

## QUESTIONS FOR PLANNERS

WHEN men gather around tables (or in cellars or garrets, if they are revolutionists) to plan the remaking of society, they generally try to be "scientific" in what they propose; that is, if they are serious men, they wish to propose changes which have some hope of being put into effect.

It is inevitable, however, that such planners make judgments about human behavior—about how large numbers of people will act when confronted with specific circumstances. Realistic planners must anticipate mass human behavior in two ways.

First, they have need to say how people will behave under the conditions of the ideal system they envision, and how the values of freedom and justice will fare under those conditions and in terms of that behavior. There is little agreement among planners on these matters. Opinions vary from one extreme to another. They vary all the way from anarchist optimism to Hobbean pessimism.

How is planning at this level to become "scientific," since it must be admitted that, thus far, there has been only a series of wild guesses, occasionally balanced by some hardheaded sagacity, to do service in this sort of planning? It is easy to point to evidence of these guesses.

Take the Marxist proposition that, once Communism is established—the ideal condition following the intermediate stage of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat—the State will begin to "wither away." The critic of socialist theory smiles and says: "Look at Soviet Russia; do you think *that* State is about to wither away?"

The point may be arguable. It may be said that the Soviet State is ringed by hostile powers with ICBM's poised for the kill, should the centralized authority of the Communist State show a tendency to falter a bit, not to mention "withering away." The normal processes of history, it may be urged, require a normal environment, and the perpetual count-down

of a cold war—inverting the plight of Sisyphus—is not a normal environment!

Well, imagine if you can a warless world. Would the Communist State then wither away? Even if we stipulate that the part of the national State which is organized for war will disappear, the complex technology of peace-time economic production will remain. This technology will require administrators, since a prime advantage claimed for the socialist political economy is its capacity for economic planning on a national scale, and the fulfillment of this function will involve a sizeable administrative body—in other words, a national state of a sort.

At this point the discussion can continue only by improvisation. There is the syndicalist alternative to a centralized authority, and there is the claim that a proper education under a socialist order will "condition" the people to a harmonious way of life under the changed circumstances, so that objections founded upon the observation of human behavior in a competitive society have no validity. And so on.

Obviously, there is nothing "scientific" about this debate—neither the claims nor the objections to them can be verified. Of course, a man embued with revolutionary fervor might say that it may be necessary to take leave of science—that a new order will have to be *created*, and how can there be "data" concerning a social scene which does not yet exist? This admission stops the argument, since it acknowledges the guesswork in the revolutionary project.

But stopping the argument does not necessarily stop the revolution. Revolution is by no means a rational affair and seldom waits upon the final deliveries of logic. This brings us to the second kind of judgment about human behavior which social planners must undertake—the judgment concerning how people will react to the *plan* for the new society, since putting the plan into effect will require its

enthusiastic acceptance by at least a determined minority. Any sort of planning will have to take this aspect of the problem of human behavior into account. Now it is either a problem for benevolent Machiavellians or a problem for educators, or it is a problem for well-intentioned people who, wanting to be "practical," decide to be both Machiavellians and educators.

The Western heritage of social thinking has in it a number of illustrations of how people have gone about meeting this problem. There is, first, Plato's Noble Lie. The ethic of the Noble Lie is something like the ethic of the physician's encouragement of a patient to think he is on the way to recovery, on the theory that the psychosomatic effect of encouragement may give the sick man the strength he needs to overcome his ill. The speech of the Grand Inquisitor to the returned Jesus in Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* is another argument claiming the justification of the good of man, although it is an argument for the *status quo*, and not in behalf of the revolutionary projects Jesus had in mind. Trotsky, who had some experience in stirring up a revolution, qualifies as a benevolent Machiavellian. "He was," says Max Eastman, "a man with an extreme social ideal and enough mechanical instinct to know that the only force capable of achieving such an ideal is the organized self-interest of the oppressed classes." Trotsky would use whatever means were necessary to obtain his goal, and the appeal to self-interest is hardly the appeal of scientific truth. A very different sort of "science" is here invoked—the manipulation of human beings by means of an appeal to their emotions. Trotsky spelled out a related view in his pamphlet, *Their Morals and Ours*, a defense of Lenin's revolutionary "opportunism." Lenin, he said, advocated "resort to all sorts of devices, maneuvers, and illegal methods, . . . evasion and subterfuge, in order to penetrate into the trade unions, to remain in them, and to carry on communist work in them at all costs." Asserting the complete bankruptcy of traditional Western morals, Trotsky said that Lenin proposed the "only methods of valid self-defense against the perfidious reformist bureaucracy." The ambivalence of the appeal made to the world by

social revolutionaries has long been evident. A century ago, Charles Kingsley addressed the leaders of the English Chartist movement, saying:

