



ANARCHY 67:30CENTS OR PIGS

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Black Anarchy in New York

H. W. MORTON

ON NOVEMBER 9, 1965, shortly after 5 p.m., at the Sir Adam Beck No. 2 Distribution Plant at Queenston, Ontario, a little four-inch-square electric relay took it upon itself to illuminate a number of anarchist principles. In doing so it selected a method which in and of itself is anarchistic: direct action. Certainly it was far and away the all-time world's champion blown fuse, in that it blacked out 80,000 square miles of the US and Canada, leaving about 30 million people in total darkness. This was an electronic *attentat*—and on a scale one is hard put to overlook. Yet through the darkness, like a beacon, shone such anarchist truisms as decentralism, mutual aid, direct action, and the like.

On the individual level we found people acting so beautifully that even Kropotkin might have been impressed. Naturally there were instances of people acting like capitalists—selling candles at \$1.50 (11/-) each, charging up to \$50 (£18) for a taxicab ride, gouging pounds of flesh for flashlights, etc. However, as *Newsweek* (11.11.65) pointed out, the "real keynote" was struck by a Negro cleaning woman who led a Manhattan career girl up 10 flights of stairs to her apartment, gave her two candles, and then waved away a \$5 tip. "It's O.K., honey, tonight everyone helps everyone."

Somehow it seemed as if the whole crazy city had read *Mutal Aid* the night before. Remember, New York is notorious for being this planet's biggest cut-throat rat-race. Furthermore it was not only the town longest hit by the blackout, it was also by far the most vulnerable area. The blackout struck in the middle of the rush hour, hence there were probably 800,000 people stranded in subways and/or subway trains when the power failed. Another 100,000 were stranded

H. W. MORTON is a New York anarchist who contributed to ANARCHY 19, 31 and 40. He intended this brilliant account of the New York black-out for ANARCHY but must have put it in the wrong envelope as it turned up as a welcome pamphlet obtainable for 15 cents from Solidarity Bookshop, 1947 Larrabee Street, Chicago, Ill. 60614. We reproduce this condensed version from our contemporary Solidarity.

waiting for commuter trains. Thousands more were trapped on the upper floors of skyscrapers. Undoubtedly the worst off were the hundreds upon hundreds who were trapped in elevators. Yet there was no panic! Everyone was calm and patient. Neither was there any crime wave or looting—of course for this we have to thank the fact that the police were kept too busy with rescue work and other emergency activities. It was estimated that \$100 million (£36 million) was lost in revenue. Certainly one of the hardest hit business interests was the New York Police Force. Therefore I have to give them credit for coming through in the pinch, although several cops of the 24th Precinct failed to appreciate my concern when I walked by in the darkness explaining to my companions in stentorian tones of commiseration that the poor guys were beating their brains out and “all on straight salary for a change”. (The 24th Precinct specializes in shooting 14-year-old Puerto Ricans.) All in all some 5,000 off-duty policemen were called up to join the 7,000 already on duty. The Fire Department brought in their off-duty personnel also.

Yet although these men all performed beautifully at tasks of supererogation, the real stars of the show were the people. Piecing together various contemporary reports (cf. *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *US News and World Report*, *New York Times*, and *New York Post*) many people actually enjoyed the situation. There was drinking, singing, and necking in the streets. Parties of Frenchmen and US Southerners stuck on the 86th-floor observation roof of the Empire State Building chorused each other alternately with “La Marseillaise” and “Dixie”, though how many hours they kept this up was not reported. A church sexton handed out free votive candles—even God lost money—while a blind woman led passengers out of a subway station. One 19-year-old girl said: “They should do this more often; everyone is much more friendly. It’s a big community again—people have time to stop and talk.”

Volunteers directed traffic with flashlights and handkerchiefs. Home transistor radio listeners pitched in to report on developments and incidents so that helpful information could be shared with everyone else. Drivers shared cars with pedestrians. People quietly queued up at pay telephones, restaurants and saloons. They gathered on street corners to listen together to portable radios. One shoeshine boy completed his task by his customer’s matches.

