often spoiled or destroyed by the conflict of interest between the management and the rank and file. These two groups belong to the same social class so that there should be mutual understanding, but their interests are opposed and there is a great gulf fixed.

The following incident illustrates a common state of affairs. A young superintendent was rightly annoyed because his people got into the habit of leaving their benches early on Friday to queue up for pay, and then stampeding for the buses, which then sometimes left five minutes before time. So one Friday he telephoned the factory police to lock the gates ten minutes before time and not open them a minute early. Bus loads of furious people were kept waiting in the yard for five minutes. The next morning they were so enraged that they did hardly any work at all. This loss of time did the manager no good, and the progressive loss of the confidence of his workers did him harm. In pre-war

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days such actions were often part of the accepted method of enforcing discipline, and they ministered agreeably to the sense of power. Nothing could have revealed more unmistakably the absence of any concern for mutual consideration, or for the development of common purpose between management and men.

One common incident in factory life acts as a deterrent to any sense of common purpose which the worker may naturally have. This is the neglect of suggestions for the improvement of processes and the speed up of work which the worker may offer. In some works there are suggestion boxes and men are encouraged to send in any ideas they have. They may get some reward for any that are adopted. This is a better plan than leaving them to put their notions to a charge hand or foreman; for it may not suit anybody's interest to allow a subordinate to obtain the credit of a good idea. Other firms cannot trust themselves to put up boxes; they think the opportunity to put in scurrilous remarks about the management would be bad for discipline. It is certainly true that most of such suggestions are of no use at all*, but one working man was right when he said

* This has been the experience of one of the writers, John Winnington. But where the relations between management and men are good the proportion of sensible suggestions may be better. G. S. Walpole in his *Management and Men* (p. 192) quotes from his company's Works Newspaper: "Since the Production Suggestions system was inaugurated, 57 suggestions have been received from 33 members of the organisation. 31 of these have been put into operation, 20 have been found impracticable (in some instances because of objections from the Ministry or main contractor), three are still under consideration and three were considered not to be suitable for Suggestion Form procedure."

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to one of the writers that if you put up a suggestion you ought to get an interview to explain it; such interviews could be used to encourage the sense of corporate purpose and loyalty. The neglect of such suggestions can be very galling when men are made to go on working in ways they know to be time-wasting and senseless; either production is important, in which case every improvement ought to be encouraged, or else it is not, in which case nobody ought to be made to sweat for it. It is one thing to turn down a suggestion for sensible reasons, and another to treat a man's intelligence as if it was not there. A man known to the writers was working a machine whose cutter continually broke down. The firm tried various methods for curing this defect but there was no improvement and they gave up the attempt. But the man could not give up working the machine, he was tied to it all day long, and could not let the problem alone. At last after prolonged attention he was convinced he had found out what was wrong and how to put it right. However, the management would not listen to him. They were tired of the subject. They did not say his suggestion was too expensive or would not work, they would not let him speak of it. He had to go on working the machine as it was and losing bonus every time the cutter broke down. When this sort of thing goes on for years, and the directors try to make good losses due to their inefficiency by cutting wages, it is not surprising that there are strikes. Many strikes must be due to such cumulative irritation; most notoriously, perhaps, in the coal trade.

(B) During the war efforts were made to overcome the loss of production which arises from the

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frustration of the impulse of common purpose, and to build up a spirit of co-operation partly by propaganda and partly by Joint Production Committees. The propaganda was not in our opinion very successful; it was not believed. One of the most disquieting things about the temper of the working man today is his scepticism about the information coming from the most reputable sources; anything that is in the more responsible papers or published by the B.B.C. or was brought to light in the (coalition) House of Commons is discredited as propaganda. Bombs have been the best pep talk and they were not so effective outside their explosion range.

The Joint Production Committees were designed to overcome the irritation of neglected suggestions, to improve organisation and to give workers that heightened enjoyment of responsibility which comes of sharing in the planning as well as in the execution of common purpose; and in all these ways to do something to heal the long hostility between management and the rank and file. In the last war, the Whitley Councils were set up in the hope of improving relations between management and men. Most of them petered out because there was not proper backing from the management side. In many places the same seems to be true of the Joint Production Committees. One labour manager responsible for several factories said to one of the writers: "My idea is that Joint Production Committees are waste of time. My hope is to get the workers to take the same view." This was not difficult. The workers had little confidence in the scheme; they did not always bother to take any interest or see to it that good people were elected to represent them. The

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tendency was to choose toolmakers. This does not necessarily indicate a great value set by the workers on skill. The work of the toolmaker allows and encourages more initiative and independence of mind than most other work, and accordingly in many factories the toolmakers give more trouble than any other set of men; production workers are apt to admire this capacity to make trouble and waste time by endless agitation. When this happens a cunning chairman can rule out of order most of the suggestions that are brought up; these tend at first to be time-honoured grievances which are said to have "nothing to do with production." After a good deal of this the workers lose heart. If the trade unions had perceived their opportunity they would have seen to it that all over the country sensible men were elected, and then given them some coaching in committee procedure. Both sides seem to have lost a valuable opportunity of building up a sound sense of corporate purpose.

It would be interesting to have a comprehensive account of what the Joint Production Committees have actually achieved, but it is doubtful whether records have been kept at the factories which would make such a review possible. The publication on Joint Production Machinery by I.L.O. has a small section on results, from which one gets the impression that where both sides were ready to co-operate the work of the committees was well worth while, but that this was by no means always the case. The Minister of Fuel and Power, speaking in the House of Commons on June 23, 1943 (see Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 390, No. 79, col. 1232), said:

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"I do not think . . . the pit production committee has been appreciated by the managements. . . . From a survey that I have made—it is not a complete survey—one in four of the pit production committees is functioning really effectively, but on the other hand one of the remaining three is almost ineffective for the purposes for which it was set up. There are a number of circumstances which affect the usefulness of pit production committees—the industrial relations in the area, the character of regional control, and above all the attitude of managements."

Mr. Jack Tanner, President of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, is reported to have said:

"The J.P.C. movement was initiated by the workers and their organisations. The committees were only set up and developed by constant and unremitting pressure from the workers' side."

A letter from a works manager—quoted from *The Engineer* May 7, 1943—said that the main object of the committees was to reduce waste.

"The following examples of waste are the most obvious: absenteeism, bad time-keeping, the making of articles for private use, the concealing of faulty work, and evasion of inspection. The attitude of the majority of shop stewards, who are normally the mouthpiece of the workpeople in negotiations between labour and management, has been disappointing and they have obviously found it difficult to adjust themselves to this new sphere of co-operation. They have often sought to use the meetings to bring forward complaints regarding working conditions and have conveyed the impression of not being interested in the objective of the scheme, which is output.

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Generally speaking workpeople who have not represented labour in contentious negotiations have adjusted themselves more readily to the work of the committee."

The view that bad working conditions have nothing to do with output is mistaken; on the other hand one recognises the agitator who is only concerned to waste time*.

(C) It has been suggested that many factories are neither inspired to any extent by a purpose of service rendered to the community, nor united in a common purpose to promote the success of the factory, because of the internal conflict between the management and workers; have the workers in the last resort a sound sense of common purpose among themselves? If not, what is the basis of the sense of community that one does get? What does the society that one is aware of live on?

It seems to live largely on gossip, on humour and rumour, on a certain degree of common awareness of all that is going on, on the perpetual interest of sizing people up and divining what they are after; on the collections that are taken up, in some factories almost weekly, for those away through long

* This I.L.O. report refers to the following other studies: P.E.P., No. 189, Production Committees, articles by G. D. H. Cole in the *New Statesman and Nation*, a series of articles in the *Daily Herald*, a report by the Association of Building Technicians entitled *Production Committees for Building and the Technician's Part in them*, *Socialist Commentary* article, by Allan Flanders, Aug., 1943, *Third Report*, November, 1942. For a most interesting account of a Joint Committee set up before the war, which has been found very successful, see G. S. Walpole, *Management and Men*. This book confirms from the point of view of the employer the general tenor of the observations of the present writers.

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sickness ; on common grievance ; to some extent on the friendships that are formed and contribute to the sense of community. Friendship does not flourish in all factories ; where the noise or the nature of the work prohibits conversation, where the workers' homes are scattered and their one desire when work is over is to catch their buses, there is little opportunity for the close personal acquaintance that enriches life. On the other hand, in places where it is possible to talk at work, where people work in teams, there may be an undeclared dividend in friendship which means a great deal.

Within the general atmosphere of vague sociality a variety of true corporate purposes are born from time to time and fade out. Sometimes there will be a drive for recreation or discussion groups, or for changes in hours or tea-breaks, but these seem short-lived. Semi-permanent groups sometimes form in the canteen, especially among young men who enjoy arguing, but the canteen is a very public place and many people avoid perfectly good canteens for this reason. Sometimes, the firm will put up a club or foster the development of communal recreation at the factory out of working hours, but these do not always flourish.

It is impossible to generalise, but we have the impression that the potential sociality of factory life is for the most part not brought to fruition, and poverty of contacts and of friendship is the lot of many people who live in a perpetual crowd.

The strongest bond between workers is often community of grievance. Grievance manifests itself in a variety of ways. In a healthy community it generates purposive action. This means that the

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emotion of discontent is taken up into thought, and the energy of it is focused on the question, what can be done? The answer to this question produces a policy, and the emotion is canalised as a kind of internal-combustion fuel to get things moving. Such considered and concerted action is good, because grievances tend to be removed by it, and also because emotion spends itself in action. Men who are thinking out their proposed remedy and bringing their mind to bear upon it will listen to reason. A wise firm will wish to bring grievance into the open as soon as possible. The experience of translating it into purpose and going into action teaches people how to go about matters reasonably, and has in some industries led the trade unions through a long history of negotiation without ruinous conflict.

But many firms do not act with so much sense, and apathy ensues from frustration and inaction. Moreover, the constructive reaction to grievance in terms of purpose requires of the workers gifts of judgment and self-control which are often lacking. In many factories certain perennial grievances seem to lie about for ever, taken for granted by everybody in a good-humoured sort of way, until something happens to aggravate the workers, and there is a change of mood to surliness and obstruction. Then suddenly the pervading irritation ignites, and the whole factory is solid in resisting some quite reasonable instruction. The circumstance which precipitates such a crisis may be so petty that it is hardly identifiable. Many strikes are caused in this way.

Such a conflagration may not be at all an expression of anything so rational as corporate purpose; it may be a blind explosion of pent-up emotion; the

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action taken may be quite senseless and ruinous to the interests of the workers. It may be exploited by some interested party like a trade union secretary, who may not even belong to the factory, but has some purpose of his own of which the factory people are unaware. He may be anxious to have a flare-up in order to advertise himself and hold down his job; the workers will respond helplessly to his manipulation, in gratitude to anyone who will give them the blessed relief of excitement.

The tendency for the workers to form corporate purposes and carry them out is impeded by their competitiveness against one another, and piece rates tend to keep this competitiveness alive and effective.

One worker said to one of the writers: "There is such a thing as mass thought, you know. If you think the same as the man next to you, you're all right. But if you don't, if you're seen bringing in a book or anything like that, you're not. It's very difficult to stand up to ridicule." He thought this was the reason why some men did not join discussion groups.

The bondage of "mass thought" lies far below the level of purpose, which is a function of reason. Irresistible compulsive habit is the mark of the herd, the lowest form of community. It was of the most civilised people in the world that Pericles said: "If a man chooses to go his own way and we think that way peculiar, we do not penalise him with nasty looks, for we believe in freedom." (Thucydides, II, 37.) The factory is not nearly so civilised as this.

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II

LONG-TERM, INDIVIDUAL PURPOSE

We have seen that in a factory corporate purpose shared with the community is practically non-existent, except in time of crisis, that internal factory loyalty is impaired by the conflict of interest between management and worker, and that group feeling among the workers themselves often falls far short of purpose either because the workers are competing against one another or because they fail to understand how to canalise their common desire for better conditions into coherent purposes. We have now to ask what scope there is for personal purposes both of long- and short-term range.

(A) Dorothy Sayers in a book called *Why Work?* has raised the question of the underlying fundamental purpose of daily work. Her answer to it brings out the contrast between what work can mean for the few who are fortunate, and what it means for the many. She says the ultimate purpose of work is to glorify God, by doing a job well. It is one of the unhappiest facts about our civilisation that fewer and fewer jobs can be done well, more and more machines are designed so that if the operation is carried out at all it is done as well as it can be done; there is no room for excellence. It is possible, of course, for the humiliation of a job of this kind (and there is humiliation in it) to be offered to God as a mortification, but few people have the vocation to mortification. The normal and proper reward of pride in workmanship, which is what Dorothy Sayers has in mind, is unknown to the men and

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women, boys and girls, who have to do a great deal of the work in our factories.

God can be glorified not only by the work that is done, but also by the spirit in which it is done. Many factory people are convinced of the truth of the second commandment, and believe that there is no stronger evidence of the love of God, and no duty more clearly owing to Him, than the kindness of men and women to each other. They are the more resentful of the fact that the competitiveness of factory life tends to penalise those who practise this ethic. Men have said to us: "Christianity means doing right by your neighbour; but in industry you must do your neighbour down or he'll do you down." They feel that this competitiveness is deeply embedded in the whole capitalistic system of today, and that if Christianity were a living religion it would destroy capitalism.

Those who live in more security probably think that this dislike of competition is exaggerated. We have been to schools where we competed in examinations, and in games, and think competition is a bracing and wholesome thing. So it is as we knew it. The competitiveness of games is quite different from the competition the working man objects to as un-Christian. Games are played according to rules, and the rules are based on the assumption that two things are more important than winning: one is the person you are playing against—there are rules to prevent serious personal injury; the other is the æsthetic quality of the game itself—there are some strokes that might win but they are not played because of the value set on style. In the competitiveness of industry as we have seen it, the welfare of the

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other person does not count ; nothing counts except winning.

It has been said to us, you can practise Christianity anywhere if you are prepared to pay the price. This is true: but nobody who is a party to modern industry as a consumer ought to take any comfort in this thought, unless he has himself risked paying the price, and being out of work, and on the dole with his wife and family, for conscience' sake.

(B) There is not much room in industry for altruistic purposes. This is natural in a society based on competition. Jeremy Bentham, 150 years ago, taught that there is a kind of law of nature by which if everyone looks after his own interests as hard as he can, the result will be for the good of all. History has not confirmed this belief. But it is still the case that unless you do look after your own interests you will have to go out of business. The severity of competition seems to compel men to be harder to each other than is natural to them ; there is a tendency to become milder as soon as security, attained for instance through monopoly, makes the penalty for unselfishness less severe.

The common forms of long-term purpose are accordingly self-regarding. Men organise their lives as a rule either in order to save enough to become their own masters, or to get promotion to higher grades, where they believe there is more security and there is certainly more power.

There are trades—the weaving section of the cotton trade for instance, or bicycle repairing and garage work, or newsagent-tobacco shops—where it is not difficult for a man to set up on his own, but the tide seems to be turning against the small man

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and there cannot be very many in the factories who really hope for independence.

The desire for promotion is very strong. Men believe that there is more money and more security in higher grades. In the humbler grades of supervision this is not always true, and—especially during the war when high bonus rates have benefited the production worker but not to the same extent the man who organises production—there has been reluctance on the part of many intelligent men to be upgraded. But money and security are not the only enticements; love of power is a strong inducement to those who are subjected to discipline, which is often inhumane and unjust and not regulated with due regard to the dignity of subordinates.