. . . many of you are trying to do God's work with the devil's tools. What is the use of brilliant language about peace, and the majesty of order, and universal love, though it may all be printed in letters a foot long, when it runs in the same train with ferocity, railing, mad, one-eyed excitement, talking itself into a passion like a street woman? Do you fancy that after a whole column spent in stirring men up to fury, a few twaddling copybook headings about "the sacred duty of order" will lay the storm again? What spirit is there but the devil's spirit in bloodthirsty threats of revenge? . . . I denounce the weapons which you have been deluded into employing to gain you your rights. . . .

In the twentieth century, Léon Blum made a gentler reproach. Speaking to his socialist colleagues, he said:

Were we emphatic enough in refusing in all circumstances to have recourse to the cruder instincts of the human animal, to brutality, envy, and malice? Did we remember to appeal only to the nobler sentiments of the human mind, to its inborn need of justice, affection and fraternity? It is often argued that it is useless to change social institutions until the mentality of the individual has changed, and the argument has too often been a convenient justification for the indefinite postponement of necessary changes. But have we, in fact, done what lay in our power to change the individual human unit, while we tried to change society? Did we carry on the two tasks together as we should have done, so that they intermingled and supported one another?

Blum's question is pertinent, its feeling admirable; but what we wish to call to attention is the fact that science has no place or part in this view, and there is not even an apology for its absence.

Why has there been no science in the anticipations of human behavior in revolutionary plans for a free society? Why was it Hitler, and not a Marxist, who wrote and openly published a modern manual of mass persuasion? Why did the Communists wait for Arthur Koestler and George Orwell to "explain" their psychological techniques?

The founders of modern Communism, we may say, had no literature of a science of behavior to

draw upon, to add to their scientific socialism; further, the claim that the mode of economic production is decisive in shaping even cultural attitudes may have seemed to make behavior controllable at the source of its causation; and finally, with them, it was probably a matter of first things first—erase the infamy and *then* work out these lesser problems. This is an answer to the first question.

The other questions are more difficult. They involve the inner contradiction between materialist assumptions and revolutionary ideals. What is a "free" man, a "free" society, in the materialist conception? These are metaphysical inquiries and cannot be dealt with at all by a materialist. If you ask a revolutionary materialist such questions he will answer by telling you what a "free" man will *have* in his kind of "free" society. He will tell you that the only kind of freedom that means anything is the freedom supplied by economic equality. He cannot say that a free man thinks for himself, because the success of the revolution depends upon getting people to think in a certain way—the "true" way or the "scientific" way, but this, also, is an ultimately meaningless claim and must not be looked at too closely.

There are built-in obstacles to the development of a theory of persuasion for people who are by definition the objects and not the subjects of history. Who or what is there to persuade? Has it a *mind*? The materialist's conception of a human being is concerned with an entity who does not think for himself, but *thinks* he thinks for himself, and who is likely to react adversely if allowed to suspect that he is being manipulated. This tends to make materialist methods of political persuasion sail under false colors. They must often pretend to accept bourgeois notions of freedom, so that the traditional values contained in these notions may be used as forces of persuasion. Either this, or the persuasion must be expounded in documents reserved for the use of an initiated elite whose members are not bothered by metaphysical inconsistencies. Hitler could afford to be brazen in his revelations about techniques of persuasion. He made no secret of his belief in the fact and necessity of an elite—a blond, Aryan-

blooded elite. But the Communist elite—the Bolsheviks, and now the Party—is a temporary, transitional phenomenon, with no permanent identity or role in the classless society. It has no theoretical explanation, only a pragmatic justification.

But what of Western or democratic theories of political and economic reorganization and reform? At present most of these theories gain identity from their rejection or acceptance of certain aspects of socialist theory. They propose either democratic socialism or a better democratic capitalism or a pluralist combination of the two. These theories also make some claim to being scientific; that is, there is in them much examination and analysis of existing economic and political formations and processes. But their highest avowed value is Freedom. By this we mean that if you ask them why the matter is worth arguing about, they will tell you that the human individual is in danger of being engulfed by the power struggle between the huge, impersonal entities of the State and the Corporation, and that this individual must be restored to a position of independence, if the traditional values of Western society are to be preserved.

One popular view is that the freedom of the individual depends upon his possession of property. Without property, it is argued, the individual is reduced to a rootless proletarian, wholly at the mercy of the corporation and the State. He may be a white-collar proletarian—that is, a salaried Organization Man—but without property of his own he is as rootless as the anonymous worker on an assembly line.

