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GROUNDS FOR OPTIMISM

LYMAN BRYSON'S book, *The Next America*, which we have just discovered (published two years ago by Harper's), is a peculiarly American judgment of future possibilities for the United States. It contains legitimate grounds for optimism for the reason that it deals with what the author believes may be within the capacity of the people of the United States to accomplish in remaking American society. Mr. Bryson is professor of education at Teachers College, Columbia University. He is also consultant to the Columbia Broadcasting System and Director of the well-known program, "Invitation to Learning." In his own experience, therefore, have been combined the values of academic scholarship and the perspectives derived from long association with one of the great "popular arts" of American culture.

Mr. Bryson's position may be briefly stated. The problem of America, as he sees it, is that the rise of industrialism and technology has seriously interfered with the practice of democracy. Because of the complexity of modern industrial production, the manufacture of goods for mass markets has gravitated to the control of experts. With experts at the helm, industrial organization has become increasingly collectivist in character. "Collectivist," in Mr. Bryson's vocabulary, means organization in which the opportunity for individual choice has been radically reduced. Not only bigness in organizations, but the machines themselves, create this imperative. Significant decision, therefore, in industry, becomes restricted to fewer and fewer persons. The great majority of workers do what they are told; they have nothing to say. They are tenders of machines. In a wider sense, the economic system itself imposes this condition on American society as a whole. Men become tenders of the system.

Bryson points out that for some years, now, Americans have been trying to conceal this fact from themselves. We have tried to substitute "symbolic" democracy for actual democracy. We argue, for example, that the power of the labor unions helps to balance the power of industrial corporations. What this argument ignores, however, is that the balance of power is between *organizations*, not individuals. Union policies are *collectivist* policies, in the sense that they are created by the conditions of modern industry. The individual union member has only a nominal democratic role.

We had better stop, here, and give Bryson's definition of democracy. Democracy exists, he maintains, only when individuals have opportunity to make decisions and to act upon and learn from their decisions. The growth of human beings, he points out, is an individual undertaking. It cannot be accomplished for them by the corporate acts of organizations. Democracy is that form of social organization which is devoted to protecting and fostering the right and need of the individual to choose. Democratic legislation must always have this end in view; when it does not, it ceases to be democratic.

Pretended democratic legislation is legislation which claims to be democratic because it is intended to serve the good of the people. It may serve some secondary good, such as economic betterment, or greater efficiency in the carrying out of public business. But if it takes away from the people decisions from which they may learn as individuals, it is nevertheless anti-democratic legislation. Bryson's point is that while we may decide that we must have such legislation, we should not deceive ourselves by calling it "democratic."

The problems so brought into existence are not ideological problems. They are simple, non-political consequences of modern industrialism and the pattern it has imposed upon the life of human beings wherever large-scale economic production prevails. They exist in Russia under Communism and they exist in the United States. Under Communism, however, the loss of democracy is more absolute, since the ability of the individual to choose has been curtailed, if not destroyed, by political means as well as by the fundamental economic causes.

The tremendous value of Mr. Bryson's book lies in the non-political character of its analysis of modern industrial society. A collective, he points out, is not collective because formed by socialists or communists. A collective exists because it is a way of dealing with problems requiring elaborate organization. As the author puts it:

> By the term "collective" we mean a large group of persons who seek a common purpose by acting together. The purpose, or complex of purposes, exists in individuals; a group has no mind. The most significant of the traits of such mass groups are those which determine the relation of the individual thought to collective action. Membership in a collective may be voluntary, although the penalties of withdrawal are sometimes severe. Membership may give the right to vote and the majority of the votes may determine policy but, typically, the groups are so large that no man can feel individual responsibility for the final result. Besides, policy needs to be interpreted in action and the members are too numerous to have any share in interpretation.
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> The officers of a collective, charged with carrying out the policies voted by the majority and themselves the elected servants of that majority, have a field of autonomous or irresponsible action which is generally proportionate to the size of the group. The larger the group the greater the freedom of the officers to do whatever will consolidate their power. In the same range they can modify the purpose of the majority and frustrate minority opinion. The individual member faces the whole mass of other members. The officers, whether responsible or secretly controlled, whether honest or machinating, whether wise or headstrong, are able to use greater technical knowledge and the skills of manipulation to interpret the policies within a wide range of complacency. Against them the individual is worse than powerless; for him even to question the authority of the officers may bring from them an accusation of disloyalty to the group.
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> To say this much is not to argue that the final effect of these processes is necessarily or always evil, or that the degree of irresponsibility exercised by the officers of a collective always results in a defeat of the will of the majority, or a betrayal of the group cause, or even the suppression of corrective minority thinking. These may happen, of course, but that is not the point of the danger now under scrutiny. Even when these processes of leading and being led are successful in expressing fully the general wishes of the majority of members, and successful in advancing the economic welfare of the members taken as a group, and singly, also, they are still not democratic.
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> Democracy is not a success. Democracy is a way of regulating all experience so as to involve and expand and educate human character, to preserve man's ability to think for himself and to act with his friends, to keep the restrictions that are created by the needs of common action to the minimum in order to keep thought individual and free; above all, to give men a chance to learn the value of their own free thinking by testing it out in the action that will produce direct results and pass upon hypothesis the judgment of experience. Collective ways may be efficient; they are not democratic.