In industries that are not well organised the fight for promotion is a much more unpleasant business than it need be. The organisation of modern production is very difficult and intricate, so skilled and so interesting that it ought to attract able men. But men of the calibre that is needed are not attracted in sufficient numbers; industry at this grade is too disagreeable, with its dirt and long hours, and insecurity, and continual fighting, to offer a good enough life. Further it is not yet fully understood in this country that training is needed in this part of the work; technicians are trained but there is practically no training for administration. As a result it is done by men who are not equal to it. These men are often subject to gruelling anxiety in their effort to hold down their jobs. They dare not delegate, because they have learned not to trust one another, and because the whole business is at base a battle of wits and it does not pay to let your subordinate put

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up a good show. They allow themselves little leisure and have not the peace of mind to use it well. Some men who have wider interests, in history, or art, or music, hesitate to indulge them; fear makes them feel compelled to give their time to improving their technical qualifications, and more than that, the conflict of feeling between the warfare of the factory and humane studies is intolerable.

Under these conditions it often happens that functions are badly correlated and liable to be changed. You cannot say what a works manager's job is, or a planning department's, or a progress officer's, because they vary from one firm to another, and from time to time within a firm. This has created difficulty for those who have had to organise Ministry of Labour Training Courses. A man's job is apt to be what he makes it. Success depends on self-advertisement, capitalising other people's mistakes and taking credit for whatever goes well, intruding on other people's fields, and appearing all over the place as a dynamic indispensable person. Nobody's prestige is secure. Nobody's job is secure.

It is sometimes suggested that a self-respecting man will not care about prestige. This is nonsense. Only an uncommonly strong-minded man or woman can maintain self-respect with proper balance and poise without the support of due social recognition. Social recognition is like the pressure of the physical atmosphere, which helps to keep the body in balance. If you are getting enough to eat you do not think about food; the same is true about prestige—if you are getting enough for mental health you do not give it a thought. Those who are not getting enough either accept society's estimate

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of them and suffer depression of spirit, or they are driven to compensatory self-assertion. In properly established professions like the law and medicine there is no need for this, because there are traditions about the interlock of functions which, being accepted, are the basis of prestige and not a challenge to it. A solicitor does not wish to encroach on the barrister's work, nor the physician on the surgeon's, because their professional self-respect is bound up with their knowledge and acceptance of the traditional distribution of functions. Everybody is thus protected within his own sphere, and can make a success by simply doing his job well.

It is very different in industry. There it is often not enough to do your job well; men have to fight to enhance their prestige as part of the business of fighting to hold down their job or to get promotion. Fear expresses itself in aggressiveness. In this war of all against all, men become quite merciless. The qualities that win are cunning and ruthlessness and intense concentration, and defeat is very galling. The humiliations of personal conflict nag relentlessly at the mind and bitter thoughts give the mind no rest. When you have brooded for several days and nights you do think of some effective reprisal, but the obsession does you no good. For men who have not learnt to use books there is no road out of the narrow and distasteful struggle of their own lives into the larger landscape of human aspiration and achievement. They become disillusioned and cease to believe in the reality of integrity and generosity, outside family relationships.

Part of the business of holding down your job is

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to reduce the costs of it. One way of doing this is to get men to do responsible work which should command higher pay without giving them the pay. A man will be put in charge of a bench or of a night shift or of a progress department, on the understanding that if he makes good and gets the required production he will get the promotion and the pay which these duties should carry. But at first he is to do the job without the status or the pay. It is not easy to do this, because those whom he is to control will know that so far he has no authority and no security, and that if he fails someone else will have a chance. He will sweat his soul out to get the production, and probably he will get it. But the promised rewards do not come. At first, if he raises the matter, he will be told that he has not been long enough at it to demonstrate that he has the ability, later he will be told not to worry, that all will be arranged next week. But the weeks go by, and if he does not let it rest he will be told at last that if he does not like his present position he can go back where he came from, and work again at the bench, and someone whom he has been ordering about will order him about. Some men throw up the job at this point, but probably more never carry the contest as far as this; they do not dare to press their demands, and go quietly on doing the work without the pay or the status, never having expected anything very different. It is a feather in the cap of the man over them that he can get them to work like that, without costing the department the amount of the wage they ought to be getting.

The onlooker wonders whether the game is worth the candle. But the onlooker has probably

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not experienced this kind of insecurity, nor the whips and scorns of the war of all against all, and the passionate desire to get to the other end of the whip.

Many men abandon the aspiration for promotion. Their long-term purpose reduces to the fact that they are obliged to work because they are obliged to earn. It is senseless to say that men ought not to work for the sake of money; they have to. Money and power constitute the long-term purpose of the vast majority of the people in industry. This is not because they are not capable of devotion to higher ends. Many of them are, and are conscious of the spiritual poverty to which their work condemns them. In this poverty is a profound cause of the listlessness which many observers have noted as a prevailing mood in working-class society today.

III

SHORT-TERM PURPOSE

Long-term purpose carries for the most part greater significance and value than short-term; but, on the other hand, short-term purposes can provide engrossing interest and considerable satisfaction. It may be thought that in a factory there is no room for such purposes on the part of the individual. The production programme depends on contracts, and these depend on markets and prices, and the decisions concerning them have to be taken by the high command. Once these decisions have been made everything else follows. A man cannot do what it would interest him to do because he must do what the firm's commitments require. A factory is a totalitarian institution and necessarily so. This is

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true. But every major decision requires a host of minor decisions to implement it, and in a well-run despotism, like a hospital or an army, the responsibility for these entailed decisions is properly allocated and they give great scope to those who have to make them.

A works manager, for instance, may be extremely dissatisfied with the long-term purpose which has to govern his life. He may be making objects which seem to him to have no significant value for mankind and he may greatly resent the capitalist system under which the major part of the profits he makes goes into the pockets of shareholders. Yet his faculties may be extended all day long on short-term projects of the greatest interest. It is, in fact, the great interest of this kind of planning which makes factory life bearable for men in the grades of management and supervision*. The manager will be working on a plan laid down by the directors, which has been translated into a timed programme by the planning office. Each of the dates appointed for the completion of a process constitutes a short-term purpose, and entails further purposive planning. It is the works manager's duty to see that these plans are carried out. To do this he must have a working knowledge of each process in his department, and these processes may be very complicated. There are different materials each requiring the appropriate treatment, and different processes, some lengthy

* According to Saunders and Jones, *A Survey of the Social Structure of England and Wales* (p. 58), employers constitute 4·3 per cent and foremen and overlookers 2·7 per cent of occupied workers. These figures are from taken the 1931 census.

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and some short, which must be kept in step with one another. More than this, the planning office's programme takes no account of absences, quarrels, errors, breakdown of machinery, delay in other departments. It is the works manager's business to foresee and avert these difficulties, or to cope with them. He must understand his foremen and charge hands and those who work under them. He must sense trouble brewing long before anyone else is aware of it. Other men will get the profit he makes in money, and very likely the promotion he has earned. But he, and no one else, will win the experience and self-reliance and judgment he acquires in doing the work. If he holds down his job he is bound to become a man who can make up his mind and stand to his decisions, a man fit for democracy.

Superintendents, foremen, charge hands, ought all in lesser degree to meet the same kind of challenge to their capacity for intelligent and resolute purpose as the works manager does; they all carry some responsibility for keeping machines and human beings steadily and accurately at work. But often the exercise of responsibility is spoiled and frustrated by the interference which we have noted as arising from the general insecurity. It continually happens that men are given responsibilities that tax their capacity to make adequate plans; their standing in their job is at stake, but their planning may be ruined by someone else's intrusion. A foreman, for instance, had to take on a lot of untrained girls about eighteen years old. He was not consulted about the most convenient time to take on this new labour. He was accustomed to work with skilled or semi-skilled men, but most of them had

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been withdrawn for war service. About the same time the firm got a contract of work designed for mass production by unskilled labour. These new designs needed a lot of study by the foreman and his charge hands, and many snags had to be ironed out before production could go smoothly forward. He planned to put his girls on to easy jobs first and bring on the best of them afterwards, when he knew their capacities, to more difficult operations. But while the skilled man who was to get the work ready for them was clearing up some difficulty with the foreman, the production manager came striding into the shop and demanded to know why these girls were doing nothing. The foreman said he had no work for them at the moment, but he would have shortly. "No work!" shouted the production manager, "there's plenty of work. Put them on this." The foreman said that particular job was beyond them. The production manager insisted. The girls jammed their machines, spoiled the material and got properly scared. The foreman was blamed for faulty supervision.

Later in the war, a shop was getting very tired of working a six-and-a-half-day week. The supervisor whose responsibility it was to arrange for Sunday work so as to secure output promised them that if they worked well and got their required production by Saturday they could have a free Sunday. He saw to it that all arrangements were made to render this possible, and the works manager agreed. The people put on a spurt and reached their target. But on Saturday the works manager lost his nerve, and feared that if any hitch occurred next week he would be blamed for not having a Sunday shift. So at the

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last moment the people were told that owing to urgent commitments and high priority requirements from the Ministry they must all come in on Sunday. When they came in there was no work. This sort of incident is very frequent.

Or again, a foreman found that a certain assembly that should take one hour was taking an hour and a half; so he went over it himself, and found that one component had three bolt holes five-thousandths of an inch out of position. It was not impossible to assemble the part with a wangle, but this was where the time was being lost. He reported to his supervisor, who said he would get the error corrected in the next batch of parts being made in the machine shop. But when the next batch came over the same error was there. The foreman reported again. But when he had reported the same thing three or four times he lost heart. Meanwhile, the operative was being paid piece rate for a job that was timed to take an hour and could not be done in less than ninety minutes, so that he never got the bonus that should have been well within his reach; and if he lost confidence in the foreman who knew there was something wrong, and never got anything done, he could not be blamed. The foreman would be blamed, of course, if this workman created difficulties.

This sort of thing is very common indeed. Either the manager of the assembly shop or the manager of the machine shop had too much to do and forgot about it. But it may very well happen that such a fault will in the end hold up production noticeably, and then the high command may make some enquiry. Then everyone will have to sell the idea that the error was outside his department. It might

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have occurred in the specification of parts issued by the planning department, or in the drawings of the parts, or in the tools made in the tool room, or in the drawings for tools supplied to the tool room by the drawing office. Everybody will hope that the business of going through all the possible sources of error will be too time-costing to be pursued, and that if he can plausibly put the blame on someone else he will get himself out of the picture. The question who in the end gets the black mark depends on luck, probably on the luck of being present when the high command say: "Well, there was a slip up on this." If you are there you can say: "Well, I've had a word with the foreman and I think he will pull his chaps together," suggesting that the foreman was slack, or: "Actually So-and-So was out sick, and I don't think the tool-room foreman put the best man on the job." These explanations do not have to be true; all enquiries have to come to an end some time, and no one is interested in abstract justice. Each man fights his own way up through a succession of errors and confusions of this kind. It is the same in any kind of employment where there is severe competition and also incompetence, not only in industry. But in any employment where men are subjected to this kind of conflict in a life which is so driven and so subject to anxiety that there can be no effective let-up either in leisure or in some periods of peaceful creative work, the effect on character, on the quality of the purpose which sustains them, and on the influence on their subordinates of the kind of discipline they exercise, must be bad and must tend to colour the whole of life.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Reaction to the Frustration of Purpose

I

THE ABORTION OF PURPOSE

A

THE frustration of purpose which we have been describing is the frequent experience of the various grades of management. The works manager and the progress officer, the foreman and the charge hand, continually find themselves responsible for the making and carrying out of plans and their own position depends on their success; but they are continually interfered with or frustrated by other people. This is bitterly provoking, and some men are so daunted by disappointment that they give up striving to get anywhere and make it their business to avoid responsibility and simply to carry out instructions. They have not the temperament to endure continual warfare. But they are often men of intelligence; if they were given coaching and guidance instead of interference, and were encouraged to plan their own work, the factory could give them a very interesting and stimulating experience and they would develop into reliable and valuable men.

The experience of the production worker is entirely different and in many ways preferable. Purpose hardly enters into it, except the basic purpose of earning money. As has been said, nobody bothers to enlighten him about the purpose of his firm or his

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department, he simply has to work his machine. Sometimes this is a tricky business ; it may take him all his time and all his wits to keep a complicated machine going without let or hindrance ; his bonus will depend on his constant alertness to lose no time and work his machine as fast as possible without interruptions. For some men this kind of work has its reward, because it is a satisfaction to control such a machine successfully. But it is too narrow, repetitive and exhausting to be in itself an adequate training for citizenship.

Other machines make no such demand. The worker has to learn a simple process and repeat it faithfully. The mind does not easily forgo all custom of exercise. Some men cannot help using these long hours of repetitive work in the kind of brooding that brings an invention to birth. This may be a modest notion, an idea for saving production time by means of a small tool, or by some rearrangement of operations. Or it may be a far more important and far-reaching idea of real significance. The law of the land is that a man who hires a man's labour owns his brain, and any invention that a worker may have which touches the employer's products is the property of his employer. Some firms have a ready means for men to make such ideas known and they may have a habit of remunerating them. A man who puts up an invention which is used may get a rise or promotion; or he may get 30/- in his pay packet; or he may get the sack, for the firm may think it unhealthy to let a man with that quality of brain learn any more about their processes. In general it does a man no good to have ideas, and indeed, under this system, to have an inventive mind

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is a misery*. The claim that the creative power of a mind can be bought is an indignity. The argument is that the employee would not have thought of any such idea unless he had been privy to what the firm were doing already; in so far as this can be shown, it implies that in equity the benefits of his invention should be shared between him and his employer, but this assessment should be made by a disinterested third party. The loss to the country through the discouragement of invention cannot be estimated.

B

Most people are not inventive in this way and the purposes which engage their minds when on repetitive work are of a different kind. Women sometimes make a surprisingly good job of the double responsibility of factory and home because they think out their plan of campaign for their work in the home while they are at their machine. The successful running of a home requires planning and this kind

* Cf. A. Barratt Brown, *The Machine and the Worker*, 1934, p. 125. 'Mr. W. S. Rogers: "The marketing of a patented invention in this country is difficult partly because our manufacturers are conservative and ready to condemn a new device because it is new, or because it would disturb their routine of manufacture to embark on making it, or in some cases because they hope to be able to secure the idea for themselves, without consideration, either by waiting until the inventor has abandoned his patent, or by shamelessly copying it with a slight modification which they hope will disguise the fraud. . . . After sufficient experience to test the matter I agree with the dictum of a brother mechanic with whom I discussed the question, that the only course open to the inventor, if he happens to have a good thing and the means to do it, is to manufacture the article himself."' (Mr. Rogers for a number of years published his ideas in the journal, *Work*.)

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of purpose is very valuable. Others make other plans for the use of their free time. I found myself* that it was difficult to do any continuous thinking of this kind because the cyclical process of the machine continually brought the mind back to the point where it began. It seemed that some idea would associate itself with some movement of one's hand about the machine, and then every repetition of this movement recalled the same idea; one got no further. When this idea was an unhappy or provoking one it was very tiresome indeed to be unable to shake it off. It was easy to have a grievance about some small point or other; or to imagine that the charge hand would refuse some reasonable request one had it in mind to make. It seemed humiliating to be unable to think of something else and let petty irritations pass. But I grew to regard it as part of the normal effect of fatigue that one could not get free of the unwished recurrence of minor and perhaps imaginary grievances. I realised that when a man has something difficult to look forward to, say a shop steward anticipating an argument with the management, there would be nothing to stop him rehearsing that conversation hundreds of times, inventing bloody-minded things for the management to say and impossible retorts. After this process had done its perfect work it might be very difficult for the management to convince him that after all they were reasonable.

C

If one is working on a machine for eight or ten hours a day, and is free for two or three, one is apt

• Constance Reaveley.