But since property is now transformed from farms and shovels and plows into electronics plants and enormous manufacturing organizations like General Motors and Chrysler and Ford, its possession by individuals has been replaced by a symbolic participation—we have a certificate of possession instead of actual take-home-and-do-what-you-want-with-it possession. And the freedom to use his property which goes with the certificate is a limited freedom to be exercised by the owner according to rules which a man has to study and specialize in, in order to get all the benefits. Usually, the benefits go to men who are clever in a certain

way. The same situation exists at another level. The man who reaps the economic benefits of industrial enterprise, today, is increasingly the man who understands the tax laws, and not the man who understands industrial production. In other words, the freedom made available to men by means of property is a freedom increasingly created by legal conventions which relate the individual to the complex forms of wealth brought into being by modern technology. It is dimly conceivable that the legal conventions may be made to reflect more or less faithfully the old sort of opportunity to be free that primitive property relationships once allowed, but it is obvious that extraordinary legal genius will be required to devise those conventions, and obvious, also, that extraordinary discipline will be necessary to the ordinary men who are to live by them.

Now why should it be insisted that freedom is dependent upon private property? To say that this is the specious claim of acquisitive capitalists who are making propaganda begs the question, even if it is on occasion true. There is another reason for this claim. It comes, we submit, from the longing to be "scientific." Property is something you can count, even if you can count it only in stock certificates. Property is finite and measurable. If you can relate freedom to property, you can make freedom into a sure thing—so much property, so much freedom. It may be difficult, but it can be done, and since when has the difficult dismayed us?

Science is the study of measurable things, of their properties, dimensions, relationships, and movements. What is measurable can be made the subject of scientific studies, and what is not measurable cannot. Accordingly, if you want to make men free, and if you believe that science is the only knowledge that men can possess with any certainty, then you will want to make the highest good for mankind into a subject for scientific study. This means that you will want to make it into a measurable thing, or make it into a function of a measurable thing. Property is a measurable thing. By making freedom into a function of property, you eliminate the incommensurables, such as the moral qualities in human beings, which are not—not yet—

subjects of scientific study. And you bear to mankind the gift of a sure thing—scientific freedom.

The evolution of science to its present peak of development has been marked by progressive stages of getting rid of the incommensurable elements which defy analysis and frustrate the precise definition of things and their properties. Accordingly, social science, if it is to be anything more than a branch of history—a descriptive science, that is—must reduce its subject-matter to things. How can men be made into things? This promises blasphemy, so we shall do it, not literally, but by association: we shall make men into things by linking their essence—their will to be free—with property, which is unmistakably a thing. And then we can have a science of freedom.

What happens to man in this transaction is the same thing that happened to God in the Cartesian philosophy. He disappears as a moral reality and reappears as a sanctifying nonentity, as in the doctrine of Occasionalism. Descartes opened the field to all the mechanistic ambitions of the materialists. If freedom is a by-product of property, then freedom is not something to be won, but something that happens whenever the right system of property relationships comes into being. Morality, you might then argue, consists in having the capacity to recognize the right system, or better yet, in being able to define it. It has become an object for scientific study and programming.

Of course, there is a lot of evidence to justify the claim that property provides freedom. "Things," as Emerson said, "are in the saddle and ride mankind." If you don't want to be ridden down, get up there in the saddle and ride first class with the things. And if everybody is given a horse, that will make it fair.

Obviously, this argument has nothing to do with economics. It is an argument about the nature of man, and whether or not history has a humanist meaning. It is an argument about whether or not there are incommensurable realities in human beings which have commensurable effects upon human behavior, and which cannot be mechanistically accounted for.

The scientific aspect of social planning comes from the study of past human behavior. Its facts are *social* facts. Freedom, however, is not a social value, but an individual value. It is *enjoyed* by individuals, however much they may collaborate to increase their individual enjoyment of it. It is a question whether we can ever say what freedom is and how it is to be assured without being able to say, first, what the human individual is and why he longs to be free. A social fact becomes such only by losing sight of the individual. It seems reasonable to think, therefore, that a theory of freedom based solely upon social facts starts out by excluding the source of the value it pursues.

Theories of freedom have much in common with theories of education. No one in his right mind has yet tried to make a science out of education. The educator, as someone has said, is a man who can never guarantee the quality of his product. The same absolute limitation confronts the man who would increase the freedom of human beings. He can try, as an educator tries, but the prime condition of his success is that he must not try to control the nature of the product.