This may be classified as chiefly an educator's version of democracy. We contend with Mr. Bryson, however, that there is no other version worth considering. What he says is in the spirit of the original documents of the American Republic. Any other theory of government or social order tends to result in a denial of the human quality of human beings.

A large part of *The Next America* is devoted to bringing home this contention. The book is perhaps repetitive, but the repetition is welcome. Consider the following, in which Mr. Bryson endeavors to correct the popular impression that the American government, since it is democratic in form, is "really ourselves." He writes:

> How could government be really ourselves? Anyone who has ever held a public office and can remember his ways of thinking while in that situation knows that he was more than a member of the public.

> If an official thinks for us, we have not thought for ourselves. Even when a government official is most truly our servant he is not a mere extension of ourselves; he is the custodian of our opportunities. The difficulty in our thinking about these things appears to lie in the mistake that many philosophers make and thus give a bad example to citizens. It is the mistake of thinking that a political process is justified by its public result, that is, by its result in the lives of the members of the state, and the most important thing in the lives of the citizens at anytime, even at a time of public danger, is the development of their own best selves.
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> We are compelled to make group decisions, by means of delegates, to escape anarchy in political life, so this is taken as a reason for doing something quite different. It is taken as a reason for us to put into the hands of administrative officials, who work under vague laws that are not easily corrected by the courts, many of the decisions which men could make for themselves. If by being thus relieved of responsibility men are freed to give their judgment to other problems and get their democratic experience and seek their ideals in other struggles, where are those other ideals? The partisan advocates of the welfare state seem too busy to seek them out but they must be found or we have made too casually a bad bargain.

Although not very many pages of *The Next America* deal directly with them, the book is primarily concerned with "those other ideals" which are independent of economic processes. What Mr. Bryson is really saying, in effect, is that we are in trouble because we have fallen into the habit of supposing that our economic ends are the most important ends in life. Let us make amends. Let us find true ideals and seek their fulfillment by democratic means. What follows is a rather free rendition of Bryson's thesis:

While, in the past, economic pursuits, the winning of our daily bread and butter, may have supplied a region of democratic experience—providing opportunity for decisions by the individual, for seeing the direct results of our choices and learning from them—that time is largely past. Some observers who recognize the value in this kind of experience hope to regain it by a return to the ideal community life which is supposed to have prevailed in the village economy of the Middle Ages. But this is only a species of sentimentalism, however authentic its inspiration. We cannot go back to the age of craftsmanship in industry—certainly not in any wholesale fashion. The intelligent course would be to accept the collectivization of our economic existence very much, perhaps, as we accept the functions, pursued independently of our decision, of the physical body—and turn our attention to more important affairs. We can afford to delegate our economic decisions if we are able to learn that they are of secondary importance. We can afford to lose our democracy in this area, if we regain or recreate it in other and more important relationships. The situation is this:

> Power organizations and power machines can make comfort and adorn our lives with gadgets. They can give us power over material conditions in far more significant ways also, in chances for health and education and safety. But that part of our lives which is taken over by the machines and the groups cannot be the field of democratic experience; neither assembly lines nor great organizations allow free informed choice and the chance to learn by consequences. It is possible, for scientific purposes, to see the person as a pattern of habits, or predictable behavior, and productive generalizations can be made, I believe, with that concept as the unit. But what gives to this abstract entity a spiritual meaning is significant choice and intelligent action. Our moral stature, in our own conscience and in the judgment of our fellows, depends on what we try to do and how well we do it, and on the value of our purposes and the effectiveness of our skills. If we have lost, in some part of our lives, our individual freedom of choice and our chance to learn by insights and errors, we have lost the training ground of the soul in that area at least, and if we give up our skills to the appalling practical superiority of the machine we have lost the training ground of prudence. The process of the kind of democracy that works out in the development of men must find a new content and the chief concern of our lives shifts then to this new dimension.