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to make too many plans. There is no time to carry them out. When this has been going on some time you adapt to your life. You may stop making plans; in that case you lose your initiative and impoverish your life completely, for the things that fill your mind at work depend a great deal on what you do with your leisure, and if you get disheartened about planning for leisure you waste it. There is no margin for waste. Or else you may gradually get accustomed to fantasy purposes. You think you are going to do all sorts of things. Men have come to me with grandiose notions about the concert parties they were going to get up, or the fierce reprisals they would take for supposed injustices or slights; but they never did anything. There is no sharp line between the purpose you may really put to the test in action and the fantasy that gives you the gratification of being pleased with yourself at no cost whatever in courage or persistence. Fantasy is therefore the constant compensation for the rebuffs and failures that are so common in factory life. A man who is defeated suffers a challenge which may spur him to greater effort. But if he takes refuge in fantasy he evades defeat and challenge. He then loses the sense of fact.

The production worker at his machine or his repetitive process at the bench is to all intents and purposes shut up in an imaginary world for most of his working day. Conversation is a contact with actuality, but often conversation is impossible. When the mind is baulked of its active assault on reality, it turns to the world of fancy; fantasy purpose melts into mere fantasy, into day-dreaming. It is very hard to remember or analyse one's own

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day-dreams. It is even harder to find out what goes on in other people's minds in day-dreaming, especially factory people, who are often not introspective and anyway would feel silly if they told the truth. It seems that what one did with one's last leisure tends to recur in day-dreaming and, if one has brought away thoughts worth brooding over, the opportunity of brooding may be a good thing. Few factory people have the education to get to know about the nobler achievements of man or the natural beauty of the world. Few people in any class can stand good literature. Many people have nothing in their minds which is worth brooding over. The mind tends, therefore, to be dominated in day-dreaming by emotion, by love affairs, or by hatreds, humiliations, grievances, often small-scale matters not worth prolonged contemplation. "What a piece of work is man, how noble in reason!" But factory life is a corrosive to the nobility of reason.

This tendency to endless unprogressive brooding goes far to explain the great force of the *idée fixe* in the working man's mind. The notions that have pleased the fancy or have been engendered by emotion are ground into the very substance of the mind by the repeating process of the machine and they recur ineluctably in every conversation. Russia has no territorial ambitions; the leaders of the General Strike were threatened individually with prosecution and this was what made them stop the strike and has prevented the workers having any confidence in their leaders ever since; Mosley bought his way out of prison; and so on. It seems that nothing will disabuse men of these embedded convictions.

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D

Not everybody has a love affair in progress or in recent memory, or political notions to brood over, or even a grievance to hold attention. To many a grievance would be a welcome diversion and a real row a godsend. People settle down to the dreariest kind of minute cyclical purpose or to unbroken apathy. When I* was on a job that needed no thought whatever it pleased me to stack the finished parts for removal in twenties or in hundreds; I had an idea that you saved yourself fatigue by stooping more often or less often. There may have been nothing in it but I got very annoyed if anybody interfered. But some people do not even exercise as much purpose as this. They think of nothing at all. Their minds are a complete blank; they become incapable of attention, imagination or concentration. The routine carries them round as if they were animals.

Nevertheless I found definite satisfactions which help the repetitive worker to endure the life. There is a sense of virtue in consenting to the self-subordination which the machine demands. There is a compensating feeling of power and gratification in having so powerful and expensive an engine under one's hands and responding to slight movements. It was not oneself but the setter who really controlled it; it was pleasant to be looked after by a skilled man as though for a moment oneself was the most important person in the section. There seemed to be some release of primitive impulses, or escape from normal sanctions, in accepting the dirtiness of machine work; and perhaps of sadism, in working a

* Constance Reaveley

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machine which relentlessly destroyed solid objects (a tool, for instance, which cut away part of the surface of small metal screws). There was also pleasure in making things, which was less shocking to one brought up in the conventions of polite society, and pleasure in getting through a lot of work, and in particular in reaching certain figures in output; there can be pleasure in rhythmicising a repeated movement.

These small matters are here set down because I* found them surprising. The point is that it is all so childish. Men and women who are subjected to these feelings every day cease to notice them; it does not follow that they are not affected by them. Further, in so far as you can adapt to repetitive work without difficulty you become successful; you find your little gratifications and are not moved to grumble unless you are short of work or think you have a claim to work a machine which commands a higher bonus. You come to be regarded as a real good worker, a most ominous indulgence. There seemed to me to be an obvious analogy between these infantile satisfactions, especially the capacity to be pleased with oneself for obedience and the acceptance of subordination, and the temper which has made fascist peoples able to accept the régimes to which they have been subjected.

II

THE REACTION TO FRUSTRATION

There are men who persist in rational purposes of their own in spite of continual frustration and disappointment. They fight their way into the

• C. R.

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department where the kind of work they want to do is being done, or they get their own department reorganised on reasonable lines, or they succeed after years of campaigning in setting up an experimental section or a scheme of technical education for the younger men. Or a working man may at long last achieve his position as foreman or works manager. But heroism of this kind is rare and democracy depends upon the common man.

But the common man is usually defeated. His defeat manifests itself in various ways. At first he wants to identify himself with his work and devote his purposive energy to its improvement and perfection; when his ideas are despised and frustrated, he is sensitive to contempt, and wants to say "have it your own way, I shall go elsewhere." But to act on this impulse is not always a fruitful thing to do. Going elsewhere means leaving people who may be your friends; if you stop working with them you may have no further opportunity of seeing them. It may mean giving up your house which has become part of your life, though many will travel for three or four hours a day in order to avoid leaving the locality where they belong. There is very little reason to believe that you will find a place where things will be any better. A man may take this course once or twice, but he learns his lesson; the menace of insecurity teaches him. But when he decides that he must go on working in a place where his reasonable judgment and his will to make something reasonable and good out of his work are perpetually disregarded and set at naught, he suffers an affront to his essential dignity which will damage him more than most kinds

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of trouble. This is no training for citizenship.

The less resolute and realistic men take refuge, as we said, in fantasy compensation. They are losing their sense of reality, of what they can do and what they cannot, which must control purpose, and save it from futility. They are losing their sense of fact.

The commonest reaction is to say, "have it your own way; I will not put my *mind* on your business any more; I will confine my thinking and my capacity for purpose to my private life." This means that at the factory a man simply carries out instructions whether he thinks them well conceived or not; he avoids responsibility as much as possible and is careful to evade decisions if he can. Disappointment and contempt have taught him not to regard himself at the factory as a person who has a responsibility to use his mind; more and more he becomes what Aristotle calls a living instrument (and this is his definition of a slave, of a human being not fit for citizenship but only for obedience). In the end the management will complain that he has no initiative. But he will have stabilised his position at a level below his capacities, and reconciled himself to ceasing to compete. He will not have any more breakdowns due to anxiety. His wife will be disappointed that he makes no progress, at the waste of his powers and his earlier reasonable ambitions. The fact is he could not face the risk of imperilling her welfare and the proper standard of living for his children by continuing to engage in warfare. As a toolmaker friend said to me, "Money isn't the main thing." He believed he could make a better thing of his life in the long run if he could give up wearing himself out for promotion. Good men who dislike

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cheating and meanness are especially likely to take this line.

At one time the trade unions supplied a powerful stimulus to purposiveness and creative activity and persistence against odds. The story of their rise and success against every difficulty is one of the most heroic in our history. They began with the beginning of the industrial revolution, in one trade and another at different times, as it became clear that the increasing use of machinery would make it impossible in many cases for journeymen to become masters. In 1797, the Government, appalled at the turn taken by the French Revolution, passed the Combination Laws making all trade associations illegal. This law was not enforced against associations of owners, but it was enforced brutally and often unjustly against unions of workers. Men could be and were transported for collecting trade union subscriptions. At this time there were, of course, no railways or telephones to make collaboration easy, there was no State education to combat illiteracy, wages were low and hours long. But the men who migrated to the towns carried with them from village life a strong tradition of independence and persistence in the purposes they conceived. In spite of all these handicaps the trade unions won, and established themselves as part and parcel of English life, and an indispensable partner in the give-and-take of perpetual dispute, which is the English substitute for revolution. The Labour Party was born out of the experience and gathering strength of the trade union movement. But today in many parts it appears the movement itself is being governed more and more by a bureaucracy, and though it offers

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responsibility and wider experience to some, many gain little from it in the extension of their personal life.

It is for the most part home life that offers the only alternative field for responsible purposive activity. A man may develop projects for the improvement of his house and garden. A recent enquiry among six or seven hundred workpeople revealed a noticeable habit of really creative enterprise in the home: men said that "decorating" was their chief hobby; or they gave their free time to making or modifying their radio sets, or putting up poultry runs or breeding birds or rabbits or dogs; or to doing odd jobs about the house. They said they had no wish to leave their houses after all the improvement they had made in them, and this service to the home was a pleasure and a pride.

But wider enterprises arising from home life are precarious. If you plan to take the children to the seaside on a Saturday afternoon or go to a show with the wife, there may be a fiasco. The factory may demand overtime without notice, change shifts, require a man who has just worked a full day to work a full night. Many men have worked longer hours in time of peace than in war. One manager said to me* that he was against arranging a rota of days off, during the war, because if you told a person beforehand that she could have Thursday, she made plans for Thursday; then if someone was out ill and you wanted her to work on Thursday she objected. In time of peace resistance was impossible, but in time of war you could not sack anybody, and could not compel obedience; it was better not to let them make plans but simply to say to a suitable number of people

* C. R.

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at the end of each day "you can have tomorrow." The factory is hostile to the purpose of the home.

As a result of not being able to rely on having regular free time, many men find that in order not to disappoint the wife too often, it is best not to make plans or to have any purposes. They simply enjoy their freedom, when they get it, as relaxation. Their freedom in planning their lives reduces to the freedom to sit in their own armchair sometimes of an evening. Very few attempt to tie themselves up with continuous corporate purposes outside the home, such as choirs or W.E.A. classes; if they do their attendance is apt to be interrupted by illness and overtime and they lose heart.

The use of leisure simply as relaxation seems rather satisfactory to the man himself. When you come out of the works, even into the dark and wet of a winter evening, the pleasure of being your own master is so great that it suffices for an hour or two. You are tired, you want the armchair. You do not want to *do* anything. By the time relaxation has done its work the evening is too far gone for any definite activity to be worth beginning. The result of this kind of leisure is that you get no experience of life which can compensate in any way for the narrowness and boredom of the factory. If a man is using all his powers at work he can relax during leisure without loss. But if the work is leading steadily to the atrophy of his capacities, what he needs is a type of leisure which will offer him worthwhile activity, stimulate purposes that will bring a continuing interest and responsibilities and variety of experience; he needs a tonic rather than a sedative; otherwise his life is miserably poverty-stricken.

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The whole balance of his life needs rethinking. The routine of his work provides relaxation for most of his powers as a rational being; his opportunity for self-realisation and for growth lies outside work hours. This is a concept that has not been realised. The men themselves do not realise what is happening to them. But if we attach any meaning to the question, is not the life more than meat? we must realise that for the factory worker life, in this sense, can only be lived in leisure. Leisure is not only time; it is a condition of the mind.

It is part of the strength of the Englishman that he does not react violently to frustration; he adapts to what life has to offer. The factory employee who has ceased to compete and simply does what is required of him at work and enjoys his armchair when he gets home, develops the qualities which his life demands; chiefly doggedness—doggedness against disappointment, against illness, against boredom and insult. His good temper, on the other hand, is not a function of his environment; it is a miracle. The imperturbability which makes him as steady as a rock in times of disaster like Dunkirk helps him to accept the ignominy of his position at the factory without great distortion of character. But he does not grow in judgment or courage or enterprise. He does not acquire the self-confidence which is the fruit of responsible activity. He is learning all the time to reduce his demands, to let his mind lie fallow, to regard himself as a person not responsible for any kind of decision, a person whose capacity for reflection and purposive thinking is no use to anyone. He is becoming less and not more of a man.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Inadequacy of the Existing Defences Against the Effects of Competition

I

THE easiest reaction to a book of this kind is to deny that it is true, and probably many readers will take that course. They will say that no doubt in the past things have been bad, but that they know personally directors of companies who are as humane as anybody else; there are Factory Acts and H.M. Inspectors to enforce them, there are welfare officers. In fact, as a soldier friend said to me* when I was going into a factory as a welfare officer: "You need not worry about the industrial worker. They've got doctors and nurses to look after them if they get a scratch, they've got surgeries and rest rooms and canteens, and everything is done for them." It all looks very well on paper but a great deal of it never gets any further than paper.

There are, no doubt, many directors who wish to have their works run so as to give a fair deal to all. Two such men have said to me that they had a strong desire to introduce more humane methods of management, but that they could see no way of doing this except by themselves showing consideration to the higher grades with whom they came in contact. This method is apt to be unsuccessful; men who have fought their way to the top are not likely to be able to change their conceptions very much as a result of contact with a high-minded director, they

* C. R.

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are too old and too set in their ways. Directors may conceive purposes of great value and these may be ruined by the way they are administered by those lower down. I attended a training school, for instance, attached to the machine shop of a very large and reputable firm. But we got nothing that could be called training, no instructions in the care and working of machines, or in safety, or in the use and construction of the products of the firm. We were simply shown how to work a few machines by young apprentices or by other workers, some of them light-minded little girls who had never been in a factory till a few days previously.

Other valuable schemes also are apt to be reduced to futility by the way they are run; such as the appointment of welfare officers if they are not given suitable powers and access to directors; or arrangements for the rational treatment of waiting time. In the machine shop where I worked—and this was, I believe, very usual during war-time—you were supposed to be given a waiting card if you were kept idle, and be paid for your time; but a waiting card revealed that your charge hand had been unable to find you a job, so he was offended if you asked for one, and it was best not to offend him. You just lost your time.

The law has done a great deal to remedy bad conditions. It might be said that these provisions for physical welfare do not bear directly on our subject, which is the moral and political effect of the suppression of purpose and responsibility. Legislation will not make foremen and managers respect the personality of the men they control. Yet plans for the improvement of physical welfare have a bearing

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on this subject ; for health has a direct relation with morale, and apathy may be in part a function of impaired vitality. The dirt and foul air of factories, the fatigue, the long hours, all play a part in depression. In particular, the dirt, the grime and litter and general squalor oppress the mind as an indignity, which men as well as women resent.

Even within its own limits the law cannot do as much as many people suppose. There seems to be very little reluctance to break it, if managements think they can get away with it. A limited number of inspectors cannot visit a large number of works very frequently ; H.M. Chief Inspector of Factories in his Report for 1936 records that his authorised staff of 320 inspectors had under their care 255,012 workplaces to be visited ; the total of visits paid was 260,787. Some must have been visited more than once and it would seem to follow that some were not visited at all that year. One of the most frequent breaches of law concerns seats. The Factory Act provides that where women work seats must be provided ; in the machine shop where I was employed there were hardly any. I went to the welfare officer ; she said women were not allowed to sit in the machine shop. I said that was against the law. "Oh, the law," she said, as though she thought the law had nothing to do with the machine shop ; she added under pressure that she had asked for seats and could do no more. I told this to a factory inspector friend, who then visited that works and amongst other things said there should be more seats. This was quite ineffective. Workers as a rule do not protest against such breaches of the law unless they are led by very

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active trade unions. You only make yourself unpopular by protesting.

Again, the public probably over-estimate what can be done by a welfare officer. In many works she can spend no money and has access to no one higher than a works manager, who will be called to account for every penny he spends. You can do very little without money. If you want to get the place cleaner, you must engage more cleaners and what is more you must offer a wage that will attract women of the right type (there are women who bring their house-pride with them when they come to the factory to clean, and they contribute a great deal to morale). It is the same with everything else that needs doing. If you want to improve ventilation, that means layout on fans and windows; better lavatory accommodation, better lighting, dust extraction, ointment to protect those who work in oil against dermatitis, even soap and towels, all mean expenditure. It is hard to prove that this type of expenditure will improve output, especially to someone who does not want to believe it. Factory conditions are changing all the time, with weather (which affects health), contracts, personnel. It is very hard to isolate any factor and prove that increased output is due to that; if there is any improvement everyone will claim it as due to his efforts and not another's. Many firms do not keep records which make it possible to prove anything very clearly about the factors that affect output (cf. Sargent Florence, *The Economics of Industrial Fatigue and Unrest*.)