We started out this discussion with the observation that social planning takes leave of science when it undertakes to predict human behavior. We attempted to show, by implication, that social planning must in fact avoid absolute predictions of the nature of its product; if it is to preserve the possibility of freedom, it can, like the educator, only *hope*.

The end of education is a free man, in all the meanings of the word "free." The end of politics is the same. But men differ in their desire to be free and in their understanding of freedom. This means that the flow of the incommensurable into the commensurable—like the spark of originality, the birth of a new idea—varies with these differences. The politics of freedom, then, is the politics which removes as many as possible of the obstacles to that flow, without attempting any prediction of when and where it may take place. The *problem* of politics is only superficially and externally a problem of designing the conditions which present the fewest obstacles. Essentially, the problem of politics is

created by the human pursuit of ends which make men unfree. Politics takes over after education has done all that it can, and tries to make the best of a bad situation.

The educator deals directly with the incommensurables in human beings. Politics deals with them also, but only indirectly, by conventions suitable to the "average" behavior of human beings. "Mass" societies, such as are now developing all over the world, increase the rule of statistics in politics and depersonalize even more the conventions by which politics orders the gross relationships of human beings. As this process continues, politics has less and less to do with freedom, less and less relation to the incommensurable in human beings.

The very worst thing we are doing may be the pursuit of our habit of identifying our freedom with some form of political economy. One way, perhaps, to discover this would be to begin to behave as though politics and economics were totally irrelevant to our freedom. This may be the only way to get, at last, the kind of political and economic arrangements which know their place and stay in it.

## REVIEW

### "COMPULSION"; "SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER"

MEYER LEVIN'S searching novel on the Leopold-Loeb case was first published by Simon and Schuster in 1956. This reviewer then had no knowledge of Mr. Levin, and saw no reason for acquiring any more knowledge concerning the psychotically inspired murder of a young boy in Chicago. When a copy of the paperback edition of *Compulsion* came this way, the thought of tackling a book of more than 500 pages on the subject seemed most unattractive—but gradually, bit by bit, and over a considerable period of time, the realization dawned that we should have known more about Mr. Levin a long time ago, and that in various respects the Leopold-Loeb trial was momentously important. Further, since the public is apparently responsive to such macabre works as Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer*, Mr. Levin's probings are good instruction: it is possible to be philosophic about even those matters which Williams writes about, as he continues his calling of "poet of the damned," to quote Brooks Atkinson.

Tennessee Williams has a talent for enabling his audience to identify—in a gently human way—with those of the "damned" who suffer compulsions, but his treatment of the specific situations in which his characters become involved is symbolic and impersonal. The "cannibalism" which terminates the action in *Suddenly*, for example, is clearly representative of all those instances of human experience wherein the demons of unreason devour the substance of a man.

But Mr. Levin, over and beyond being a writer of considerable talent, is a human being to whom feelings of compassion come naturally. A school-mate of both Leopold and Loeb, and fairly well acquainted with Leopold, who survives, Mr. Levin works outward from his own personal involvement with the tragedy to a portrayal of

considerable significance for everyone. His foreword provides a partial answer to the natural question: Why recall this gruesome crime of more than thirty years ago? Mr. Levin writes:

Certain crimes seem to epitomize the thinking of their era. Thus *Crime and Punishment* had to arise out of the feverish soul-searching of the Russia of Dostoevski's period, and *An American Tragedy* had to arise from the sociological thinking of Dreiser's time in America. In our time, the psychoanalytical point of view has come to the fore.

While psychoanalysis is bringing into the light many areas heretofore shrouded, the essential mystery of human behavior still remains the concern of us all. Psychiatric testimony in this case was comprehensive, advanced, and often brilliant, yet with the passage of time a fuller explanation may be attempted. Whether my explanation is literally correct is impossible for me to know. But I hope that it is poetically valid, and that it may be of some help in widening the use of available knowledge in the aid of human failings.

I do not wholly follow the aphorism that to understand all is to forgive all. But surely we all believe in healing, more than in punishment.

There is no adequate way of describing the content of *Compulsion*, but one might say that this sort of subject, if it is to be written about at all, needs to be written about just as extensively as Levin has done. For here we have a totally irrational crime of the most repugnant sort, and no easy explanation of it can ever be possible. What we can do is learn to live awhile with the tortured psyches of the two offenders. Finally, we can take, directly from the transcript of the trial, the measure of Clarence Darrow's greatness.