There was incident upon incident: the whole situation was fantastic. *Time* later mentioned a “crisis-born spirit of camaraderie and exhilaration” and a very prevalent view was that “it brought out the best in people”. Of course the fact is that our authoritarian social system cannot help but bring out the worst in people, hence its removal—and bear in mind that the state had well-nigh disappeared—merely allowed them to act as free human beings. After the blackout various politicians, officials, and kindred parasites delivered encomia

to the splendid behaviour of their “fellow citizens”, never realizing how completely superfluous this splendid behaviour proved their own functions to be. Somehow or other the ruling class is incredibly fortunate: people often see through individual leaders, but rarely through leadership *per se*. One woman said that she had received “so many singular courtesies” during the power failure that her “faith in mankind had been restored”. Tragically she didn’t say she had received so many that her faith in authority based on force had been lost. Yet that power failure was nearly a power vacuum: we were closer to a true anarchy for those few hours than anything most of us will ever be lucky enough to see again. Incidentally, the Statue of Liberty, because it draws its current from New Jersey, remained lighted throughout the blackout. For the first time in her life “that old bitch” as one of her would-be bombers described her, was almost telling the truth.

To some extent there was a Dionysian quality reminding one observer of VE or VJ Day “when everybody loved everybody”. Another commented on “the same air of revelry that often accompanies a heavy snowstorm”. A lawyer in his 32nd-floor office said, “first we just sat around having drinks. Now we’re having a seance to communicate with the spirit that caused this bliss. We could have walked down, but it’s about 600 steps, so we’re staying, and we’re all getting to know each other.” Someone else confessed: “It’s a big pain and all, but I sort of hate to see it over. Tomorrow will be just another working day.” But the following day, and several thereafter, there was a continued *élan* as people exchanged anecdotes of courage, kindness and adventure. There was something to talk about and we were impressed by one another. Cab drivers, waitresses, secretaries, truck drivers, grandmothers, teenagers, lawyers and bell-hops interviewed by the *New York Post* all remarked on the “calm, cheerful, considerate attitude the majority of people maintained”. Yet, by way of contrast, there were the inevitable exceptions: an elderly woman paused diffidently trying to cross Fifth Avenue and instantly acquired a four-man escort; meanwhile a panhandler continued to intercept passers-by, concentrating on his own version of mutual aid.

Naturally, the transportation hang-up, vertical as well as horizontal, posed the biggest problem. There were 600 stalled subway trains containing some 800,000 commuters, hundreds of whom were trapped for as long as eight hours, and 60 of whom stayed on for over 14 hours. Furthermore in New York City there were hundreds of elevators stalled between floors in apartment and office buildings, which meant several thousand additional victims requiring rescue.

Nonetheless even in these untoward circumstances the leitmotif was solidarity. As one housewife put it after a six-hour stay in a subway car, “I never thought New Yorkers could be that way. I mean everybody seemed to lose his anger.” In one car a passenger

was leading people in Calypso songs and handclapping. Couples were dancing when the conductor arrived to lead them out of an emergency stairwell to the surface. The universal report was that there was no panic. As one woman said, "Our conductor would pop in every once in a while and ask 'How's everybody?', and everybody would say 'Fine'. We really weren't worried at all." Some good samaritans left one train and walked along catwalks to find emergency exits. But then, instead of going safely home, they returned to lead their fellow passengers out. On other trains, talented victims entertained their fellows: in one car there was a tenor; in another, an harmonica player; but the *pièce de résistance* was a bagpiper. Many cars featured communal singing. The most common thing, however, was light conversation interspersed with sardonic humour. Men gave up their seats to ladies who frequently offered them back. In one car a woman fainted but word was transmitted from person to person until someone was located with smelling salts. Thereupon these were passed back up hand to hand.

Those who had long waits on their hands exchanged whatever comestibles they had in pockets or pocket books: peanuts, wild cherry drops, assorted goodies, or even antacid tablets. One group shared a combination of doughnuts and salami which had been sliced with a nail-file. At midnight the Transit Authority sent in food to those who hadn't yet been extricated. The food-bearers were greeted with a tableau of people sleeping with their arms draped about other people who had been complete strangers five hours previously, and nary a cop in sight!!!

Meanwhile those unfortunates trapped in elevators—96 in the Empire State Building alone—were enduring their plight with the same sort of equanimity exhibited in the subways. Here too the people entertained one another with improvised games, such as the unlikeliest partners for stalled elevators. This was readily won with the combination of Defence Secretary Macnamara and a draft card burner. In an elevator in the RCA Building one gentleman gave a course in Yoga positions. When firemen chopped their way into one immobilised car, they asked: "Are there any pregnant women in here?" They were answered: "We've hardly met!"