What does pay is to have a labour force which has confidence in the management and is therefore conscientious at work. But this confidence takes time to

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grow. If a firm has treated its people meanly and developed a poor tradition, it is very likely that the initial improvements in welfare will not be able to be shown to affect production, it will take a long time and the cumulative effects of many improvements before the result appears in increased output. Inefficient firms feel the unwillingness to spend on welfare more than others. Inefficiency means that production costs are already too high, and anything spent on non-productive matters makes them higher still. In such a firm almost the only thing the welfare officer can do without spending money is exactly what the firm probably want her to do, which is to use her womanly charm and quick wit to quiet the workers down when they become angry and get them back to work as soon as possible. The workers understand this.

The workers' most effective help often seems to come from the trade unions and especially from the shop stewards. It is difficult to gauge how strong the unions are upon the whole, because their position varies so much. In some firms they are able to get the law observed, and reasonable conditions established; in some their power goes further and they can insist on unreasonable concessions; in others they have no footing and can do nothing at all. In my machine shop I could not find a shop steward and the trade union secretary of the region whom I contacted did not seem interested in the conditions of women workers.

Directors, factory inspectors, welfare officers, trade unions all do good but they do not yet cover the field.

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II

We must make it clear that we are not offering this story as a complete picture of British industry. There are factories which are well run and in which the workers have a good life. In the same way those who are working for better health services are not denying that a great many people are perfectly well. But the fact that some people have a good life is not a reason for refusing to attend to those who are ill or oppressed.

The question arises as to how general are the conditions we have seen and described. There is so far as we know no means of answering this question. There exists no comprehensive survey of industrial conditions, and this is something that is needed. H.M. Inspectors of Factories are concerned only with seeing that the law is kept, and they are the first to say that there are many aspects of factory life which profoundly affect the mind and health of workers with which they have no competence to concern themselves. H.M. Inspectors of Factories are empowered by law to investigate one aspect of welfare, that is to enforce obedience to the law. The hours that men work in factories in time of peace, for instance, have never been made the subject of legislation and the inspector, therefore, can do little or nothing to protect men from the grossest exploitation. Methods of dismissal have never been brought under the control of the law and inspectors are powerless to interfere in cases of the fiercest injustice.

It would doubtless be possible to get a comprehensive survey of the general conditions of industry covering the whole country if some research

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institution cared to pay for it, but so far none exists.

In the meantime the best approach to an assessment in the most general terms of the prevalence of good or bad conditions is to start from the assumption that John Winnington* is right in suggesting that inhumanity is generated by excessive competition. Men do not as a rule enjoy treating one another badly; they do so in self-defence or in excitement. On the whole we may suppose that his experience of better conditions in a concern not exposed to severe competition, and of the harshness which was substituted for humanity when the firm entered a competitive field, would be confirmed by a wider survey.

The question therefore arises as to the proportion of industry which is thoroughly competitive†. There is today a strong tendency for firms to combine in order to avoid the full force of competition and the presumption is that small concerns are more exposed to it than large. In this connection figures published by His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Factories in 1936 have a certain relevance; in the period under his review 77 per cent of works subject to his inspection were small in the sense that they employed fewer than 25 operatives; and 52 per cent of factory workers were in works employing less than 250 persons, only 18 per cent in large works employing 1,000 and upwards. This suggests that 50 per cent of the seven millions odd who are insured as workers in industry are working in conditions more or less such as we have described.

* Ch. 2.

† Evidence bearing on this question is assembled in a recent Fabian pamphlet (1945).

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This inference cannot be made with complete security. Some small firms are paternal. Men can be comparatively happy in quite poor physical conditions if the human atmosphere is friendly. On the other hand, a factory inspector with whom this point was discussed was doubtful for the opposite reason. "Some big firms," she said, "are awful." Further, the proportions of large and small firms will not be the same today, because so many small firms have gone out of business or been swallowed up through the concentration entailed by war production. Sir Henry Clay in the 1942 edition of his *Economics for the General Reader* says that at that time more than three-quarters of the factories in Great Britain employed 25 or fewer employees and that under 80 per cent employed as many as one hundred.

It seems impossible to conclude that the number of people who are working in firms which suffer from the severities of competition is so small that they do not need to be considered. On the contrary, it seems that the firms which are secure enough to afford humane management and healthy conditions are more the exception than the rule.

There is a further note to be made on the contents of this and other chapters. Much of what is chronicled in this book must strike the general reader as petty: fighting for prestige, trying to get seats, fussing about waiting cards, the question of who is to get the blame and so on. These matters are petty, and in war-time it is not fitting to waste time on them. In time of war many workers do put up with what comes their way without complaint. But the point of this book is that when one's whole life is closely

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tied to the factory, when leisure is short, precarious and poorly provided with opportunity, there is no getaway from these petty details. Education gives very little help; we have not in this country discovered a method of adult education which has a strong and lasting appeal to industrial workers*. Factory work tends to depress and even humiliate personality, though this may not be consciously felt by the man or woman whose normal experience it is. But the ordinary worker does react to the depression and to slights by unconsciously seeking compensation in self-assertion wherever this offers. This is the source of some of the fuss and bother about petty details; workers have no other opening for the expression of their sense of their significance as individuals. There is, therefore, no attempt in this book to disguise the fact that industrial experience is often so confined that small matters are bound to loom large, and cumulatively to amount to a considerable burden of irritation. This irritation sometimes explodes in violent protest against some one or other of the petty slights and annoyances that go on all the time.

The men and women who bear the burden of this kind of life with fortitude and magnanimity win a great spiritual victory.

* The W.E.A. has recently increased its membership to 70,000. Many of these are black-coated workers.

CHAPTER SIX

The Political Significance of Factory Experience

I

WHAT we have come to is that the frustration of many of the normal purposes of human life leads the few to the concentration of all their powers on the pursuit of wealth and power, and the many to an acceptance of a life in which there is very little purpose of any kind, and in which day-dreaming and complaints and other infantile gratifications compensate for the lack of adventure and responsibility.

All this has a significance for political life which those who believe in democracy will ignore at their peril. Democracy cannot be built on nothing; it is built on the steady pressure and co-operation of men of democratic temperament and character. Character is under training in all the experience of life, and the rehearsal for democracy goes on at every level—in the small local society, the factory, the trade union, the chapel or vestry meeting, the club, the community centre, the city council, the national association, the House of Commons. Democracy rests on two foundations, the energy of active public opinion and the vitality of democratic local self-government. When public opinion loses energy and purpose democracy falters. Parliament is sensitive to the urgency of political feeling in the constituencies, and obtains its direction from the pressure of public demand. Party committees are guided in forming their programmes by the perpetual two-way traffic with their local organisations, and apathy

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among the rank and file means that the parties lose their drive. Lack of confidence ensues and a vicious circle is joined. For when the people have not proper confidence in their party, individual feeling spends itself outside the political process which could give it effect, in private purposes which may or may not provide satisfaction, or in fantasy, or in underground revolutionary activity. The natural and proper form of government for a people who do not wish to shoulder responsibility is some form of oligarchy or despotism.

Repetitive machine work tends to make one shy of responsibility. In order to take responsibility well, and also in order to enjoy the varieties of self-government that provide the rehearsal for democracy, men need to be capable of understanding another man's point of view, and of allowing for it in putting their own policy; they need to be able to express their thoughts clearly; to be persistent enough in their own purposes and policies not to be immediately discouraged by rebuff, and resourceful in thinking out the feasible way of carrying their ideas into effect. People who have been starved of responsibility and contacts fall down on all these counts; they tend to spend most of their time brooding over their own ideas in phrases which may suggest a wealth of meaning to themselves but may convey very little to other people, they are unpractised in divining what other people are after, they do not foresee and provide for the difficulties which will be brought up against their suggestions by others who have other axes to grind, they lose face and feel extremely discouraged when they are unsuccessful, and can think of no more to do. The

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result is they appear unreasonable and unpractical and they grow to dislike responsibility; they prefer to express their point of view in private grumbling rather than in purposive action. This is the frame of mind that is induced by a repetitive job, which engrosses the major part of life; you prefer the quick, familiar routine movements, you resent having to think, or being under the necessity of finding contact with other people's minds and bringing persuasion to bear upon them.

It is often asserted by employers that their people like monotony and dislike variety and responsibility. This is very often true and is the worst possible indictment of modern industry; there is a vicious circle here too, the constant effort of the designer to make machine-minding even simpler, and the increasing mental inertia in those who have to work such machines.

Neither victory nor defeat in the competition of factory life is good training for democracy. The defeated resign themselves to being domineered over, not without hatred but without excitement. They have too little chance of enterprises outside the factory that can compensate for the poverty of their experience inside it. Emotion that finds no outlet in active purpose remains latent behind the doggedness that is the industrial form of courage, or runs into fantasy.

The qualities that win in the factory are just as undemocratic as those that lose. Men learn to become bullies. The notion that the other man has a claim to consideration simply because he is another man has little place. Individuality is seldom valued, it is a tiresome by-product which jams up

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the works and which the management desire to eliminate as far as may be.

The concentration of purpose and energy on the pursuit of power and money does not provide motivation which is good enough for the normal man. This accounts in part for the malaise and listlessness of those who do not achieve power; nothing that they have to do seems worth a lot of trouble. More than this the denial of altruistic purposes in the factory, and the breakdown of loyalty to one another, often make men bitterly sceptical about the genuineness of any purpose transcending selfish ends, indeed of any ethical purpose whatever*. Cynicism is not a mark of indifference and it is not a truthful state of mind; it is the emotional condition of the idealist who has suffered disillusion. It is not harmless, for it offers the gratification of self-flattery for nothing. The cynic refuses to commit himself to any effort and believes that this is the sign of his superiority. He is too clever to be taken in by the idea that it is any use trying.

The effects of factory life would not be so severe as they often are if industrial employment did not so largely insulate people from many normal experiences, from adventure and personal encounter (except through sex), from creative excitement and from the passion to know, and also from the tranquil restoration of the countryside. Factory workers left

* In the services men have a different experience. War subjects them to a life in which without conscious reflection they are in fact united in a common purpose, the purpose of winning the war, and are compelled to be co-operative. The view has been expressed by psychologists that frustrated altruism among returning service men after the last war was one of the roots of Nazism.

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school when they were too young to understand adult aspiration, or to see in history the astonishing creativeness of the human race, and its unique power to transmute the tyrannies of physical fact and instinctive impulse into spiritual enrichment. Religious teaching does indeed offer to the humblest something to revere, a perspective of greatness against which he can see his own life truly, but more and more unbelief keeps people away from the churches and from the enlightenment of the Christian tradition and the Bible.

The more thoroughly moral ideals are defeated in the everyday life of the factory the stronger the desire to believe that somewhere else they are fully realised. The complement to cynicism is idealistic unrealism. Men live in two worlds, the actual world in which they learn not to take any notice of moral ideas, and an unreal fantasy world governed by high principles which meet with no testing, no development, no cost. Thought dwells lovingly on an imaginary order, based on ethical concepts, in which everything goes well and human nature is free from sin; a condition mythically to be brought about by revolution. This order tends to be identified with Communism, which in turn is identified with Russia. There are several false steps in this train of thought. (1) A fully moral system would be communistic. (2) Communism is practised in Russia. (3) Therefore, Russia and all that goes on in Russia are fully moral. (4) Russia is successful. (5) Therefore, a communist system can be successful. (6) But you can only get a communist order by revolution. The reaction to this conclusion is dejection or enthusiasm according to temperament. But in neither case do

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their dogmas come under correction of facts. Working men seem to have no conception of the actuality of life in Russia. One of the writers heard an address given in a works canteen by a foundryman who had worked in Russia for a year (in 1931); he said he found at that time that a man in work in Russia had a lower standard of living than unemployed men in England. His hearers were most displeased and clearly put the idea out of their minds at once. Or again two railwaymen, on hearing that John Scott's book, *Beyond the Urals*, spoke of great hardships heroically borne by the workers at Magnitogorsk (about 1936) replied without hesitation that if the book said that workers had a hard life in Russia it was without doubt propaganda. These reactions are typical.

Unrealistic idealism has been a marked defect in Labour policy. Two instances especially have endangered the welfare of the country: one, the entry upon a general strike "unprepared and proud of it," apparently against the judgment of their own most responsible leaders, and certainly against a Government that was extremely well prepared; and, second, the continued opposition to rearmament in the 1930s coupled with an urgent demand that we should quarrel with all our most powerful rivals. (The Labour foreign policy during the 'thirties was, of course, based on collective security; but the Labour Party was late in seeing that there would be no collective action unless Britain led the way, and that she could not do so unless she was able to fight. Stalin began to prepare his country for war, at immense cost in the standard of living, in 1933, the year in which Hitler came to power. The Labour

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Party was still deprecating rearmament in the election of 1935.)

II

Hortega y Gasset in his *Revolt of the Masses* (1927) develops a portrait of the "small man." He says the population of Europe multiplied during the nineteenth century four times as fast as in any earlier time and this increase of numbers meant that those who carried the cultural tradition of Europe, the older members of each generation, were not numerous enough to impart it successfully to the newcomers, the younger people. (The large numbers in the classes in schools is one symptom of this difficulty.) Accordingly, the youth of each generation has grown up with less and less sense of their cultural tradition; their education failed to make them aware of what excellence means in workmanship or social relations or creative art, of the difference between wisdom and unwisdom in the statesmanship of the past or of their own times, or to help them to individual maturity. The result is that they tend more and more to aspire only to be like the other people they know. Such people tend to be poverty-stricken in their notion of what to do with themselves when they are free to choose, they have few private purposes and little initiative. Society degenerates into herd life. Further, they have no capacity for criticism; they contradict ideas they do not like but they are incapable of logical analysis or of critical evaluation of evidence. They take their ideas from other people. Such men are inevitably at the mercy of propaganda. Hortega y Gasset is describing people whom we know. Our factory

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population is becoming more and more like his small men, the men whom Hitler so thoroughly understood.

When a population of this kind becomes inflamed by emotion, ready and eager to be played upon by a leader who can use propaganda to excite passion and find outlet for it, it becomes a dangerous herd. This must be borne in mind when we read the reports of extraordinarily strong corporate enthusiasm in Russia. According to reports men and women in Russia are working with whole-hearted devotion for their common purpose. It seems that in this country there has been nothing like their concentration on the common goal, except after Dunkirk. But one reason for this unanimity in Russia is that all those who were suspected of having purposes which did not run hand in hand with Stalin's were liquidated in a series of purges of which the latest was in 1936-1937. In this country a government which was obliged to resort to a blood bath like that would not quickly win very great enthusiasm (our brief experiment with the Black and Tans in Ireland in 1921 tested our reaction to ruthlessness), but in Russia the enthusiasm ensued without difficulty. Why? Because their propaganda was successful. Otherwise their peasant peoples might today be working for a Czarist régime.

Propaganda is a menace to democracy which is hardly understood. It looks like a means for developing common purpose; in reality it is the opposite. It is the means of using people without their knowledge or consent as the instrument of the purposes of another, of a person or group who desires power. Propaganda is the art of appealing to the stronger

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more primitive emotions so that these overpower the individual's capacity to exercise critical judgment, and compel him to seek relief for his excitement in passionate mass action. The attribute of individuality is mind and the duty of the mind to God is truthfulness. There may be crises, such as the break-up of social cohesion in revolution, which necessitates the use of propaganda to eliminate criticism and the care for truth. But a society which tends steadily to overbear individuality and to prepare the state of mind that responds to propaganda is losing spiritual freedom.