Bryson's "new dimension" is not especially explicit. It cannot be, as a matter of fact, for if it were, it would sound like another formula for Utopia, which the author is determined to avoid. So far as we can tell, when he speaks of a fresh

region of character-forming experience, he has in mind the arts, the field of social and personal relationships, and what some modern psychologists are beginning to term the "search for the self." Bryson proposes, in short, a concentration on those activities and perceptive powers which are unique to human beings. He also proposes a renewal of community democracy, as more within the reach and control of individuals. These are means by which to develop new opportunities for self-education and growth. It is surely true that a cycle of intensive reflection on the higher qualities of human beings—the creative qualities implied by practice of the arts, the moral and psychological qualities which have play in human relationships—would tend to give human energies a more constructive focus. It is even possible that the periodic dislocations and sometimes disasters which overtake our economic life would tend to disappear from a society in which such interests came to dominate. For one thing, a human community in which economic achievement ceases to be the mark of "success" should soon be relieved of the ruthlessness of economic competition. Quite possibly, all men could be "comfortable" if nearly all men did not worry so much about their economic status. Perhaps the neuroticism which afflicts our struggle for economic achievement is precisely what is wrong with our economic system, as such.

There is an old argument which says that men cannot give attention to "higher things" until their economic needs are properly satisfied. Some truth is in this argument. But because a man can think better in an unstarved body, it does not follow that food is ultimately more important than thought. A foundation may be necessary to a building, but it is meaningless without the building. Bryson addresses himself to this point with considerable subtlety:

> When men are not free, they do not have so good a chance to indulge their love of material goods, which is in fact their love of mastering the physical universe to make it yield the things, the services, the pleasures, and the vanities that are the material embodiments of cultural evaluation. They may accept, as Montesquieu said, "honor" instead of comfort, and practice virtue because the practice of aggressive strength is too dangerous. But it is also true that men who are not free may never get their unslaked thirst for material power and comfort out of their minds. Like those denied any natural satisfaction, they are in danger of obsession which, like satiety, will lead to false evaluations. We have had and have recorded a vast amount of human experience with material ambition, and a little on freedom, but I doubt that we know enough to say whether the serenity toward wealth that all philosophers have praised is more easily found on this side or the other side of some material success.
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> This is not cynicism; mere wealth is a narrow and soon exhausted ambition for able men, and seeking it can easily call out evil. Other goods are more worth having, and we intend, in the next phase of our development, to put it down on a lower level of our motives and desires. Some Europeans might say, not without truth, that we are just becoming civilized. We can answer that this may be happily so since nations reach civilization, as children grow up, whether they deserve it or not. And we may be better off in more important goods when we have reduced our economic interests to routine.

What Bryson is saying here, among other things, is that the notorious "American materialism" may not be very much more "American" than the materialism of other peoples. It is possible, he suggests, that Americans have been able to achieve more in a material way, so that if they now adopt a higher way of life, there will be no question that their new, spiritual interests may be a case of "sour grapes." It will be a genuine concern for self-development. Americans are often accused of infecting older, more "spiritual" civilizations with American materialism. But if these cultures are indeed spiritual, how can they be seduced into love of fleshpots and longings for material success and pleasure? The question is not entirely unfair.

The Next America has marked virtues in its method of attack on all such problems. There are no high and wide generalizations; or rather, the generalizations offered are immediately laced with practical illustrations and practical qualifications

based upon experience. Mr. Bryson turns to notable advantage the famous "pragmatism" of the American outlook, the questing, non-traditional spirit. What are commonly thought to be defects in the American character, become, in his pages, alert guardians against easy belief or dogma. The habit of thinking engendered by study of this book is immensely constructive, it seems to us. No clichés go unexamined; they are neither accepted nor discharged because they are clichés. Take for example the familiar charge of American "vulgarity," concerning which the author has this to say:

> In these days, and more in America than anywhere else we have developed a new pattern. The uniformity ascribed to a machine age democracy is a myth, or a misstatement of cultural patterns, but the vulgarity we are accused of is a fact. The rich vulgarity of the taste of the American people is the natural result of freedom for commonplace invention, for the small independence of choice in so many aspects of life that an American enjoys. Instead of presenting to the eye of perspective a firm mosaic of rigid spot patterns, it presents a vast single pattern of dizzy variations. . . . The craftsman of folk art cannot show anything but dignity and good taste under the restraint of custom. The modern industrialized democrat shows all kinds of trivial inventions of his own and chooses freely in a wild profusion of the trivial, mass-produced inventions of others. . . . The ease with which the shoddiest commercial gadgets invade a market of peasant buyers shows, first, how little attached they are by anything but habit to the fine old things and, second, how much pleasure they get out of choosing.