Surface transportation reflected the same sort of co-operation and solidarity. Even though the Transit Authority was running 3,500 of its 4,000 buses it could barely make a dent. Therefore countless thousands hiked home across the bridges or up the avenues. Others waited calmly in line at the bus stops, with no pushing or shoving. Nobody seemed to take advantage of the confusion to avoid paying fares, although some passengers couldn't have paid if they'd tried—they were riding on the rear bumpers. Bus drivers themselves were inordinately accommodating, calling out each stop as they approached. In New York this comes under the heading of *mirabile dictu*. At the

same time, dozens of private automobiles were loading up at every intersection with absolute strangers.

On the other hand all was not sweetness and light during the darkness. Some people capitalized on others' vulnerability. About 100 windows were smashed in, and about 41 looters were arrested (none in blue uniform). All told perhaps a dozen stores were looted, which is absolutely negligible in a city of over eight million. Even Police Commissioner Broderick conceded that both the crime and the casualty rates for the night were far below normal. (So who needs him?) One enterprising gunman held up a rare-coin dealer by the flickering light of the shop's only candle—a touching vignette to be sure. There were a total of 65 persons arrested for burglary, larceny, or felonious assault—as opposed to a typical 380 for a comparable 16-hour stretch. The sum total of arrests for all crimes was only 25 per cent of what it would have been during an ordinary night. There were very few shoplifters reported, which is nothing short of miraculous considering the open-house policy of the department stores (cf. *infra*). Moreover there were only 33 vehicle accidents involving injuries, and 44 involving property damage—and this in the world's largest city, completely devoid of traffic lights! There was one bus that ploughed into a crowd of people in Queens knocking down 38 persons, some of whom were seriously injured. The driver—evidently in complete consternation—jumped out and fled. Yet his actions must be viewed in context with the fact that his was only one out of 3,500 buses operating under these weird conditions.

Somewhere along the line a subway motorman found himself facing charges of rape for flashing a badge and leading a young lady to the ostensible safety of his room. Yet later in court he contended that on any number of previous occasions he had led the same young lady to a similar lair to similarly lay her, so who knows. . . . Progressing from debatably to unquestionably false alarms, we find that the Fire Department reported a much higher incidence than usual: 227 rather than the typical 50. This is totally irreconcilable with anarchist theory, so I've decided not to mention it at all.

Easily offsetting those relatively few human beings who acted like capitalists were the many capitalists who acted like human beings. For example many department stores flirted with free access for the evening. Macy's played host to an estimated 5,000 customers and employees for the night—inviting one and all to make themselves comfortable, and serving them all coffee, sandwiches, cookies, and candy. Needless to say, the furniture department on the ninth floor was the best spot for comfort. Meanwhile, across the street, Gimbels was featuring a guitar-playing salesman for the entertainment of its customer/guests. One of the songs they reportedly joined in on was the old wartime favourite, "When the Lights Go on Again All Over the World". Evidently no one was familiar with "We Shall Over-

come". Lord and Taylor's turned over its entire second floor to customers for the duration of the blackout, while B. Altman's turned over its first. Altman's, incidentally, has its own power generator, so there was some light by which to enjoy the caviare and specially blended coffee which were among the imported delicacies provided by the gourmet department and served to shoppers and employees. Five hundred stayed there overnight, evidently being unable to tear themselves away from all that caviare. Bloomingdales turned over its home furnishings department to strandeers—one woman slept on an \$800 (£287) sofa—and then capped it off by having its staff serve breakfast to everyone the next morning. Fina Company had a combination sales meeting and dinner scheduled for that evening, but they catered it to customers instead. Bonwit Teller chartered two buses to get its employees home, and suggested that they hold hands leaving the store so that none would get lost. Indicative of the prevailing mood was the fact that the employees danced out of the store together because "someone thought it would be fun". Meanwhile 40 people were bedded down for the night in the showroom of the Simmons Mattress Co.