Men whose lives are narrow find inadequate emotional outlet and are grateful to a leader who will provide them with adventure and prestige and a sense of high ends to be striven for. Such a leader immensely enhances their dignity in their own eyes by linking their lives with a great corporate purpose. But the primitive emotions of the herd, of aggressiveness and sadism, are likely to be strong in uncritical uncultivated minds that have found too little outlet, and the leader will win great popularity if he helps them to indulge these passions*. It is part of his technique to offer them self-assertion without responsibility, the responsibility remains with him as dictator and theirs is the grandeur of obedience; he appeals simultaneously to their desire to obey and their desire to dominate. Fused and consolidated by the release of these emotions, the human herd can become incalculably powerful and dangerous.

Hortega's book was founded on observation of Mussolini's régime. It applies equally well to

* Cf. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*.

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Hitler's achievement in Germany. The point is that the same technique could be practised by any party and any leader. Any leader who offers the needed compensations for emotional and spiritual starvation will easily persuade the masses that he understands them. Understanding does not necessarily mean love nor love understanding; but it is such a rare comfort to be understood that the masses will always believe that a leader who shows by his deeds that he understands them, also loves them, and they will love him devotedly in return.

It is remarkable that all the dictators have owed much of their power to their presentation of a moral ideal, the ideal of selfless courage in imposing an austere, ordered, altruistic way of life upon the indolence and pettiness of human selfishness. It was because he saw, as they saw, that the world was out of joint and that heroic action was needed to put it right, because he believed that they were ready at heart for high sacrifice, that Hitler won the devoted allegiance of many innocent people.

III

We are confident that what happened in Germany could not happen here. Historically it is true that Englishmen have been far readier to assert themselves than Germans or Italians, and have far more political courage. "If writings be true, there hath been many scufflings between the honest men of England and those that would have deprived them of their rights." This was said three hundred years ago. The question is how far this national character is indestructible, and how far it is the product of environment, and manner of life. The moral

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qualities of responsibility and purposiveness and resolution, upon which our democracy has been built, may well be transmitted from father to son by training and example rather than heredity, and in this case, when the experience of life fails to call forth traditional behaviour, our inheritance could be dissipated in the course of a few generations. There are signs that this is happening; that the environment provided by urban life and, in particular, by factory employment is not good enough to develop the basic qualities of manhood, and that the character of those who are subjected to this environment is more and more approximating to that of Hortaega's masses.

It is interesting that the Archbishop of York does not seem to be confident that a form of fascism is impossible in this country. The *Daily Mail* reported on June 6, 1944, that he had spoken in favour of changing the constitutional method of appointing bishops; at present they are appointed by the Prime Minister, and this method has worked well, because it is customary for the Prime Minister to consult the Church before making his choice. But if the country came under a more fascist régime it would be possible for these ecclesiastical appointments to be used for political ends, and the Archbishop wished us to be protected against this beforehand.

On the other hand, there are many who fear the influence of the Communists and we believe that they are, in fact, increasing their numbers among the factory population.

IV

Our strong impression is that working men do not care for ideologies, except when they are

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completely disillusioned about the possibility of getting anything done by ordinary means. What they really want is security in a decent life; this is a natural and common-sense aspiration. The reason why they cannot have it is that the process of competitive mass production sets up violent conflicts and oscillations and extremes of wealth and poverty, which have so far not been brought under control. In America the large internal market has stimulated a tendency to let wages rise and prices be reduced, so as to bring more and more of the workers themselves into the market that buys the goods produced. Our own country has relied far more on export trade and employers are therefore more anxious to keep costs, and therefore wages, down.

The argument of this book is not that we should put the clock back and revert to a rural economy. This is not possible. The large populations of today can only be maintained at a decent standard of living by machine production. The troubles we have tried to analyse arise partly from the necessary monotony of mass production, partly from bad factory administration, partly from poverty of leisure, but chiefly from the severity of intense competition. The monotony of mass production must be accepted as inevitable. The other causes of distress are remediable. It does not fall within the scope of this book to explore the possible modifications of perfect competition. One of them is Socialism. There is widespread fear of Socialism on the ground of the immense powers it would put into the hands of the Civil Service and the fear of graft and intrigue manipulating these powers for private ends. Whatever Socialism brought us it could hardly bring

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greater freedom. But Socialism is not the only alternative; a policy for full employment, designed to convert the labour market into a sellers' instead of a buyers' market (that is, to secure that there were more jobs to be done than men to do them, so that jobs wait for men instead of men waiting for jobs), would remove the paralysing fear of dismissal which is the chief instrument of tyranny. Sir William Beveridge, in his book on *Full Employment*, in outlining a policy for creating such a situation, admits that it would have its own difficulties. When the fear of dismissal is suddenly removed, as it has been under the Essential Works Order, discipline suffers. In order to maintain proper discipline in a period of full employment, more enlightened methods would have to be understood and practised. Opposition from employers may, therefore, be expected. This is the kind of fundamental question that in a democracy ought to be settled by appeal to public opinion. Ultimately, if the community desires to abolish bad unemployment, it should be able to put into power a government which will carry out this policy.

To move from the unfettered competition which prevailed for the most part till the 1930s into an era of monopoly would not be difficult. That change has already gone some way in this country. It is not a democratic solution of our difficulties, for it puts immense powers without political responsibility into the hands of capitalists. If such capitalists desire to obtain political power in order to defend themselves against controls and interference in the interests of democracy—and they commonly do desire such defence—we shall be in danger of finding ourselves under a mode of government which would

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in fact be fascism, though the customary forms of democracy might well be kept up. It has not, in the past, been difficult for vested interests of one party or another to secure that men who will support their policy are returned to the House of Commons, and it might be done again.

To move away from unfettered competition into an era of full employment and greater freedom, along the lines of the Beveridge proposals, would be more difficult; it would require experiment and adjustment and immense determination in overcoming capitalist opposition. It would involve changes at least as great as those that attended the initiation of social security legislation by the Liberal Government of 1906-1914.

The danger of the present state of affairs is the effect of industrial employment on character; it induces the destruction or atrophy of the very qualities on which freedom and democracy depend. It seems irrational to be devoted to a political order because it preserves freedom, and to fight wars to maintain it, and at the same time to acquiesce in an industrial mode of organisation which tends all the time steadily to undermine it. This process goes on whatever party is in power, and a Socialist régime is not necessarily more democratic than a Conservative one.

We suggest that without waiting for the profounder economic changes which we believe are needed, there are immediate reforms which could do much good. These are the inauguration on a wide scale of juster methods of dismissal, the training of management, and a new policy for leisure.

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Note.—Since the main part of this book was written the Labour Government has come into power. If this Government achieves any kind of success the danger of violent revolution in this country will recede into the past. The danger of autocratic government being substituted for democracy by insensible degrees is not at all abated.

The experiment of nationalisation in certain great trades may provide or point the way to the solution of the worst problems of extreme competition. A more immediate hope is that, through the Labour Government, the community will succeed in exacting a higher standard of conditions and management in industry generally.

Part III

Remedies within the Present System

CHAPTER ONE

Three Immediate Steps

I

WE have said that competition is the source of that pressure on the employer which compels him to use the worker not as a person but as an instrument of production which must be exploited to the limit of its capacity, and that it is a most urgent task, if we care for democracy, to bring competition under rational control. But certain reforms are possible which would relieve the pressure in some degree without waiting for fundamental re-adjustment or revolution.

The first of these concerns the method of dismissal. John Winington has shown how summary and especially unjust dismissal is used as a whip to speed up production beyond what flesh and blood can bear. It is an intolerable indignity that a free citizen should be at the mercy of an overseer who can reduce him and his family to unemployment and the dole for no reasonable cause*. There is in effect no appeal against such dismissal because the higher management will normally feel they must support their foreman. A man haunted by this fear is not free. He dare not resist any demand or any insult. People outside factory life often cannot

* In war-time, when workers were in a stronger position, and summary dismissal might cause employees' meetings, strikes and lost time, the Ministry of Labour sometimes appointed courts of enquiry. At a case at an important motor works the court noted that, after the unsuccessful intervention of the Personnel Manager, "the workers had no effective means of expressing . . . grievance . . . except by meetings and threats." cf. Cmd. 6284.

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believe that Englishmen would put up with this treatment; if twenty or thirty resisted together, they say, they could not all be sacked. But in time of acute unemployment, local or general, they could. Further, twenty or thirty do not combine in that courageous way unless they are led; the firm will have a good idea who the leader is and, if they do not wish to sack all, will sack a few likely ones; anyone who tries to lead a resistance movement simply ensures that he will be the one to go home to his wife to tell her that they are on the dole again. His family's standard of living will be abruptly reduced. In any case, whether it seems likely or not that Englishmen would submit to such treatment, it is the fact that they do. How can men reduced to such weakness have the self-respect or self-confidence of proper citizenship?

However, it is not easy to provide the alternative method. Since the Essential Works Order came into force the power of dismissal has virtually been vested in the National Service Officer, that is outside the factory. The N.S.O., who is also the manager of the Employment Exchange, is extremely busy; presumably his instructions from his headquarters were that labour was to be kept at work, and restrained from moving about as much as possible. However that may be, it often happened that he was very slow in responding to a request to use his powers for the disciplinary discharge of idle or incompetent workers. Firms were in many cases working for costs plus profits, so that it did not greatly matter to them if they carried a good many incompetents; it is undignified to threaten workers with disciplinary action by a servant of the State,

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and then find that nothing much comes of it. Many firms found it simpler not to make many requests for the removal of unsatisfactory workers. The effect on discipline was very striking. The Minister apparently relied on the patriotism of the workers to carry on properly and strenuously without the sanction of the effective threat of dismissal. But many workers have felt that in war as in peace the upshot of their labours is to put money into other men's pockets; they had not confidence either in their own managements or in the Government, nor even always in their trade union leaders. They believe that the Excess Profits Tax has been widely avoided by careful accountancy. As a result of the removal of the control to which they were accustomed, discipline has suffered very badly. The only effective incentive has been bonus; this has worked very irregularly. Work was designed and tooled so as to be able to be done by green unskilled labour; skilled labour was supposed to be upgraded to supervision. But bonuses for supervision were much smaller than for production, so that it became unmistakably clear that it paid to remain at the bench earning production bonus; this having been designed to provide a living wage for green labour brought high money to the skilled man. But this was often not an inducement to him to work hard continuously or keep good time. He has a definite standard of living in his mind and when he has provided for that he loses interest in money; his leisure becomes of more value and, especially if he has been tired out by unwisely long hours, he absents himself. The country has paid very heavily indeed for the lack of training in management; in

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John Winnington's experience it has appeared that uneducated men who love power, and have been upgraded rapidly, have had no idea whatever how to get work out of men and women who hate them, and over whom they have no effective sanction.

Accordingly managements are extremely anxious to recover their powers as soon as possible. This means the old tyrannies will return. If it becomes illegal to give men less than a week's notice the extreme indignity and hardship of finding yourself on the street within an hour of a row will be removed. But this will not suffice to remove unjust dismissal. Those who sack in anger will feel that their position will be intolerably shaken if they weaken later in the week. No outside panel will be likely to be available who could be relied upon by both parties to have sufficient technical knowledge to decide justly. The power of firing will have to lie inside the factory.

It is not enough for directors to announce that in every case of dismissal men may appeal to them. Directors are often not well enough known for workers to have any confidence that they (the directors) would let down a foreman or superintendent by reversing his decision. Nor would it necessarily be effective to have dismissals brought up before a Joint Production Committee or the like; workers may be intimidated, there would be a strong temptation not to mark yourself out for reprisal by resisting the foreman's decision.

Two methods may be mentioned that have been practised with success. One is to vest the power of hiring and firing in an officer not directly responsible for production, whose own power to discharge his function efficiently depends on his reputation

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for fairness ; this is generally the labour manager or personnel officer. Where the power is really given to this officer the plan works well. The personnel officer will not be successful unless he (or she) holds the confidence both of foreman and of workers. But few firms, comparatively speaking, will give these powers to such an officer. Their profits depend on overdriving their men ; when time is lost by giving fair consideration to disputes, the production of that day or week is affected ; and they do not wish anyone who is not involved in the drive for production to have the power to delay it for a minute.

Another scheme is to refer dismissal to a panel with a director as chairman, on which also sit the personnel officer and a representative of the workers (such as a shop steward) as well as the worker under threat and the foreman or supervisor who wishes to dismiss. Some firms make such a scheme work. When it will work, it is likely to reduce the number of unjust dismissals or attempted dismissals, simply because people dislike publicity for their own worst outbursts. The worst explosions would come under restraint if the power of dismissal was vested in a panel. But many firms would be slow to agree to such an arrangement, because you would then have to *prove* to the panel that there had been due grounds for dismissal, and proof is extremely difficult. There can be bad timekeeping, dishonesty, disaffection, bad workmanship, and unless the firm's methods of keeping records, and the memories and integrity of various witnesses are exceptionally reliable, it will be impossible to prove delinquencies which are not in doubt. For a firm to attempt to dismiss a bad workman by means of such a panel,

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and fail to carry it, would be extremely bad for discipline, and if everyone knew that the workman was in fact guilty of misdemeanour the effect would be all the worse.

Such a panel would work in a firm in which workers and management had confidence in each other*; it would be difficult to get it to work where such confidence did not exist. This is the case with many needed reforms; they would be practicable where relations were already good, but relations will not improve until these very changes have been made.

This whole question is very difficult. Even the best employers fight shy of letting power out of their own hands and believe that committees of workpeople would be as likely to be governed by spite or jealousy as any other human authority. But it is urgent that some better way should be found. The present situation simply means tyranny, it takes away essential freedom and degrades the tyrant as well as his victims. Many people will doubt if the amount of injustice warrants this assertion; if you have talked freely, as the writers have over a period of years, to workers from many districts and many trades, you cannot doubt that it is a major iniquity. This is one of the questions on which enquiry is most urgently needed. The community cannot act without knowledge.

II

A second reform which need not wait for profound changes to take effect is training of management. Nothing is more urgently needed than this.

* Cf. page 131, the Nunn-Bush plan.

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The want of such training has been apparent in most of what has been said in this book. To men with training, or the right kind of experience, this kind of work can provide absorbing interest and a good deal of excitement; for the reward of effort continually comes, in problems solved, output secured, contracts fulfilled. But to men who have to find their way through intricate and urgent difficulties without any experience or preparation, with hundreds of people dependent upon them for work, and who dare not ask for help or consult another, because you lose prestige if you admit for one moment that someone else may know better than you, these responsibilities bring gruelling anxiety; men make mistakes and have to cover them up, they become harsh, simply because they are afraid, and they constantly feel compelled to compensate for bad organisation by demanding overtime or by overdriving their workers. Not humanity alone but common sense must inform us that if we wish to compete successfully for trade in the post-war world we ought to overcome the loss of production which is due to inefficiency and could be remedied by training.

During the war the Ministry of Labour attempted to meet the dearth of foremen and lower supervisory grades, which had been created by the expansion of war industry and men's unwillingness to be upgraded, by means of short courses. Practically no courses of any kind were available until this was done, except such private and experimental training as a few firms had developed within the factory. These courses have been difficult to arrange because the duties of foremen vary so greatly from one works

to another. Men do not always see the point of attending courses at the end of a busy day, in order to be instructed in planning, progress work, costing and so on, when the tendency is all the time to take these functions away from the foreman and give them to specialist departments. Nevertheless, the experience which has been gained at these lectures and discussions should be valuable in building up a far more thorough, well-thought-out, regular system of training for management after the war. The works manager holds the crucial position. He is the point of junction where policy is translated into day-to-day control; and he is the man who represents the higher grades to the working people and by whom they will tend to judge the goodwill and sense and integrity of their directorate.

Three types of training appear to be essential to the making of a works manager, in addition to technical proficiency: he needs to be taught how to think out the problems of organisation, some introduction to psychology, and facility in expressing himself in English.