Here, as everywhere else in this book, the value recognized as primary is the value of human decision. It begins to seem possible that, out of such discussions and perspectives may develop for America a concept or theory of progress that is not doomed to disillusionment, for Mr. Bryson is inalienably attached to *human* values, as distinguished from institutional measures of success, and refuses to discuss "progress" in any other terms. As he says:

> The important point is that the failure of social change ever to reach the final utopian or perfect goal is not simply the result of mistaken choices made by social reformers or their converts. The ultimate difficulties could not be finally remedied even by good choices. There is no point at which progress can ever make a great leap and stop. A humane look at the record makes us suspect that progress may, indeed, enlarge the sensitiveness of men and thereby enlarge their range of suffering about as much as it lessens the brutality of their existence. This is not a question primarily religious or philosophic and out of our scope. We believe in progress but not in any utopia because we believe that human virtue and greatness, the actual attainment of goodness, beauty and truth, have always been in the higher deviations, not in the central normality, of any system.

In this passage, Mr. Bryson affirms a qualitative view of the good in human life, and he does so, not as a lonely hermit preaching from a wilderness retreat, but as a man of affairs in the United States. He is a man who stands high in his profession, and who is honored by a large-scale commercial undertaking, yet no conventional dogma of "prosperity" in tomorrow's "better world" holds him as hostage.

There have been growing currents expressive of this sort of thinking for the past several years, many of them reported in MANAS. Mr. Bryson has written a book which gives promise of turning those currents into a mainstream of practical conviction. We can think of no more important contribution to the future, to the "next" America, than work of this sort.

REVIEW
"THE BIGAMIST"

IF this motion picture is representative of actress-director Ida Lupino's efforts to awaken sympathy for some of those who run afoul of "moral" statutes, Miss Lupino wins high praise at least in this quarter. We have been vaguely aware that several other movies have been prompted by Miss Lupino's concern with the insensitivity of legislation intended to regulate conduct between the sexes, but, until seeing "The Bigamist," had no idea that so worthwhile a film might result.

Ably supported by Edmond O'Brien and Joan Fontaine, Miss Lupino reveals that there are times when, in our society, the most decent and kindly among us can also run into the most trouble. In other words, a truly ethical person can be adjudged immoral, if the existing laws do not allow him to work out a fair solution of complicated problems without interference. One of Plato's chief arguments, we recall, involved this point. In debate with Thrasymachus, Socrates maintained that it is better to be a just and fair man, even if held in ill repute by one's contemporaries, than to be unjust and unkindly, while gaining high public esteem. Any movie-goer who sees "The Bigamist," and who thinks about what he sees, is apt to conclude that Plato was fundamentally right—and yet wonder if he or she would have the courage to live according to such a decision.

In this story, the "decent man" (even the trial judge admitted him to be this) comes to love genuinely two women—under unusually extenuating circumstances. Partner to a childless marriage which has taken its psychological toll from his wife, he meets, in another city where business often takes him, a lonely, lovable, and courageous girl. At first, neither seeks more than companionship, and neither desires to probe the other's past or present circumstances. When growth in the fullness of love results in the conception of a child, the man cannot bear to tell the girl that he is married; instead, he plans to secure a divorce from his first wife—whom he also loves, but to whom he now, as he sees it, bears a lesser responsibility—and then discovers that the shock of asking this freedom immediately would be injurious to her. So, for a time, he is married to two women, waiting, in considerable torment, to find the best solution to the problem. In the meantime, he is exposed by an investigation originally intended to qualify him as a fit person to adopt a child; the police take over, and "the bigamist" faces punishment.

The court scene is extraordinarily brief, but effective. Counsel for the defense admits that his client "should be punished" (did the Breen office require this touch?), but reveals the tragic irony of the now notorious case. If, he reminds the court, "Harry Green" had been a mere philanderer, and had taken the girl as a mistress, he would have attracted little or no attention, and escaped a clash with the law. But *because* he wished to give his name to his child, and a needed sense of self-respect to the girl, he became the target of endless tabloid publicity and a candidate for prison. The judge, in summation, admits that a man thus tormented should not be punished by statute but the statutes nevertheless exist and presumably must be followed.