The city's hotels came through in grand style. The Commodore set up 150 cots in a banquet room. Both the Roosevelt and the Algonquin switched elderly guests and those with heart conditions to the lower floors. At the Stanhope the manager gave up his own room, and an assistant manager carried a crippled woman up to the 16th floor. On arrival, she said, "Now I'd like a glass of water," so he procured one. At the Statler Hilton two bellmen carried a crippled guest to the 7th floor, but it was not reported what his needs were on arrival. The Americana passed out blankets and pillows to the 200 occupants of its plush lobby—most of the other hotels merely provided their lobbies as free space. The Sheraton-Atlantic, whose lobby was occupied by some 2,000 people, considered the evening somewhat less than a total loss, because as one manager pointed out, "The bar is doing a land-office business". That hotel's report seemed typical: 99 per cent of the people were "terrific" but a few guests tried to sublet their rooms at double the rate.

Unfortunately, utopian free access was much less prevalent in food than it was in shelter. Nevertheless one meat market in Brooklyn donated a whole pig to a neighbouring convent thereby providing roast pork snacks to everybody for blocks around. Two numerically named restaurants, 21 and Four Seasons, adopted a policy dangerously akin to "from each according to his ability; to each according to his need". The 21 passed out steak sandwiches and free drinks without limit, while Four Seasons ladled out free soup. Fully to appreciate the enormity of this, reflect on the following: in 1960, when prices presumably were lower, an acquaintance of mine told me that two friends of his went to Four Seasons for luncheon. Including drinks and tip it cost them nearly \$60 (over £21) while the band played

"Nearer my Veblen to Thee". My wife and I didn't happen to go there that night so we missed out on the free soup, but we did enjoy knishes by candlelight at our own expense in a nearby delicatessen. Many other restaurants, although they didn't give away food, stayed open all night to provide free shelter.

Most downtown offices close at 5 p.m. and were empty when the blackout struck. Those still occupied did whatever they could. Revlon, for example, gave its girls couches in the executive offices and then told them to take the next day off. One of their secretaries, stuck on the 27th floor, ate crabmeat and graham cracker sandwiches, and described her experience with a wistful: "I had a great time." Whether she was alluding to the crabmeat or the couches was not made clear.

All sorts of institutions opened their doors, or in some instances dropped their gangways, as a free public service during the emergency. Final estimates included well over 400 people who had been put up for the night in staterooms of ships in port when the lights went out. Armouries were thrown open to all comers, while railroad stations, airlines terminals, and churches sheltered countless thousands.

The 34th Street Armoury alone accommodated 1,500 refugees, offering wooden chairs and what illumination could be furnished from the headlights of a few jeeps parked in the middle of the drill floor. For some unexplained reason no cots were available. Naturally Rockefeller had immediately called out the National Guard, which is always a good safe ploy for masking gubernatorial inutility. According to the *New York Post* the Guardsmen were armed with rifles "unloaded but impressive". To complete the farce they wore packs containing ponchos and gas masks, perhaps out of fear that someone would fart. The Guard's major contribution seems to have been scouring the area around 34th Street and Park Avenue until 1.30 a.m.—a full eight hours after the attentat—at which point they finally came up with coffee and French bread for the besieged. Compare this forlorn, dilatory effort on the part of the military to the ingenuity of the prostitutes in their quest for bread. *Life Magazine* pointed out that these ladies "were among the first to procure flashlights", indicating that the yen is still mightier than the sword.

At the Central Commercial High School, a double session school, the second session runs from 12.30 to 5.50 p.m. Thus there were 1,000 students being subjected to obfuscation when the blackout struck. Some 400 of these left during the course of the evening as parents arrived to pick them up, but the school officials kept the other 600 in the classrooms all night. These joked, sang, and later put their heads on their desks and slept—readily taking the crisis in stride. Of course they were nowhere near as comfortable as the lucky ones who spent the night cradled in luxurious barber chairs, but they were infinitely better off than the hundreds who sought sanctuary in St.

Patrick's Cathedral. These were huddled in the pews without even a hair shirt for warmth, and worst of all, no bogs. Mgr. McGovern later confessed, "We've been sending people over to the New Western Hotel for 80 years," which tends to confirm something many of us have long suspected: God's up shit creek.