The presentation of Darrow's arguments alone would justify purchase of *Compulsion*, for here was a man, we again discover, who did not labor to defend only individuals, but who rather worked to save humanity from itself. The public wanted the boys hanged, and the prosecution was so determined to achieve this result that it lost its emotional balance. But Darrow was arguing, as he always argued, for the standards of a more mature humanity of the future. He contended for the sort of psychological understanding which

would enable a mature society to learn from even the most repellent behavior. Darrow's words on the subject of capital punishment are as impressive today—and as needful of repeating—as they were a third of a century ago.

Levin was present at the trial of Leopold and Loeb and there is little doubt that his book was in part inspired by Darrow's memorable argument. After calling everyone in the courtroom to reflect on the fact that an execution imprints the most deliberate of bar sinisters on future generations of the families of the condemned—"a disgrace that never ends"—Darrow began his closing plea:

Now I must say one word more and then I will leave this with you where I should have left it long ago. None of us are unmindful of the public; the courts are not, and juries are not. I have stood here for three months as one might stand at the ocean trying to sweep back the tide. I hope the seas are subsiding and the wind is falling, and I believe they are, but I wish to make no false pretense to this court. The easy thing and the popular thing to do is to hang my clients. I know it. Men and women who do not think will applaud. The cruel will approve. It will be easy today; but in Chicago, and reaching out over the length and breadth of the land, more and more fathers and mothers, the humane, the kind and the hopeful, who are gaining an understanding and asking questions not only about these poor boys, but about their own—these will join in no acclaim at the death of my clients. These would ask that the shedding of blood be stopped.

I know the future is with me and what I stand for here; not merely for the lives of these two unfortunate lads, but for all boys and all girls; for all of the young, and as far as possible for all of the old. I am pleading for life, understanding charity, kindness, and the infinite mercy that considers all....

I am pleading that we overcome cruelty with kindness and hatred with love. Your honor stands between the past and the future. You may hang these boys, but in doing it you will turn your face toward the past. In doing it you would make it harder for every other boy who in ignorance and darkness must grope his way through the mazes which only childhood knows. In doing it you would make it harder for unborn children: I am pleading for the future; I am pleading for a time when we can learn by reason and judgment and understanding and faith

that all life is worth saving, and that mercy is the highest attribute of man.

As Levin sat in the silence that followed Darrow's words, he could not help but feel that a victory had been won over the emotions of revenge—a victory over the senseless, cold brutality which alone can justify capital punishment. Levin remembers:

We did not dare speak to each other, for our words might deride sentiment. We rather made the comments professional. A great plea. His greatest. His valedictory. It could suit any case and no case at all. It was a plea for every human life.

## COMMENTARY RELIGION AND POLITICS

IMPLICIT in this week's leading article is a distinction as old as recorded philosophy—the distinction between legal truth and spiritual truth. In Indian thought, spiritual truth was called *Sruti* and had the high authority of revelation. Legal truth was called *Smriti*, and it had only the authority of hallowed tradition.

It was also a part of Indian wisdom that while legal truth may govern the mundane affairs of men, it is the prerogative of spiritual truth to challenge legal truth and, on occasion, to do away with it. This declares the perpetual schism between freedom and order, between the conventions upon which the orderly relationships of the majority are based, and the principles which guide the life of those who are truly free.

Ancient hierarchical societies took cognizance of these distinctions among human beings and attempted to provide for them by the establishment of castes and classes with corresponding rights and obligations. While it is possible to offer a defense of the hierarchical society—Ananda Coomaraswamy made the best one we have seen in his booklet, *The Bugbear of Literacy*—we do not propose to attempt it. But it may be conceded without argument that the caste society recognized the differences among human beings and sought to accommodate the social order to those differences. And it may also be admitted that the caste society failed for two reasons: (1) It was impossible to predict where superior men would appear, so that the legal accommodations got all mixed up; and (2) distinctly unsuperior men found themselves in places of power, which they soon learned to abuse.

The history of Western civilization is the history of a great social experiment: the application to human society of a legal structure which ignores the differences among men. Hierarchical law was law which asserted that while all men might be brothers, and of the same essence, the differences among them constituted the practical reality with which law should deal. Democratic law took an opposite view.

While admitting that men are indeed different in capacities and attainments, it declared that their *ideal* being is their true being, and that in this all men are equal—equal in rights before the law, and equal in potentialities, however unequally realized—so that the law should take account of this real being, and let the differences go.

Both systems assumed a practical background of moral responsibility and educational effort on the part of individuals, to make the systems work. The hierarchical system trusted to the principle of *noblesse oblige* to protect the community against the abuse of power. The democratic system depends upon the responsible leadership of those who, by reason of their achievement and other qualities, are chosen by their fellows to occupy places of authority.