Miss Lupino's argument is not for bigamy or against monogamy. She is concerned with one compelling truth—that no legislation should exist which automatically, in its enforcement, compounds the psychological suffering of human beings. Laws should protect, not be instruments to inflict pain. With this sentiment, which is simply the sentiment of human brotherhood, no sensible person can disagree.

We come now to a vital question: Is it possible for an ethical man to regard with equanimity the society in which he presently lives? Can he respect "moral codes," so long as these codes exude cant and hypocrisy as well as the abhorrent vengefulness against nominal deviators made so apparent by this film? Do many of the "younger generation" carry chips on their shoulders because they instinctively react against a cultural outlook which approves conformity enforced by *threat?* We should like to know Miss Lupino's thoughts on these matters, being convinced they would be worth hearing.

A few months ago, the authorities of two states moved to seize the members of an obscure Mormon community still doctrinally dedicated to the practice

of polygamy. Public officials commented upon the righteousness of punishing these simple farmers, who thus "affronted all canons of recognized decency." Newspapers had a field day—and the children of numerous polygamous families were wrenched from their parents. One daily paper finally got around to printing the views of the polygamous community's leading men and women, and those who read these statements without undue prejudice discovered that the polygamists were honorable, ethical persons, wrong, perhaps, in their conception of the ideal relationship between man and woman, but sincere in their efforts to live to benefit their fellows. Punishment in this case seemed so grotesque that it was finally mitigated—but children were still appropriated by the government, their lives forever marred by scandal-exploiting publicity, their previously happy contacts with family and community destroyed. A humane psychologist would have had but one question to ask these Mormon children and their parents: do love, understanding, and cooperation exist in your family, and in your village? If so, the polygamists were doing far better as human beings than hundreds of thousands of their supposedly monogamous contemporaries who happened to be born in more orthodox locales.

Dr. Margaret Mead, a leading anthropologist, has a good deal to say upon this and related matters in her well-known volume, *Male and Female*. With a wealth of illustration, she shows that the social standards of all cultures are deficient in some degree. The attainment of any ideal of human relationships must come, she implies, not through the discovery of "perfect social standards," but through increasing awareness of the fact that man must continually improve the norms of private and social morality—or live a life robbed of vitality and creativity.

Dr. Mead implies that an ethical man must base his idealism upon that kind of self-reliance which neither seeks social praise nor feels unduly social blame. If "freedom" is to be preserved at all in a regimented age, it must be preserved by men and women who first become confident of their capacity to meet and learn from any personal trials which come their way. The law should not interfere with this process. Dr. Mead writes:

> In cultures like ours, there may be a second or a third adolescence, and the most complex, the most sensitive, may die still questing, still capable of change, starting like Franz Boas at seventy-seven to re-read the folk-lore of the world in the light of new theoretical developments. No one who values civilization and realizes how men have woven the fabric of their lives from their own imaginations as they played over the memory of the past, the experience of the present, and the hope of the future, can count this postponed maturity, this possibility of recurrent adolescent crises and change of life-plan, as anything but gain.
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> But a world in which people may reorient their whole lives at forty or fifty is a world in which marriage for life becomes much more difficult. Each spouse is given the right to and the means for growth. Either may discover a hidden talent and begin to develop it, or repudiate a paralyzing neurotic trend and begin anew. Ever since women have been educated, marriages have been endangered by the possible development or failure to develop of both husbands and wives. To all the other exorbitant requirements for a permanent mate, must be added "capacity to grow."

Society must grow, too, in its comprehension of the subtleties which are involved in nearly all personal problems—subtleties ignored by most law-making bodies. The broader the comprehension of society, as reflected in its laws, the more a respect for the law becomes possible for the average person.

There are many ways of making some of these fundamental issues clear. Miss Lupino has chosen one, and, by this time at least, has shown an extraordinary mastery of her medium. Her success in the difficult task attempted in "The Bigamist" proves her, we think, an educator of some distinction.