(1) Experiment will be needed before the best way of teaching organisation will be found. But part at least of what is necessary is to teach people not to be scared of complicated thought. Some people believe that teaching in logic, mathematics or economics—all abstract studies of the interaction of a multiplicity of variables—would be a useful gymnastic and equip the mind for dealing with the shifting intricacies of production problems. On the other hand, for lower grades far simpler instruction could be very useful. The lack of perception in these grades of what factory organisation means can

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create havoc, unless it is checked. The following story provides an illustration. A foreman known to the writers when confronted with a jig and a batch of parts which would not fit it, returned the *jig* to the toolroom for alteration. Several batches had already been drilled satisfactorily in the jig and when the matter was looked into it was found that the parts which did not fit had been made oversize. Had the foreman's note requesting alteration been accepted by the toolroom foreman, the jig would have been rendered useless for subsequent batches and a new jig would have had to be made. The right course in this instance was for the foreman to send the jig and the parts to the inspection department with a request for a decision as to which of the two was at fault. What seemed a natural solution to the foreman would not have occurred to a trained man.

One result of good training for administration should be to produce a type of manager who could appreciate the value of scientific records. The introduction to any book by Professor Sargent Florence*, or almost any other industrial investigator, will reveal how hard it is to find out what is really happening in our factories, owing to the lack of proper records. Scientific costing is impossible unless there are good records; enquiries into absenteeism and lost time and sickness are stultified by the same difficulty. Only an educated man knows that time spent on accurate records is not time lost.

(2) It might be thought that managers and foremen are already quite acute enough to know what is going on in the minds of their men, and also of their

* Cf. for instance Sargent Florence, *The Economics of Industrial Fatigue and Unrest*.

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directors, and not to need instruction in psychology. They are often exceedingly shrewd. But their judgment is continually interfered with by emotion, and they make very crude mistakes. The value of a trained personnel officer is largely that he or she has had sufficient training to interpret behaviour objectively without emotion. But this capacity should not be confined to the personnel officer; otherwise this officer has to spend a disproportionate amount of time clearing up mistakes that ought never to have been made, and calming people who ought never to have been incensed. A great deal of time lost in factories is due to obviously avoidable errors in dealing with people.

(3) Managers, foremen and indeed most of the inhabitants of factories fall into continual difficulties through not being able to say clearly what they mean. There is constant need for instructions to be plainly given, quarrels to be calmed, grievances expressed and met. But this need is not always seen. When a manager says to you: "Speaking as an engineer, with 30 years' engineering experience ..." you may surmise that he has some principle in mind which at this juncture needs to be clearly communicated. Yet you will probably not be wrong if you also surmise that he will almost immediately shy off with some such cliché as "I feel least said soonest mended," or else shirk the issue by embarking on a flood of irrelevant observations, which may be such an established escape mechanism with him that they are utterly familiar to everyone at the works. Thirty years' engineering experience in factories has taught him to avoid explanations; but a man who is to control hundreds of other men, and keep their

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confidence, needs to be able to convey his ideas clearly and get them across. (Commentators on Field-Marshal Montgomery's technique in creating a high morale have noted that he makes it a constant principle to see that those who work under him understand his plans.) This inarticulateness is not peculiar to factory life; family relations, friendships, the co-operation of workers in every circle, are upset by the misunderstandings that arise from explanations that do not explain or the silence of those who fear that words will do more harm than good. Everywhere a man or woman who can express ideas clearly is liable to be mistrusted by those who cannot; they fear him (or her) because they cannot compete. But this ability ought not to be exceptional. It sometimes seems to be taken for granted that the teaching of English presents difficulties which only genius can overcome. This cannot be true; investigation would surely discover ways in which our own language could be and indeed often is effectively taught. Till this is more widely done in the schools, every course for works managers ought to include lectures by students, discussion groups and seminars to give practice in talking clearly about complicated matters. Every technical college ought to have its students' union. In the students' unions at universities students do a great deal to educate each other. They discuss continually any number of topics, and all the time they are getting practice in expressing themselves, in the art of listening to other people expressing themselves, in giving careful attention to notions that may be quite unfamiliar to them, in bringing criticism to bear on plausible talk and distinguishing originality

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and sense from clever balderdash. Foremen and overlookers would be better able to carry their responsibility for handling people if they had similar exercises in their youth.

So far many technical colleges have thought it no part of their business to provide for social contacts of any kind. But if they do not make such provision it is hard to see how else it can be provided. The boys who attend night school and technical colleges have less leisure than university undergraduates, but where there are facilities—and such students' unions are not unknown—the young people may be trusted to seek one another's company and talk freely. Some come before lectures begin, and do their cleaning up after the day's work in the college cloakroom, and have a snack in the college snack bar; others stay when the lectures are over to continue in argument. And societies can be formed to meet on nights when no lectures are on the time table, in order to read and listen to papers, and join in discussions. Now that some daytime is to be given to continued education, the opportunities will be greater. To many outsiders it must seem that university students waste a lot of time in talk; but no small part of the advantage that a university man takes with him into the world is that he is not afraid of talk and can himself talk as well as anybody he expects to meet.

There is one further point. Training could help in the ways we have described and in other ways; it might also give management the support of a professional ethical tradition. Some people do not need this. They have such clear light within and such natural strength of mind that they need no

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help of this kind from society. But most of us are not like this; most of us know very well that we owe a good deal to the funded insight and the refined sense of what is proper to be done which we learn almost without knowing it from our profession, and to the control which this tradition exercises on our own way of thinking. Doctors, scientists, bankers, soldiers, all professional men and women are upheld and guided by the ethical tradition of their calling. Works managers and factory foremen have no such common tradition to guide and inform the way they discharge their heavy responsibilities. They are exposed to severer temptations than are common in other professions, and they work in a circle which has almost consciously abandoned moral considerations. (What else does "business is business" mean?) They are considered soft, the obvious people to be exploited, if they hesitate to do as others do. The saddest thing is to see the young accommodating to this environment, straightforward boys learning cunning, the kind-hearted getting over their scruples and becoming hard. Discussion of factory problems, and of the psychology of the people who have to be directed, could help to build up a common tradition of the right way to meet the stresses and strains of industry and in particular to reveal to people that they are not alone in their sense that ethical ideas ought to have their place. Such idealism probably cannot by itself defeat the inexorable pressure of fierce competition, but it could help to set up a clear norm of conduct and to strengthen the moral feeling that is already in men's minds.

There is a great deal that the law cannot do to

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lighten the burden of factory life, that only management can do. Management appears to be on the way to a position of great and increasing power; it is important that in its struggle for professional status the opportunity for taking thought about its moral responsibility should not be lost, and that the knowledge which most men have of what they think right and what they feel to be wrong should not be allowed to perish as a useless scruple.

Again, the technical colleges provide the obvious opportunity for the training that is needed, but they have never taken any responsibility for the ethical side of factory work. They could make a great contribution. What is needed is lectures and discussions on the psychological and ethical problems involved in the handling of people. It has been a mistake, as was said, to relegate these problems to the welfare officer. If conflict of policy arises between this officer and those responsible for production, the production people win. Until those responsible for production understand something of the psychology of management and have better ethical standards, things cannot get much better. Setters and overlookers and other technical men do not escape from the human side; every machine is worked by a human being, and the technicians' attitude to the workers exercises a great influence. Everybody who carries responsibility in the works ought to share in a common ethical tradition, which is part of professional pride.

A third reform which could do a great deal to change and improve the effect of industrial employment on the character of those who accept it is wider and wiser use of joint consultation. This

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device (as was said on page 54) has been tried in this country during the war, and found by a good many people to be of limited value, and there is a danger that, now the war is over, these experiments may be thankfully abandoned by many firms. But this would be a mistake.

There are difficulties in joint discussion, which are not always realised by those who embark upon it, but are quite inevitable. For creative corporate discussion demands skill as well as goodwill, and the skill probably cannot be acquired in any other way than through experience. There is an art in this kind of discussion as much as, and indeed more than, in any other kind of public speaking. Mark Benny has described some of the reasons for the disappointing quality of unskilled joint discussion in the coal industry, in his book *Charity Main*. Similar difficulties may be observed wherever one is privileged to be present at such meetings among people who are new to the method. Probably the workers' representatives come to the meeting with little or no idea of what is going to be discussed or of the facts material to the arguments. Inexperienced people do not always realise that they cannot put their case effectively if they have not studied the agenda beforehand; or they may not have received the agenda. Workers' representatives are almost bound at first to wonder what may be behind any new scheme, and what the directors have in mind to get out of it. They tend to be opposed, for reasons of security, to any change whatever unless it has sprung from their own demands. They do not know how to present their demands, nor how to back them up with reasonable argument and verified facts.

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They often indeed have rather little sense of the difference between facts and allegations. On the other hand the directors or their representatives, who are apt to be in the chair, seem often to be more accustomed to chairing small meetings of men who are familiar with the matters on the agenda. A Works' Committee may be quite large, including twenty or thirty people, and the chairman, being in the habit of studying his notes rather than the faces of the people he is speaking to, may not notice that most of them cannot hear what he is saying. He may be unpractised at setting out the history that has led up to a situation, in such a way that those who do not know about it can follow; he may use uninformative phrases, such as "the present situation," which leave people unenlightened about what the situation is. He has often been too busy to clarify in his own mind beforehand the issues that are involved, and is unable to rescue the meeting from muddle and waste of time. He may not realise the suspicions moving in the minds of the workers, or if he is sensitive to them, he may not be able to find the words that would allay them. One of his great difficulties is likely to be that the workers present do not understand committee procedure and feel humiliated when they have to be told that their contribution is out of order. Another very great difficulty is that some of those who are most earnest in their desire to co-operate are not good at expressing themselves, they may seem to be obstructing when all they want is to think through the concrete detail of a proposal; they need the skilled help of the chairman in making their point clear.

These meetings give workers the chance to feel

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that they have a real contribution to make, and their morale will be improved if they feel they are being effective. The converse of this is that they are sensitive to any failure, and unwilling to risk their prestige again. Many would rather sit quiet and tell their friends afterwards what their reactions are to the committees' decisions than essay the unfamiliar ordeal of lifting up their voice in public. Others make the opposite mistake and talk too much.

All these are the inevitable difficulties of real discussion and are experienced by learned and highly educated people as well as amongst other groups in the community; it would be a mistake to be discouraged because of them. They are not insuperable. G. S. Walpole in his *Management and Men* describes a successful experiment in joint consultation, and an American writer, Koepke, in his *Plant Production Control* (p. 66), gives an account of a firm which went a very long way in using their workers' capacity for responsible thinking and in trusting their co-operative spirit. He describes what he calls the Nunn-Bush Plan. Nunn-Bush are a large firm established about 1904 who make boots and shoes. After they had been working for some years they asked their operatives to form unions so that certain matters might be settled by mutual agreement, and they gradually used the union more and more. "The Nunn-Bush Company does not feel that they have made any sacrifice of executive management power. They have made it obligatory for their executives to be right and just in their actions. If a man is to be discharged the foreman knows that snap judgment or hasty action is going to be checked by the union. If the union's

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committee decides the discharge is not justified it is assumed the committee is right and the executive is wrong. As mutual confidence grew, the greater was the co-operation between the union and the management. Over a period of more than twenty years they have developed methods of co-operating on the discharge of old employees, the hiring of new ones, working hours, number of working hours in the week, amount of wages to be paid, and other things which came up from time to time. All problems are settled by mutual agreement, or if that fails by disinterested outside arbitration . . ." (p. 67). They found very much to their surprise "that the percentage of the sales income dollar going to labour over a long period of time was almost constant"; and by then the understanding that had been established was so good that they were able to co-operate with the union to stabilise the workman's wage as a yearly salary with a guaranteed year of fifty-two weeks.

If workers were more commonly given responsibilities of this kind, industry would really provide some kind of stimulus and training in the qualities of democratic citizenship. It would do more. When men collaborate with one another, in discussion as well as in action, over routine issues as well as in controversy, they come to understand and sympathise with one another. Then it will more and more happen that they reach their conclusions without the defeat and discomfiture of any group among them, because as the result of their co-operative thinking they have worked out a policy which integrates all the points on which the several groups set most store. Such a policy is more satis-

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factory and more fruitful than any merely sectional policy. By then, whether they realise it or not, they are doing something far more important than settling the problems that come up on the agendas of most committees; they are creating a new kind of common life, they are operating in the strength of corporate purposes, which they only partly recognise but which have immense power, especially the fundamental spiritual purpose of mutual help. This experience invariably generates a new sense of the value of life and of effort, and it brings to birth what may be called true society, the kind of society in which a man reaches personal maturity through making his contribution to the common purpose, and finds himself valued and understood because of this contribution.

This may sound idealistic and unreal. It is really a common experience. It is probably found most fully in the religious life of the Society of Friends. It was effective also in the Tennessee Valley. In some degree it has been felt in the discussions that grew up among firewatchers, in shelters, in the R.A.F., in Women's Institutes, in countless small groups. (The ideal number for a group of this kind is judged to be about nine or ten, larger groups generally develop more slowly and less effectively.)

If industry could capture this experience, our industrial life would begin to be healed of the sordidness which is the indignity and blight of the modern world, and industry would then be able to make a new and tremendous contribution to the spiritual experience of man. Something of the sort is perhaps already going on in Russia. But we do not have to wait for an economic revolution. There is

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nothing about the fundamental purpose of industry to exclude the possibility of its becoming a spiritual enterprise; its *raison d'être* is to raise the standard of living, and there is there a purpose that naturally touches the basic compassion in human nature. The raising of the standard of living is not incompatible with profit, nor with private and unequal profit (any more than the devotion of an Army is incompatible with unequal pay); but compassion is incompatible with certain kinds of profit and with certain ways of making it.

Industry will not be spiritualised as long as the men who run it are unspiritual. But there are men running industry today who are spiritually minded, and who labour unceasingly to overcome the hostility which poisons it. In their hands joint discussion, as it becomes skilled, can be a very powerful weapon*.

• Cf. two books by Mary Parker Follet, *The New State*, and *Dynamic Administration*; also the Penguin *T V A*.

CHAPTER TWO

The Function of Leisure is an Economy of Mass Production

I

HOWEVER well managements are trained, however much competition is brought under control, it will be impossible to put the clock back; mass production by machinery has come to stay. The factory worker could be shown how his work fits into the general life of the community, interested in the discoveries and triumphs of his own industry, given his proper responsibility as a worker whose ideas will be valued and whose work on Joint Councils and Production Committees is necessary to the life of his factory. It would still be the case for the vast majority of factory workers that their days and years would be spent mainly in performing simple repetitive movements at machines or assembly benches. There is no prospect that machine work will ever make anything like the demand on character from the ordinary worker that the old crafts used to make and some skilled work in some callings makes today; the craftsman who knows something of what beauty is because his own hands bring it into being, the farmer whose work trains him in observation and sympathy, the small trader with his wide range of contacts with people, the sailor, the nurse, the teacher, all get more from their work as well as giving more to it than the modern factory worker ever can. War gives to some opportunities which peace does not give.

Richard Rumbold, in an interesting letter to

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the *Spectator**, has some words that throw light on the experience behind the heroism of war. He says of the men in the R.A.F.: "We were able to identify ourselves with the aspirations of a whole nation. . . . We no longer feel 'out of it' to the same extent as in peace. Our longing to play a part whereby we could secure a sense of social significance (and upon this our keenness largely rests) has been gratified. Finally we have been given, in the R.A.F. at any rate, many personal opportunities denied to us in peace. Consider one example among many: that of a navigator, I often flew with him, who was formerly an assistant in a gents' clothier in the provinces, where he said his job largely consisted of wrapping and unwrapping parcels. But now he plays a significant part in the nation's life, and upon his initiative and intelligence depends largely the success of each operational sortie as well as the lives of other men." But if the factory worker is ever in his life to meet the experiences that call upon his purposiveness, his creative capacity, his sense of perfection, and to be conscious of carrying significant responsibility in society it must be in his leisure. Better leisure is necessary to these workers, not so much because they would enjoy it as because without it they are likely to remain sub-adult and sub-democratic. One manager who regarded his men with sympathy said to me when I appeared censorious: "They're like children, you know." Why should we know that? Why should it be taken for granted that factory workers are like children? It is often true.