In both cases, one might say, the success of the system depends upon the expectation that *some* good men will exceed the conditions of the social contract and act generously and in self-sacrifice for the public good.

The difficulty, here, has always been that if the good men are to perform these services, they need a certain freedom of power; and there is always the possibility that this power will be secured by bad men, since skill in the gaining of positions of power turns out to have no necessary connection with honor, wisdom, and generosity.

Defined in this way, the problem seems now to require inventive lawmaking to guarantee that the power will go to the best men. This is where we are vulnerable, for the more we hedge power with legal limitations and character qualifications, the less good men wish to be involved in the competition for place. The best of men, as Plato showed in the *Republic*, are the most reluctant to accept power, and when the path to power is made into an obstacle-race of the sort which attracts the self-seeking more than other men, the community is in danger of being governed by a class of professional politicians, instead of by the responsible leaders whom it needs.

By this time, politics is in the hands of the demagogues, and the ancient distinction between legal truth and philosophic truth has been almost completely lost. The spontaneous nature of moral

energy tends to be denied. The self-created quality of freedom tends to be ignored. The differences among men become a subject for cynical, worldly comment among exploiters of the weaknesses of the system, instead of the honorable, if unpredictable, source of the moral excellences upon which the society must truly depend. The people are victimized by slogans. Matters by nature uncertain are said to be certain; wisdom is replaced by dogma, voluntary action by compulsion, an inner life by outward conformity. Men who are by nature responsible and self-reliant are driven into the fringes of society and find company among the lowly, the outcasts, and the misfits. Why not? The best men are now themselves misfits.

There is only one way, finally, to reconcile the differences among men, and that is by the uncompensated generosity and voluntary undertakings of the best of men. This is the counsel of high religion, and it is the reason why no religion save corrupt religion has ever allowed its energies to be diverted into the compulsions of politics. Religion which indulges in the politics of power loses authority in spiritual concerns, which relate only to voluntary action. Such religion, whatever it says, can have only contempt for human beings.

An honest politics can exercise compulsion without showing contempt for human beings because politics has no counsels of perfection. Politics is concerned only with the regulation of behavior where freedom is relatively unimportant. It is responsible for the prevention of excesses of evil, not for the generation of the good. Politics should make no pretension to the production of the good, which is strictly an individual and voluntary contribution, although the fruits of good-doing may be channeled and distributed by political means.

The interesting thing about the present moment of history is the expansion of the power available to politicians and to the State from limited to unlimited power. Nuclear weapons may represent a limited power on some cosmic scale of destructiveness, but for practical purposes—our purposes—nuclear power is absolutely unlimited.

Now what, precisely, is the role of politics in human affairs? Politics is the exercise of power in behalf of social order. This means the controlled use of power, or the *rational* use of power. Until the twentieth century, the power available to politicians and to the State has always been limited. It has grown, century by century, but it has always been limited. There has been a practical ceiling, therefore, on the exercise of power in the name of the order of the community and the national interest.

But now *unlimited* power is available, if not to politicians, at least to States. The rational use of power can now suddenly become irrational—irrational because unlimited, out of control.

Two things happen to men when they are possessed of unlimited, irrational power. They become intoxicated and they become frightened. They do not really know how to use this power. They may *talk* about using unlimited power, but they don't know how to use it, and subconsciously or half-consciously they *know* that they do not know how to use it. So they are frightened, even a little mad.

This climactic development in the availability of power to political forms of action may have a strangely reforming effect upon what is expected of politics. Men who respond to the threat of limited power may find themselves indifferent to the threat of an incomprehensible, absolute power. Men who once thought power was a legitimate means to a rational end may abandon the hope of using power to obtain any rational end, now that power has itself become irrational.

By such devious means we may be led to revive ancient forms of community, in which power has no place or part at all. And this, even if accomplished only experimentally, at first, by small groups of people, may prove to be one of the means by which we restore to ourselves an understanding of the source of the good in human life, which, while mysterious, is certainly not in politics.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### DELIBERATE DELINQUENTS

THERE is apparently a considerable amount of communication going on among parents who have determined to defy compulsory education laws. Three MANAS-reading families regularly compare notes on the progress of their legal battles, clarifying together the philosophy which impels them to protest-action. From a correspondent on this subject, we have received a brief summary of a situation confronting the family of one Dr. Shinn, who now may be in jail as a result of his defiance of the law. Here are some of the facts:

Dr. Benjamin J. Shinn, El Centro, California veterinarian and long-time vocal school critic, is accepting prospects of a jail sentence for his insistence on the right to educate his own children. He contends that "there is a ceiling on the education of children in this country; a ceiling that consists of compulsory attendance laws that prohibit eminently qualified parents from personally educating their own children." He believes that there are many very well educated people in this country who have the insight, who have the time, who would be willing to do the necessary home-study in connection with home-education. These people have the most loving concern and the greatest stake in the education of their children.