COMMENTARY
CONCERNING DECEPTION

SINCE a friend who read the manuscript for this week's Review expressed puzzlement over what seemed to him a neglect of the bigamist's "deception" of others, the point may be worth attention. We do not, however, think that in omitting comment, our reviewer felt that "deception" is unimportant. It is not necessary to approve the deception—in this case somewhat constrained by circumstances—in order to point out the cruel irrelevance of what society did to Harry Green, a man who, having married two women, then tried to be as faithful as he could to both. We don't know exactly what society ought to do in such cases, but of one thing we are sure the attempt of the offender to act as morally as he knew how, once the mistake had been made, ought not to lead society to take special vengeance upon him.

One recalls another treatment of this sort of problem—Graham Green's novel, *The Heart of the Matter*. In this case the leading figure persists in mortal sin, deliberately continuing an adulterous relationship because he feels he would do great injury to another person by breaking it off. As a Catholic, he resigns himself to eternal damnation for his offense.

Such stories have to do with the moral struggle. They do not "condone" either deception or adultery. Instead, they examine subtleties of human relationships which both law and theology ignore. It seems unlikely that we shall improve either our morals or our law unless we first improve our understanding of the human heart.

The "bigamist," incidentally became involved in a type of deception which is not especially condemned in our society. The reason for this "tolerance," we think, lies in the excessive preoccupation of our time with "happiness" as the end of life. Under this influence, a man who finds his life slipping away from him, yet has no happiness, or thinks he has none, may be driven to desperate measures. This is bad enough, but even worse, as our reviewer notes, is the fact that our society will not punish him for his deception so long as he is a bit clever and irresponsible in carrying it out. But the full weight of legal and social condemnation may fall upon the man who tries to make amends for his mistakes in terms of the integrity which he still possesses. Here lies the moral of *The Bigamist.*

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

NOTES IN PASSING

LAST week a European correspondent suggested that the way we treat our children and the way we punish our criminals have psychological relationships. The key word is "protection." Unfurling a banner bearing this lofty sentiment, we "protect" children from harsh realities—often from society as it really is—and, conversely, "protect" society (now good, not bad) from criminal elements. The man convicted by court of law, whether he be a murderer, a hard-time thief, or, in some countries, merely a sufficiently radical political deviant, may be regarded as a potential source of "infection" to the society for many years to come.

Since children, as well as criminals, know a good deal of what it means to be severely managed in the interests of *someone's* protection, it is small wonder that the young are often more sympathetic to the plight of the convicted than are the elders. Our European correspondent related that children whose parents were incarcerated were less influenced by the fact of incarceration than they were by the actual human qualities of a father. Similarly, Tom Runyon, author of *In for Life*, finally discovered that his own son was little impressed by the sense of "disgrace" others imagined he would feel, loved his father and was proud to own him because of what he *was*, in contradistinction to what he had done. Well, we have ourselves found that children sympathize with prisoners readily, and enjoy a good prison story. Here is one for parents to read to their children, both parties standing to learn something of how, in a small society where a sense of gentle humanity has replaced a Calvinist concern for punishment, the criminal and the non-criminal can develop cooperative understanding. (The story is taken from a Los Angeles publication, *Baja California*, by Ralph Hancock, Academy Publishers.)

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Mulegé is about two thirds of the way down into Baja California on the Gulf side—42 miles south of Santa Rosalia. It is a rich oasis, hidden from view by a heavy screen of date palms and banana, fig, orange and olive trees and literally heaps of flowers. It is a veritable tropical paradise. Citizens are very friendly.

Of all the anecdotes one could tell about Mulegé, perhaps a description of its principal institution, known locally as the University of Sanginés, but officially as the territorial prison of Baja California del Sur, would best illustrate the character of its citizens.

Sanginés is the prison where all the criminals of the Territorio del Sur are incarcerated and architecturally it is no different from other Mexican prisons. It is surrounded by thick outside walls pierced at regular intervals with loopholes and adorned with battlements on the corners. It is a prison, physically speaking, equal to any other territorial prison in Mexico, but take the path that leads up to it from the village and you will soon see that the prison Mulegé differs in many respects from anything you have ever seen before.

The first thing you notice is that the huge iron doors to the prison are standing ajar and there are no guards. Occasionally someone passes in or out and you may stroll in as though it were the local public library. The cells you will notice are empty, but if you search you may find someone who can answer your questions. An author contemporary of ours once reported a conversation he had as follows:

"Good morning, friend, are you employed here?"

"No, senor, I am a prisoner."

"Are you the only one? "

"No, senor, there are forty of us."

"And where are the others?"

"Working."

"But where?"

"Well, some are pruning date trees, others are fishing and the rest are constructing a hospital just back of this hill."