This involves a profound re-thinking of the

* August 20, 1943

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balance of life. We have been accustomed to think that the challenge that develops character is met in work; that work is the adventure in which you find yourself, for the sake of which you have to grow, in which you find the chief interest of life and its paramount duties. This is the Puritan conception of work; it is not true of all periods of history. Civilisation, in the sense of spiritual achievement, has largely been the creation of human leisure; music, art, philosophy, science, have owed much to men who had time to spare from breadwinning. Working-class leisure has already made its not insignificant contributions: peasant communities have developed folk dance, embroidery, wood-carving, and ballad; town-dwellers have their chapels, trade unions, and brass bands. It is wrong to identify leisure with idleness. Today we think of leisure as the margin of life that may rightly be spared for relaxation or enjoyment after a good day's work. But for thousands of people there will never be a good day's work to be done, there will only be a lever to be pulled (or the like) for eight or nine or ten hours. If work in the sense of breadwinning means machine minding, work that is the making of a man must be done in leisure from breadwinning. Leisure must become the most truly strenuous part of life, a tonic rather than a sedative.

This all sounds rather unreal. One working man said to one of the writers that most men regard leisure as the opportunity for spending money; if you increased their spare time without giving them more money to spend they would be at a loss. It is true that for many people recreation means the dogs or the pub or the cinema. If you gave them more

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time for these diversions it would not do much good.

Nor could one say that the leisure occupations of the upper and middle classes could suitably form the life work of ordinary people—music, bird-watching, embroidery, philately, sport . . . few of us would feel that our existence was justified by what we could do in these pursuits.

The old ways of recreation must change if we are not to be defeated by the new ways of work. This is not impossible. The indications are that if they were released by means of ampler leisure from the excessive confinement and exhaustion of the factory, the creative energy of the workers would lead them to new forms of community life. This is what the present age needs; other times have made their great contributions in art and music and literature, and our inspiration in these things, like our interest in them, is poor compared with what the past can offer. But today we need more than anything else fresh creative experiment in social activity and understanding, a modern tradition of community life. This is what factory people and other workers also could probably begin to do. The sociality of the factory is at present often curbed and frustrated, the sociality of the neighbourhood in arrest. The centre of personal activity and purposiveness, the place where spiritual values are felt, is the home. Here it does seem that working men and women are able to find themselves and express their own sense of the right way to live. It is said that one-third of the houses now inhabited were built between the two wars; these housing schemes, imperfect as many of them are, have given people a chance. Drunkenness has abated. It often happens that men as well as

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their wives find their chief pleasure in the service of the home*. House pride is, in its humble way, an aspiration after perfection. Relationships become truly personal and there is the beginning of true society. Here we find something of the energy and contentment of the creator who has found his (or her) medium.

This account does not apply to all working-class homes. Much of the housing that still stands is squalid; many of the people are not yet accustomed to conditions which make the domestic courtesies possible. But the beginning has been made; the home is the birth-place of true society.

But the home is not enough. Although factory people will sometimes clamour for more opportunity for social intercourse, they in fact often shrink from its responsibilities. They manifest a lack of appetite for adventure, an inability to adapt to strange surroundings, an avoidance of wider contacts, which is not healthy. In especial they dread the responsibility of organising anything; they have a morbid fear of criticism, and are intensely critical of anyone who braves it. It is not hard to understand these reactions. In the crowded streets of modern cities there is such a variety of incomes, and standards, that people who have a hard struggle to maintain their own standard of respectability shrink from identifying themselves from others who may have, as they say, "different principles." Factory employment starves so many of their proper share of responsibility that they both fear it and envy those who have courage enough to accept it. But these difficulties could be overcome; and the path to

* Cf. p. 85.

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fuller experience and fuller, more democratic life lies in the movement from the home to the neighbourhood group.

There has been some experiment in this direction already. Where there is success there is much variety. The approach to social life among fire-watchers and civil defence personnel, the enjoyment of the corporate activities of the Home Guard, are evidence of a genuine impulse to sociality. The Peckham Centre and other large-scale experiments prove beyond all question that community life is what people need and will welcome as soon as they find out what it means.

This chapter was already almost complete when the Ministry of Education's pamphlet on Community Centres came into our hands and it was followed by the announcement that it was the policy of the Coalition Government to further the development of community centres on a wide scale. This policy is profoundly right.

In order that it may be successful, two conditions are needed; one is the restriction of working hours, and the second is a different type of education.

II

Leisure that is to serve merely as relaxation, for recovery from fatigue, does not require so much time as the leisure that is to be work, though not breadwinning, and is to provide the creative opportunity of life. It may seem far more satisfactory to have work, such as research or the higher kinds of legal and administrative activity, which engrosses all the hours of day and many of the night, without a thought of stopping for relaxation. But this kind of

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work is only possible for the few and it is unrealistic to argue as though this sort of assiduity and concentration were right or proper for machine minders. Our civilisation has invented the machine and thus found the means to support far larger populations than any former time; the corollary of machine production is reduction of the hours of mean manual labour, and the discovery of the possibility of a good life for the labourer.

There are two further reasons why greater leisure seems to be needed now than in earlier times; one is the pace of modern production, which makes even simple operations at a machine much more exhausting than longer hours taken at a gentler tempo; and the other is that the size of modern cities makes the business of getting to and from work, and to and from the places of leisure occupation, so costly in terms of time and energy.

The amount of leisure that is needed to enable the worker to lead a full life varies with the demands that the work makes*. A day that ran from 8 till 5.30 was found by one of the writers to be compatible with very good leisure; one could write, attend an art school, explore the Cotswolds on a bicycle, enjoy a circle of friends. But working in Birmingham at a machine from 8 till 7 was very different. The evening only allowed time to recuperate somewhat from the fatigues of the day and there was no margin for further undertakings. This difficulty cannot be remedied to a great extent by determination; one can, if one is determined, write or draw or talk to friends in great fatigue, but one does these things so badly that there is no point in doing

* Cf. Chapter Three.

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them at all. The day that ended at 5.30 and the day that ended at 7 differed not only quantitatively but qualitatively; they afforded two different kinds of life. We have found extraordinarily few working men or women whose experience has been different, who have been able after working long hours to embark on any leisure purpose which made much demand upon them.

Another factor which has to be taken into account is the severity of the physical labour involved. A man working at a drop forge, wielding a heavy hammer, will probably give his best output in a 30-hour week; the less exhausting work of some machine minders can and should go on for longer.

The hours of factory work for men have never been limited by legislation, and, contrary to what many people think, hours are often longer in peace time, when firms are working on competitive contracts, than in war when the Government will buy all they make. It seemed to be confidently supposed by many people that hours would undoubtedly be reduced after the war. But as the full urgency of reviving and expanding our export trade comes to be felt, the captains of industry and those who follow them revert to their fixed notion that longer hours mean more output. But this is true only for a brief period of extreme urgency. It was proved in the war of 1914-18, and forgotten by the Ministry of Labour and others, and proved again in the war of 1939-45, that long hours do not increase production. But the average Englishman is not much affected by proof*. Nothing will keep hours of work down

* Cf. Martindale, *From Our Generation to Another*, pp. 160, 162.

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to a reasonable level but legislation. And the law must be carefully conceived because if there are loopholes allowing men to be employed for longer hours if they are willing, they will all be willing, because none of them will prefer the alternative of making way for others who raise no objection.

III

The second thing that is needed for the development of the new leisure is a different type of education.

At the present time there is a lot of talk about education, but nobody wants to be educated. Education is regarded as a means to the better kind of jobs rather than as an experience to be desired for its own sake. This is partly because everybody is tired. There is a need for general rehabilitation; holidays with pay, holiday camps, idle time at home have their place. But unless there is a positive policy for a redevelopment of the good life in terms of activity, relaxation will very rapidly degenerate into boredom.

The chief reason why education is not enjoyed or sought for by adults lies deeper. The education they have been offered is not designed to meet their needs. It has been too much dominated by the high academic tradition of the universities, the pursuit of scholarship. The universities do not train boys and girls for citizenship but for research (the boys and girls train themselves for the responsibilities of the community through their societies). Their studies introduce them to standards of great accuracy and thoroughness, but there is an excessive emphasis in the arts on philology and criticism and the inter-

pretation of sources. This education gives a bias to the mind which can be overcome in the course of adapting to an active career; young people with good brains get great benefit from such discipline and manage their readaptation successfully. But such curricula watered down for higher- and school-certificate examinations, watered down still more for the elementary schools, induce the notion that what is called education may bestow some obscure benefit on the mind but is remote from any natural interest of children or adults. The result is that the huge majority of those who do the work of the world have little knowledge of the background and setting of human life, little capacity for reflection and creative criticism, and are out of touch with the past.

To lose the sense of the past as a living element in the present means that one lives in a kind of blindness. Part of the cause of the listlessness of working people today is that they do not know how great a thing human achievement is. Their judgment operates on the narrow range of present fact, which falls within their own experience, the fact of failure and breakdown. Our wars, poverty and injustice are profoundly depressing; but it is not these that distinguish us from the other living races on the planet, ours are not the only lives that are poor, nasty, brutish and short; and the conclusion that our lives, like those of the other animals, are doomed to labour for nothing more than food and drink, sleep, procreation and forgetting, is false. The human tradition, from the Aurignacian cave men and the wood carvers of the Ashanti jungles to St. Francis, Leonardo and Einstein, is the story of the perpetual

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creativeness of the spirit ; this is the kind of creator man is. In our miserable present we need supremely the inspiration of the past.

The past is a living element in the present not because history repeats itself, but because institutions persist and problems recur. There is strange, strong comfort in understanding that the men and women of the past shared our experience, and that the enlightenment they won is for our help. There is a sense in which time is powerless to divide us, the past and the present generations face the human problem as a single society. If all this is dark to us, we find ourselves in bondage to the past. We find ourselves tied to powerful institutions which we can only get the better of by destroying them ; to destroy them is to strip ourselves of our greatest strength. For these inherited institutions are the focus of social cohesion and the legacy of the wisdom of our fathers. If we know how and why they came to be, we can adapt them to our own needs without sacrificing their funded strength. It is above all things needful today that the understanding of the past and of the present should be united in the same minds.

It is not unrealistic to hold that an education which has this aim, of uniting understanding of the present and the past in a single experience, is what would most help working men to recover hope and purpose and aid them to find their own salvation in new forms of community. Such an education has been practised with great success and happiness for a hundred years in Denmark. The Danish People's High Schools offer residential courses lasting four or five months, and based on history and literature, to

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adult workers. It is said that 30 per cent of the agricultural community attend high school, and it is held that this institution has contributed in no small degree to the success of Danish farming although there is no vocational training in these schools. Their great achievement has been in inspiration and in the experience of community life. The schools taught them what it means to co-operate in a common life and common undertakings. Danes feel that their success in co-operative farming and marketing is directly related to their experience of community in the Folk Schools*.

The opportunity to make a creative contribution to adult education is open, in this country, in the project for People's Colleges. If we succeed in understanding our own need and devising means to meet it these colleges might do for us something analogous to what the Folk Schools have done for the Danes. There are nine such colleges at the present moment, mainly in agricultural districts (there are four in Cambridgeshire). They do good work. If industrial workers had such chances they could help themselves more than they do. To some extent it is true that factory life is made by the people who live it; it was the workers themselves who made the trade unions, and more enlightened workers could today make a better life for themselves if they had the kind of education that would enable them to see where they stand and where they might go.

* Cf. Appendix 3.

Conclusion

SPIRITUAL freedom is not a natural condition of mankind; it is a rare achievement. When it is achieved it releases creative powers which have in all generations moved men to think there is something of the divine at work in the human mind. The Hebrew felt this, "What is man? . . . Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crownest him with glory and honour"; and the Greek felt it, "Many are the wonders, and none more wonderful than man." And our own Shakespeare expressed the same astonishment, "What a piece of work is man, how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! . . . in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!" But we do not need to go to these heights of our history to see the creative spirit at work. The craftsmanship of ordinary men, their stonemasonry, their ballads, their pottery, their prayers reveal in very humble people that power to transmute the physical into something of higher worth, which sets the great gulf between us and the other animals of this planet. This is the essentially human quality.

This capacity to live as a spirit, using the material conditions of life as an artist uses his medium, is found sometimes in very adverse circumstances. Epictetus was a slave, Spinoza a persecuted grinder of lenses, Bunyan a tinker in a filthy prison. Nevertheless the conditions of life can inhibit spiritual creativeness and reduce it to impotence; and for the most part do. Over huge tracts of history there is

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very little evidence of spiritual freedom or achievement. The spirit bloweth where it listeth and is not subject to our control; but the conditions that foster or destroy it to some extent are. Where the spiritual and physical conditions of work strip away the creative energy, there is no distinctively human achievement. A man who is fighting for his life is not free in the full human sense; under the compulsion to give his entire energy to battle, whether against illness or guns or poverty or fear of dismissal, he ceases to be an artist and becomes an animal.

In every age freedom moves towards new modes of creation and finds new obstacles which have to be overcome if the human spirit is to win its proper victory.

A democracy is a form of society which exists to foster this kind of spiritual freedom and creativeness, and which accordingly in any generation seeks to destroy the obstacles to it and provide the conditions that it needs. In our country now this freedom is threatened especially by the institutions that exist to make money. These are themselves the product of human inventiveness and freedom; for modern methods of production alone make it possible to feed and support the huge populations of modern times. Thus the urge to make money is in part the energy of fear; for the failure to produce in adequate volume means starvation. It *has* meant it on a vast scale in Russia and in India and in many countries. It would be foolish not to be afraid of such failure. But success breeds its own excitement; freedom is threatened both by the fear of failure that might mean starvation,

CONCLUSION

and also by the inflamed acquisitive passion that knows no moderation, in the pursuit of gain.

The decision where to draw the line between increased production and humanised production, the need for wealth and the need for leisure for the things of the spirit, is a moral judgment. Today wealth and poverty are not under the control of moral judgment. We compel men and women to work under conditions that arrest their development to maturity and creative purpose; the excuse for these conditions is that we have allowed a competitive system of production to grow up which will not function perfectly unless the workers are oppressed in this way. Here lies the heart of our problem: the control of the conditions of production, so as to get the goods that are wanted to meet the necessary human needs, without such intensification of production as will destroy the purpose and freedom of those who do the work; a problem that is both economic and moral. Some may say: Why take so much trouble? Why scuffle for democracy? The natural course of events will be to concentrate power, political and economic, in the same hands, and this means an evolution, which if unopposed may well be peaceful, to a mild form of totalitarianism. Why not? British totalitarianism, Socialist or Conservative, would be quite different from the continental form. Kindness would be shown to the workers (as indeed to animals); they would be looked after. The answer is that traditionally we have always opposed such concentration of power, in the hands of barons or kings or landed gentry, because where power is too much concentrated, freedom perishes. Democracy, freedom of

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the spirit for the common man, is part of our religion. It is part and parcel of our deepest religious intuition that the creative freedom of humble people is worth more than wealth. The individuality that is in them must be the object of our reverence because it is the object of the love of God.

If we are false to the conviction we really hold, what can become of us? Nothing good. And in finding our way through the tormenting difficulties and temptations of the years that lie ahead it is necessary that we should clear our minds, know what our convictions are and hold to them. There are people who do not believe in this kind of democracy. No appeasement will make them the proper allies of those who do believe in democracy; they must be fought as they have been fought before. In order to defend spiritual freedom we must know what the institutions under which people live are really doing to them; the institutions which tend to the defeat of the spirit must be modified or abolished.