Compulsory attendance laws work to prevent the application of a large store of ingenuity that could be applied in the very field where it is most needed—education. He calls this structure of laws a "closed-shop" imposed by educators not interested in education but just in running schools.

Dr. Shinn and his wife—both college trained and parents of six children—are defying the California compulsory attendance law and are willing to undergo a jail sentence in an effort to embarrass the state of California into action that will remedy the situation.

Dr. Shinn has removed three children from the schools of El Centro. These children are all advanced. The youngest, a boy of ten, is beginning high school along with his sisters. Of Dr. Shinn's younger children, Jimmy, who is seven, works on the

fifth grade level in the 3 R's and Skipper, aged four, is working on the second grade level. Dr. Shinn expects that these two younger boys will finish high school by the age of eleven.

We are interested in such deliberate "delinquency" chiefly for the reason that a dramatic action, based upon some concept of principle and in no way destructive, should provoke a sort of constructive discussion that would not otherwise occur. We don't know whether Dr. Shinn will in the long run benefit his children by removing them from public school—whenever he is allowed to be physically at large and therefore able to do so—but we know that his right to make such a decision should be defended.

While you can understand the annoyance of presumably well-meaning school boards when confronted with such intransigence, it shouldn't be so difficult to find out whether such children as those of the Shinn family are becoming adequately educated. Possession of a teaching credential does not make a man or woman a teacher, if by "teacher" we mean a person capable of awakening an active, spontaneous *desire* for learning in children. Such a problem as that posed by the Shinns, in our opinion, should be handled within the local community. Compulsory education measures could be made flexible enough to allow wide discretionary power on the part of the school board. Then experiments like that pursued by the Shinns would take place in a context which allows the whole community to learn something from it, and from discussions about the values which the Shinns are endeavoring to defend. So far as we can see, what these "protest parents" want is a chance to encourage a kind of development in their children which reaches beyond adjustment to the status quo. This matter of "adjustment" is the central issue involved, and it seems to us of an importance sufficient to justify listening carefully to all arguments favoring a family's divorce from the public school system.

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The activities of those who have banded together to defend the rights of conscientious objectors also keep alive valuable discussion on the subject of enforced conformity. The War Resisters League of America and the War Resisters International both serve as a clearing-house for pacifist rejection of conscription. During World War II, several religious denominations, chiefly the traditional "peace churches," formed the National Service Board for Religious Objectors. For years it seemed that the NSBRO had difficulty in comprehending any other basis for being a C. O. than Christian Fundamentalism or a sectarian pacifist tradition. However, the present approach by the Board indicates a much broader, more humanitarian attitude. The NSBRO is apparently now prepared to offer assistance to any of those who run afoul of the conscription law on the basis of individual conscience. For those who are unaware of the existence of this organization we reproduce a few paragraphs from a recent NSBRO fund-raising letter:

Peace in our time?

The longings, aspirations and prayers of men in all nations around our divided world reach out—almost in desperation—for the fulfillment of the prophets' vision of peace with righteousness. Statesmen labor to avert the holocaust of nuclear war, well knowing that any war today on any border, no matter how remote, could touch off the ultimate catastrophe.

While statesmen labor within the framework of the power struggle between giant nations thousands of American young men have declared that they now must abstain from any part in war or preparation for war and henceforth must employ all their energies in constructive services wherever there is hunger or nakedness or cold or sickness or loneliness or fear.

These are the young men who are served by this office. In the last eight years we have corresponded with more than 10,000 who have won recognition of their convictions and have worked in things that make for peace. Hundreds more are in preparation for such service. They have the assistance of our office in seeking recognition and in finding work where they may make their most effective

contributions. Some are in trouble, real trouble, facing or actually experiencing the realities of prison or military stockade because they cannot obtain recognition of their convictions and cannot conform to any requirement which would violate their convictions.

The NSBRO is in its twentieth year of services to conscientious objectors. The need continues. The costs are heavy, estimated at \$29,500 for this year. The total needs of our work have always been met: we believe this will always be true—with your help.