"And the guards?"

"They also have gone out to work."

"Guarding the prisoners?"

"No, senor, the prisoners do not need guarding. We have our work and the guards have theirs. Occasionally we work together."

"But who watches the prisoners? "

"We, ourselves."

"And no one escapes?"

"No one escapes."

"And you, do you not work?"

"I work here, senor. I take care of the prison."

At six o'clock the caretaker mounts the stairs to one of the battlements and gives forth with aloud blast on a horn. Prisoners and guards drift in from all directions and line up in single file. The roll is called and the prisoners march into the prison and the doors are closed.

So far as we know, it is an honor system without equal anywhere. The system is explained to each new prisoner and for a day or two he is under strict surveillance—by the other prisoners. Once he merits their confidence he is permitted almost as much freedom during the day as any other citizen of Mulegé for the prisoners themselves are responsible for their fellow prisoners and any infringement of the rules by one is judged a misdemeanor of the whole group.

The only restrictions they must abide by besides the nightly lock-up are these: They may not dance and must not drink, though they may stand on the sidelines and watch. They draw the minimum local wage for work on the farms, the date orchards, fishing or any other labor. Socially, the *mulegénos* treat them as neighbors who, but for the grace of God and the blind eye of the law, might be one of themselves.

In the history of the "university" there have been few "students" who have betrayed the trust. But then, why should anyone ever want to leave Mulegé?

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The following communication from London, Canada, re-opens a familiar question. Our correspondent writes:

> This is a personal problem, but I dare say it is also general. What can parents do to help a boy of 12 or 13 years to choose a line of work—not that at that age *everyone* can know what to make his life work, but when such boys enter college they must choose a course of study, and it is helpful if they have a plan, an ideal. But so many—mine for example—seem to have no interest in any particular profession or trade. So, when the time comes, they make a pass at some course—in many cases, the easiest one, only to find later that they lack spontaneous interest or enthusiasm for the chosen line of endeavor.
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> It seems to me that when boys were apprenticed to skilled craftsmen, as of old, they were able to get a better idea of their work and were more liable to develop a liking (or disliking) for it. They could see what they were doing, as it were. Now it is no longer possible to approach the work from that angle; besides, work is still losing dignity. No longer is work done for the love of it, but only for money! What a pity! What can be done by the parents to help?

Perhaps the simplest answer to this problem is that few parents see the necessity for early introducing their children to as many different kinds of work as may feasibly serve the family welfare. "Work" is not abstract, but a matter of (*a*) discipline and (*b*) creativity (or you may reverse the order if you wish). Any sort of "work" experience which serves a practical end, even if it be only that of augmenting family finances, may serve an educational purpose. Theoretical planning of a career designed to eventually make a youngster a wealthy person is

quite a different matter, and not so good. In the former case, the adolescent is encouraged to fulfill responsibility, to be functional in a way which directly benefits others. In the latter case, the tendency is to establish a scale of values primarily dependent upon personal possessions. Thus, those parents who take it for granted that their children should help to earn their own way in life as soon as possible no matter what the plenitude of family resources—probably provide the best help to an adolescent in preparing him for evaluation of a later "career." The choices of youngsters who have this sort of background are apt to be considerably more mature, and to contain some sound premonitions as to the types of endeavor which will likely prove psychologically most rewarding. The only caution for parents following this procedure should be to make sure the adolescent understands that it is not the *amount* of money brought back to the family coffers which matters. It is simply that whatever money *can* come from a chosen form of work, does belong, at least in part, to the family group as a whole.

Our correspondent is stretching her pessimism a bit when she remarks that "no longer is work done for the love of it." There are always a considerable number of men and women who have sense enough to place creative satisfaction, or an ideal of social service, first, and monetary return second. Underpaid teachers more often than not fall into this category, as do struggling young artists and writers. Then, since World War II, the universities record much more student attention upon the psychological satisfactions of professions. Perhaps, after fighting a war, young people somehow find it easier to put money values in their proper place.

FRONTIER

The Strain of Progress

THERE is one thing that the enthusiast of human progress must face, and that is that the people who are content without struggling after progress, who do their work dutifully and happily, but without ambition, often know far more of the graces of living than the anxious and restless ones who dream about a utopian tomorrow. There seems to be a quiet gentility about all the people of an old and static culture—a culture, even, that is pervaded by theological deceptions which have become time-honored and as natural as the roads, the hills, and the sky. Perhaps the dogmas of religion, after centuries, are somehow "naturalized" by simple people, somewhat as an old ruin is overtaken by wild growths which lend to the useless structure a quaintly pleasing charm. Nature, we think, has had her way, and we accept the process, as we accept other inevitabilities of life. And we think that it would be something of an impudence for a crew of men to come along and erect a bright new building to replace it, bringing along with "progress," odors of fresh mortar, the scream of saws and the banging of hammers. We prefer, perhaps, that well enough be left alone.