“The poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the richest he.”

Appendix 1

POVERTY

THE discovery that about 50 per cent of our children are probably living in homes so poor that the bare minimum of what is necessary for health cannot be bought for them was made by Seebohm Rowntree and accepted by Sir William Beveridge as one of the chief reasons for children's allowances. Mr. Rowntree's researches were made in York and published in his book *Poverty and Progress*. York, which has varied types of employment, is thought to be a typical city, though others are certainly less prosperous.

In the course of these investigations, 16,362 families, nearly every working-class family, were visited, and answered questions. Employers also gave information. The conception of the poverty-line was based on a report of a committee appointed by the British Medical Council in 1933 "to determine the minimum weekly expenditure on food-stuffs which must be incurred by families of varying size if health and working capacity are to be maintained." To the expenditure on food was added an estimate of other unavoidable expenditure according to the prices of 1936, the year in which Mr. Rowntree's research was made. The table of necessary weekly expenditure worked out as follows (for a family consisting of a man and wife and three children):—

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Food	20/-
Clothing	8/-
Fuel and light	4/4
Household sundries	1/8
Personal sundries	9/-

The sum for personal sundries might be itemised as follows to give an idea of the needs covered:—

Unemployment and health insurance	1/7
Sick- and burial-clubs subscription ..	1/-
Trade union subscription	6d.
Journey to work	1/-
Stamps and writing-paper for the family	6d.
Newspapers	7d.
Wireless	6d.

All else, including beer, tobacco, presents, holidays, books, travel 3/4

Mr. Rowntree says: "I have been increasingly struck by the fact that to keep a family of five in health on 53/- (43/6 for expenditure, 9/6 estimated for rent) even when the income is guaranteed for a year needs constant watchfulness and a high degree of skill on the part of the housewife." He describes it as "a standard of bare subsistence rather than living." Anything lower than this is reckoned as poverty; this standard is used to measure the resources of families of different sizes. On this scale it was found that the population of York fell into the following groups: In families with weekly incomes

- (a) under 33/6 there were 7,887 persons or 8. per cent of whole population;
- (b) from 33/6 to 43/5 there were 9,348 persons or 9.6 per cent of the whole population;

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- (c) from 43/6 to 53/5 there were 10,433 persons or 10·8 per cent of whole population;
- (d) from 53/6 to 63/5 there were 7,684 persons or 8 per cent of whole population;
- (e) 63/6 and over there were 19,904 persons or 20 per cent of whole population.

There were 4,300 domestic servants (4·4 per cent of whole population.)

There were 3,530 working-class people in institutions (3·6 per cent of whole population.)

Remainder were 33,944 persons or 35 per cent of whole population.

Thus 17·7 per cent were below the poverty-line; one-third of them because the wages of the chief breadwinner were so low. The other chief causes of poverty were unemployment and old age. Of those who were below the line though employed one-third were working in factories. Further enquiry showed that

- 52 per cent of the children under one year were in poverty;
- 49·7 per cent of the children over one and under five were in poverty;
- 39·1 per cent of the children over five and under fifteen were in poverty.

Appendix 2

UNEMPLOYMENT

I

THE measures taken by this country to deal with unemployment are outlined briefly by Sir Ronald Davison in his book *British Unemployment Policy*, and a bare summary of facts and figures from this book are given here. They supply the factual background to the discussion of unemployment as an experience in the text of this book.

1. Shortly before the War of 1914-18 a national system of employment exchanges and a limited experiment in compulsory unemployment insurance was started. It was hoped that the exchanges would help to control unemployment by making employers' needs known and facilitating the movement of labour. The insurance was intended to help people over intermittent unemployment of short duration. In 1916, the Ministry of Labour was created to administer both these functions and, in especial, to enable the country to make the best use of the available labour during war.

2. In 1920 and the following years there was very grave unemployment, of the order of one or two million unemployed. "Benefit as of right, without enquiry into means, had to be extended year after year, not quite to all-comers but to practically anyone who could prove he had worked in an insured trade at some time." The rates were low as compared with those of 1937 but they

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were drawn as of right without enquiry into means.

3. During these years other means of lessening unemployment were tried; industrial training was begun in 1926, and from 1928 there was a certain amount of aided transfer. For ten years an attempt was made to reduce unemployment by means of public works. Probably £700,000,000 were spent on this altogether, but the expenditure was ineffective. In the peak year, 1930-1931, 59,000 men were given work in this way and over £30,000,000 was spent by the Unemployment Grants Committee. The policy was then abandoned. In 1929 Mr. Churchill, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had said: "It is the orthodox Treasury dogma, steadfastly held, that whatever might be the political and social advantages, very little additional employment and no permanent additional employment can in fact and as a general rule be created by State borrowing and State expenditure." Sir William Beveridge (from whose Summary of his own *Full Employment in a Free Society* this quotation is taken) goes on: "This dogma with its irrational distinction between public and private spending was attacked at the time by a formidable variety of economic authorities, including J. M. Keynes, Mr. H. D. (now Professor Sir Hubert) Henderson, Professor Pigou and Professor Clay." In 1944 the Treasury, in one of the most significant White Papers ever published, announced their abandonment of this dogma.

In America State employment was managed with more success. In 1936 Roosevelt's administration succeeded in giving employment to over three million unemployed.

4. In 1931, the year of crisis, great alarm was felt

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lest there should be complete collapse. This never came but things were very bad. The expenditure on unemployment during the year was £125,000,000. The income received from the contributions from employers and employed was £30,000,000. Every effort was made to reduce this expenditure. (1) Benefit rates were cut, for men from 17/- to 15/3 and for women from 15/- to 13/6, and for juveniles to even smaller sums; a girl under 16 got 4/6. (2) Every claimant had to prove 30 contributions during the preceding two years. This restriction excluded half the register, over a million were cut off. These million people were to be provided for by means of Transitional Payments, and these payments depended upon an enquiry into means, including household means, which were estimated after a home visit by an officer of the exchange. It is said that this means test deterred 200,000 or 300,000 people per annum from claiming payment. They preferred extreme poverty to the indignity of the visit and the enquiry. This saved the country £12,000,000 or £15,000,000 a year.

5. The public were not unmoved. Occupational centres were set up to help the unemployed to pass their time and, if they wished, to learn new skills such as boot repairing. The National Council of Social Service was formed to direct these efforts, and the Government gave grants to the Council, which between 1932 and 1937 amounted to £307,798. The Society of Friends developed a scheme for acquiring land so that the unemployed might raise their own vegetables, and some of them succeeded in making a livelihood from these allotments. It is estimated that between 1932 and 1935

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half a million pounds was raised by voluntary subscriptions.

At this time there was a slump in Government-aided transfer. Unemployment was so general that transfer might not be successful. But at the same time there was considerable voluntary migration. This meant that the worst-hit areas tended to lose their most energetic people. The coal-mining industry lost 500,000 people and the distributive trades gained about 600,000.

In the summer of 1933 five tented camps, offering courses intended mainly as rehabilitation and lasting twelve weeks, were held by the Ministry of Labour as an extension of the instruction centres. They were attended by 38,000 men; half of the trainees were placed, but about a fifth left voluntarily or were dismissed before the course was over.

Unemployment reached its peak in January, 1933, with nearly three million. This did not cover the whole number of unemployed because there were unknown numbers who did not present themselves owing to their dislike of the Means Test.

6. In 1932, the Government launched their Conversion Loan. There was a boom in gilt-edged securities, and a lowering of the rate of interest from 5 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. "This financial operation more than anything laid the foundation for British recovery, but results in better employment did not materialise for seven or eight months" (op. cit., p. 26). Recovery began in the building trade, and then became more general.

7. There was no recovery, however, in the areas that suffered most. A survey of the four worst districts (Durham and Northumberland, S. Wales, W.

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Cumberland, S.W. Scotland) was undertaken under the Special Areas Act, 1934, and this was followed by the appointment of two Commissioners, one for England and Wales and one for Scotland. Their functions were "the initiation, organisation, prosecution and assistance of measures designed to facilitate the economic development and social improvement of the areas." They could not, however, promote or aid any undertakings carried on for gain. Their schemes included the development of social amenities, health services and the supply of milk to mothers and babies, housing associations, and amenities designed to attract tourists. In Monmouthshire, the Eastern Valley Production Society, founded by Peter Scott in 1935 and assisted by a grant of £70,000, started farms and workshops for out-of-work miners, mostly over the age of 45. The food and milk produced were distributed to the men in accordance with the hours of labour they had put in.

8. A further experiment was begun in 1937 when Government grants and £2,000,000 from Lord Nuffield assisted new trading estates, the Team Valley Estate in Northumberland, the Treforest Estate in S. Wales, and the Hillington Estate near Glasgow. These were designed to diversify the industry of these areas which had suffered from their dependence upon single trades, by bringing in light industries. Factories were built ready for renting on easy terms and roads and other services developed. These estates soon profited from the rearmament policy of the Government. They have provided experience which should be of value in the future. One comment of a Commissioner in 1936

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may be quoted: "There is too large a number of young men in the special areas who are content to live in idleness as State pensioners and are unwilling to make any effort to find work. . . . They have never had the experience of the inspiration of work or the pride of earning a living for themselves and their families; they are in fact demoralised by the seeming inevitableness of unemployment. . . . Even if their situation derives from circumstances beyond their control . . . everything possible should be done in their own interests to save them while still young from growing up into a discontented unemployable class . . . a prey to every subversive influence. . . . These men can only be saved from themselves by a measure of compulsion." The compulsion, to military service, followed in a few years. This passage serves as a commentary on the conviction expressed by working men themselves that unemployment is degrading.

9. In summary of this account, expenditure in relief of unemployment was made in the following ways:—

- (1) Insurance benefit, transitional payments, and unemployment allowances.
- (2) Costs of administration.
- (3) Training.
- (4) Grants in aid of the National Council of Social Service.
- (5) Loans and grants to facilitate removal and resettlement.
- (6) Courses of instruction and occupation (for unemployed juveniles).
- (7) Grants to the Special Areas.

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The total costs for these expenditures from 1930 to halfway through 1937 were as follows:—

<i>Year</i>	<i>Millions spent</i>	<i>Average live register of unemployed</i>
1930/1	99·6	2,201,595
1931/2	118·5	2,646,769
1932/3	112·6	2,789,703
1933/4	96·6	2,385,005
1934/5	94·1	2,147,244
1935/6	93·9	1,978,219
1936/7	83·7	1,659,308
1937/8	39·6	1,398,175

II

Unemployment was cured in the end by the war. The Treasury have lately announced in a White Paper a new policy for the future; they have abandoned the dogma which they steadfastly held through all the years of distress, and now believe that State action, especially if launched at the right moment before a slump has become marked, can make a material contribution towards maintaining employment at a high and steady level.

Sir William Beveridge believes that we could and should go much further, and by budgeting so as to equate purchasing power with productive capacity transform the labour market from a buyers' to a sellers' market. "The reason is," he says (p. 19 of his book, *Full Employment in a Free Society*), "that difficulty in selling labour has consequences of a different order of harmfulness from those associated with difficulty in buying labour. A person who

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has difficulty in buying labour that he wants suffers inconvenience or reduction of profits. A person who cannot sell his labour is in effect told he is of no use."

Some comment may be made upon this story.

1. The difficulty of unemployment relief is brought out when we consider the following figures, which are given by Sir Ronald Davison, on p. 52 of his book. In 1937, there was a surplus of £62,000,000 in the Unemployment Fund reserve account. In that year benefits were being paid as follows: for a man, 17/-; for his wife, 9/-; for each dependent child, 3/-. For a man and wife and three children this gives a total of 35/- a week. Seebohm Rowntree has given reason to think that for a family of this size anything less than 43/6, plus rent, means severe poverty. But at the rates we have quoted there was already the difficulty that some families were better off when the father was unemployed.

2. For this reason alone, but far more for other reasons, it is a better policy, humanly speaking, to provide work than benefit. But the attempt to do this through the State was abandoned early in the depression, on the ground of expense.

3. The figures of sums spent on the relief of the unemployed in various ways during these eight years amount to £738·6 million, much less per annum than a week of modern war. They did not suffice to save millions of people from acute misery. This misery could have been greatly alleviated if the desire to do so had anything like the appeal that the war has had. To working people it does not seem unreasonable to take unemployment as seriously as that. The reason why steps were not

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taken, in accordance with the most progressive economic opinion, that would have alleviated it, were that the Treasury were not accustomed to outlay on such a scale for such a purpose, and indeed our previous experience had not led anybody to contemplate such a situation; and that the community had too little knowledge and too little imagination to understand what was happening to those who bore the brunt of unemployment. In fact, the nation and the experts who served it at the Treasury were slow to adapt to a new and unprecedented state of affairs*. What that slowness in thinking cost in human suffering cannot be calculated.

* Cf. Pigou, *Income* p.6.

Appendix 3

DANISH PEOPLE'S HIGH SCHOOLS

SIR RICHARD LIVINGSTONE in his book *The Future of Education* says that we, with a population of forty-four and a half million, have nine residential people's colleges; the Danes, with three and a half million, have 57 People's High Schools. "The People's High School," he says (p. 44), "is the only successful experiment in educating the masses of a nation. It has reached the very classes for which we have done little or nothing. It has transformed the country economically, given it a spiritual unity, and produced perhaps the only educated democracy in the world. . . . We find it difficult to think of Denmark as a poverty-stricken country; but such it was in the early nineteenth century, and its transformation into one of the most progressive and prosperous democracies of Europe was largely the work of the education given in these schools." The schools were started in 1844 to counteract German propaganda in Schleswig-Holstein. "Today there are 57. They are nearly all residential with a summer term of three months chiefly for women and a winter term of five months chiefly for men. They are private ventures owned either by the principal or by a number of persons who form a company. The Government gives grants in aid. The pupils are mostly farmers or smallholders and in a less degree labourers. All students are over 18 . . . Only 25 per cent have had anything more than

elementary education ; the rest have spent the years from 14 to 18 in farming or other work. There is no compulsion to attend and no reward in the form of a degree or diploma. The cost of living and education is about £4 a month for women, a little more for men ; it is paid by the students but the Government offers scholarships which pay half the fees of those who could not afford to attend without such help. . . . About 30 per cent of the agricultural community attend a High School.

"There is nothing vocational in the High School curriculum. Its main subjects are history and literature. To these are added composition in Danish, mathematics, elementary science, gymnastics, and for women sewing."

On page 59, Sir Richard quotes from Begtrup, Lund and Manniche's *The Folk High Schools of Denmark and the Development of a Farming Community*, p. 32. "The Danish peasantry at the beginning of the nineteenth century was an under-class. In sullen resignation it spent its life in dependence on estate owners or Government officials. . . . In the course of a century this class has been changed into a well-to-do middle class, which politically and socially now takes the lead among the Danish people." "Denmark has agricultural and dairy schools and they are widely attended. But the people's High Schools came first and they supplied the driving power. . . . They roused intelligence and inspired idealism. . . . Further they made possible the co-operative system on which Danish agricultural prosperity so largely depends. In Britain the farming co-operative movement has been a failure: mistrust of one's neighbour and individual

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selfishness have been too much for it. The People's High Schools are the antidote to these vices."

The strongly seasonal character of Denmark's chief industry, which is farming, has made it easier for men and women to be spared from their work for a few months, and come back to a job which has been kept for them, than it would be for us. The Danish experiment has been described not because it could be adopted by us without modification, but because it shows the kind of response that can be got when education in the humane subjects is offered to working people, and the change of spirit which ensues upon the experience of residential education along these lines. It is becoming clear to us that it will be hard for us to climb back to prosperity unless we achieve a similar change in spirit. An education such as the Danish worker can get would equip our people to make far better use of their leisure and so to find the means of social contacts and responsibilities which would refit them for political democracy.

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