## FRONTIERS

### In Search of the Ideas

A READER, commenting on the MANAS editorial for Feb. 24, agrees that it is difficult to show that the national interests of the U.S.A. are expressed in the moral interests of mankind. He wishes, however, to place the idea in a historical setting. He writes:

The difficulty of joining moral and national interests may arise from a certain unclarity as to what our national interests in fact are. The popular concept of what the U.S.A. stands for has perhaps never been very clear. I am concerned with the concepts held by the intelligent and responsible citizenry. I believe that these concepts have been not only blurred, but positively distorted, within the past half-century.

In the beginning, our nation was dedicated to the ideal—to the "proposition," as Lincoln phrased it—that all men are created equal. The Declaration of Independence did not say that it was the purpose of government to apportion rights equally among the citizens. If it had—if our government had been dedicated to granting equal rights to its citizens—Lincoln's statement would have been in error, and our national interest would have borne no more relation to humanitarian morality than any other nation's. But Lincoln was right. The American ideal is that *all men* (not citizens only), with respect to certain rights, three of which are named in the Declaration, shall be regarded as if endowed by God equally. I submit that this is not an ideal of partisan nationalism. It is an ideal of humanitarian morality.

Cynics of today may sneer at the "self-evident nonsense" of that ideal, as did the irate British in 1776. Nevertheless, for a hundred years and more, that's what the U.S.A. has stood for in the world.

We agree wholeheartedly with this correspondent. The U.S.A. has stood for this ideal. Where, then, is the problem? The problem lies in the fact that not enough people agree with us and our correspondent!

This letter is useful in bringing into the foreground an issue in the interpretation of history. We look back at the days of the Founding Fathers, and we hear the words of

Abraham Lincoln, and we say, "*That* is the *real* America! Those are the *true* meanings of our history!"

It is one thing to thrill to such ideals and to adopt them as one's own, but it is considerably more to comprehend and accept their full implications. The expression of this version of the American dream was articulated by a small handful of distinguished individuals. When we say that the vision of this handful *represents* the entire nation, we are also saying that a lofty conception can belong to people who do not understand it, or understand only a little of it; who are, perhaps, moved by it because of some sort of intuitive perception of the nobility of such ideas, yet who would have been quite unable to express those ideas for themselves.

This is an aristocratic interpretation of the meaning of history. It is an interpretation which asserts that the best of men embody the better self of the average run of mankind and set out the ideals to which all should aspire. We may add that this interpretation is not without support from the record of events. Every great national community traces its history to a comparatively few men who gave voice to the idea of a national identity and who shaped its distinctive image. Our correspondent's point is that the idea of identity provided in the thoughts of the Founding Fathers and reaffirmed by Abraham Lincoln is a more universal conception than previous ideas of national identity. The American identity has more in common with the identity of all other men. It involves a declaration of *conscious* unity with others—unity of nature, unity of interests—that is not found in previous images of national identity. It is a national identity without the familiar, "nationalist" spirit.

How shall the behavior of the people of the United States be made to become a dynamic expression of this ideal: this is the problem.

It was Thomas Paine, one of America's Founding Fathers, who said that there is no power like the power of an idea whose time has come.

This is another plank in the platform of the aristocratic interpretation of history. What Paine is suggesting is that there are climactic moments in history when the people—people, generally—show that they have "grown up" to the meaning of a great, explanatory idea about human destiny, and begin to act upon it. Henry T. Buckle gave orderly expression to this view:

Owing to circumstances still unknown, there appear, from time to time, great thinkers who, devoting their lives to a single purpose, are able to anticipate the progress of mankind, and to produce a religion or a philosophy by which important effects are eventually brought about. But if we look into history, we shall clearly see that, although the origin of a new opinion may be thus due to a single man, the result which the new opinion produces will depend upon the condition of the people among whom it is propagated. If either a religion or a philosophy is too much in advance of a nation, it can do no present service, but must bide its time, until the minds of men are ripe for its reception. Of this innumerable instances will occur to most readers. Every science and every creed has had its martyrs; men exposed to obloquy, or even to death, because they knew more than their contemporaries, and because society was not sufficiently advanced to receive the truths which they communicated. According to the ordinary course of affairs, a few generations pass away, and then there comes a period, when these very truths are looked upon as commonplace facts; and a little later, there comes a period, in which they are declared to be necessary, and even the dullest intellects wonder how they could ever have been denied.

One who takes the position of our correspondent—the position of MANAS—is bound to adopt the substance of Buckle's statement, whatever its metaphysical interpretation, and to work toward understanding the process he describes, in order to contribute to it as best he can.

What, then, are the ideas whose time has come, or is to come soon?