And so with the beliefs of the people who live in the shadow of ancient ruins. They seem a suitable thing, even though by book and reason it would be so easy to prove them "wrong."

Perhaps there are spots on earth, whole countrysides, which find themselves set aside as memorials to the timeless aspect of existence. Among such people, the man with new ideas is truly an intruder. He is out of place. His truth, however important, is nonetheless irrelevant. Not "progress" and enlightenment, but something else, is being worked out there. He should depart to a place where the anguish and disturbance which accompany the breakup of a traditional society have some hope of being balanced by a new vision which makes the pain worth while.

Too often, the apostles of progress break in upon the quiet ritual of simple living, as though human beings have nothing to learn from living as their fathers taught them. The time will doubtless come when every traditional society will die, but there is a sense in which every death should be permitted to come by natural cause. Too often the man of progress imagines that because he sees a glow on the horizon, he has the right and the duty to waken every dreamer, to take by the shoulders the man enwrapped in meditation, and make him listen to the gospel.

But what do we know, really, of the secret processes of human life? Of the sacred metabolism of unchanging customs and ways? Is there perhaps some deep instruction being gained by these means? Do the people of such communities perchance assimilate the proceeds of some arduous advance of which we know nothing?

This is more than a question merely of material progress. It is a question rather of learning patience. For we must be content with patience, since we cannot possibly have knowledge concerning the times and rates of human awakening. The man of widely progressive generalizations is always vulnerable to the charge of being impatient, for he too easily overlooks the many levels at which an appropriate human maturity may be reached. He condemns an age for its sleepy indifference to great issues which hover in the wings of history. The real point, however, for the historian may be that the quiet interludes of history have their own contribution to make, even if simple and undramatic, so far as we can see.

Of late, the scholars who devote themselves to the study of human societies have been much impressed by the quality of American Indian communities which have been pursuing their ancestral ways for a thousand years or more, with little or no change save for that pressed upon them by the invading and surrounding Anglo-Saxon culture. These Indians, some of them, at least, are

plainly not going anywhere, yet from the character of their lives there seems to be a sense in which they long ago "arrived." This is naturally puzzling to scientific representatives of a civilization that is practically breathless from all the progress it has been making. The odd part of it is that neither culture—neither the static and traditional, nor the restless and dynamic—is very good at explaining or justifying itself. Each looks at the other with a little untutored envy and amazement. Both, actually, are pursuing intuitively justified convictions. The one feels itself to be a preserver of the good, the other a discoverer, and neither can in conscience abandon its calling.

There is one real difference between the traditional cultures and the massively progressive cultures of the world. The traditional cultures are usually uniform and in a sense "pure." They cannot sustain or contain in their midst an alien progressive element. The rebel has no role in a traditional culture whose time has not yet come to die. He would break the pattern too soon. He has the unhappy character of a violator of innocence, of a teacher of precocious and even corrupting doctrines. The progressive culture, on the other hand, is spotted all over the islands of traditionalism. Everywhere may be found pitched battles between the generations, the conflict of iconoclast with conservative, with citadels of the past being erected to protect the timid against change, and battering rams being mounted by other men to force an entry for what they hope is progress. It is the rush and flurry of the drive for progress which shuts out knowledge of the values which traditional societies continue to preserve until their hour arrives.

While the traditional society exhibits to the critical eye all sorts of defects and limitations in terms of *system,* it is this society, strangely enough, which allows a definite individuality to single human beings, within the limits of the system. The progressive society, on the other hand, filled with the anxieties of a struggle to reach some far-off goal, tends to destroy individuality in a wild attempt to organize progress for *everybody*. Then, when members of a progressive society begin to recognize this folly, comes the great discovery of the virtues of traditionalism, serene living, and peace.

It is at this point, we may suppose, that the society reaches a crisis in human decision. It is then that the simple faith of our fathers is painted in the most alluring colors, that the aimless strivings of modern man are most easily exposed and ridiculed. And it is then that men have the need, not to abandon the idea of progress, but to redefine it in terms of worthier ideals.