Of far more serious import was the situation in hospitals. Here, too, people improvised brilliantly in the emergency. At Bellevue a delicate cornea transplant was under way when the lights went out, but was successfully completed by battery-operated floodlights. At St. John's, under similar conditions, emergency surgery was performed on two people whose spleen had been ruptured in the previously mentioned bus accident. In another hospital a five-hour craniotomy was performed by makeshift light. Final reports indicated at least five dozen babies delivered by candle or otherwise. One man died tragically in the emergency room at Flushing Hospital. He had been in an automobile accident prior to the blackout and was already under surgery when the lights went out. Only two other deaths in New York City were attributed directly to the blackout: one man suffered a heart attack from climbing ten flights of stairs, and a second fell down a stairway and struck his head. Injuries, of course, were much more common: at the emergency ward of Bellevue alone, 145 patients were treated for blackout injuries—broken arms or legs from falls, car accident victims, and some heart cases. Police, firemen, and volunteers rushed dry ice to the city's hospitals to keep stored blood from spoiling, whereas a distress call from St. Vincent's brought forth 30 volunteers from a Greenwich Village coffee house to hand-pump iron lungs.

Although New York offered perhaps the most spectacular, and in view of its well-deserved reputation for ruthless competition, the most unexpected examples of mutual aid, the same pattern was repeated everywhere throughout the blacked-out area. It was solidarity, ingenuity, lack of hysteria, consideration, etc., and little or no government. In Toronto, Ontario, businessmen directed traffic, and in the process unsnarled the city's all-time record traffic jam. Among other things all the street-cars and trolley buses had stopped dead. In Albany, New York, teenagers with transistor radios went from house to house advising residents to turn off electric appliances. In Burlington, Vermont, 200 people hurried with flashlights to the local hospital in answer to a radio plea which later turned out to be a prank. In Springfield, Vermont, a barber finished trimming a customer's hair by the headlights a motorist aimed in his front window. All over the stricken territory civilians patrolled areas, directed traffic, and maintained order. Included among all these civilian volunteers would have to be the contingent of Boston gendarmes who rushed out of the Policemen's Ball dressed in tuxedos. Devoid of badge, uniform and gun these were on identical footing with the students from Boston University who also pitched in.

Incident after incident offered irrefutable proof that society can

function without the implicit threats of force and violence which constitute the state. There was probably more freedom from law, however temporary, in that blacked-out 80,000-mile area than there has been at any time since it was originally stolen from murdered and/or defrauded Indians. And it yielded compelling evidence of anarchist theories. As Kropotkin once stated: "We are not afraid to say 'Do what you will; act as you will', because we are persuaded that the great majority of mankind, in proportion to their degree of enlightenment, and the completeness with which they free themselves from existing fetters, will behave and act always in a direction useful to society."

Such then might be the blackout's confirmation of Kropotkin. What reinforcement does it offer Bakunin? Actually a good deal, but I'll cite only one case—a frequently distorted quotation which Max Nettlau once described as "a clarion call for revolution in the widest sense". Written in 1842, some 20 years before Bakunin became an anarchist, in fact before he could even be considered a conscious revolutionary, it appeared at the conclusion of an article entitled "Reaction in Germany", under the pseudonym Jules Elysard: "The urge to destroy is a creative urge". Bakunin's detractors, both in and out of the anarchist movement, invariably swoop down like vultures on that line. However Bakuninists might suffer less dismay (and, let's face it, embarrassment) if they viewed it in context with a heart-warming article which appeared in the Financial Section of the *New York Post* the day after the blackout: "Without power, Computers Died and Wall Street Stopped".

On the other hand, if the blackout provided all sorts of verification for decentralists, anarchists, Kropotniks and Bakuninists, what comfort did it offer to pacifists? The answer is, damn little. As both James Wechsler (*New York Post*) and Brad Lyttle (*Peace News*) pointed out, the same sort of unfathomable but infallible electronic technology which blacked out 30 million of us temporarily is exactly what we're relying on to prevent an accidental World War III blacking out three billion of us permanently! Small solace to me is the fact that the whole god-damned Pentagon will come down as local fall-out: my urge to destroy is not quite that creative. What with the hot line conked out, and the blithe "assurance" from the First Regional Army Air Defence Commander that despite the blackout "all of the Army's missile sites on the Eastern Coast are operative", it was obviously a case of genocide continued as usual. Bring on the Dark Ages!

The final object lesson of the blackout? The predictable, virtually automatic, responses of various members of society when confronted by crisis: soldiers fall back on their weapons; clergymen fall back on their prayers; doctors fall back on their antibiotics; bureaucrats fall back on their desks; and politicians fall back on their asses. But people fall back on one another, and in that fact must remain all the hopes—however minimal—for the survival of the human race.

The Great (big) Society

G. H. TICHENOR

AN AIR VIEW OF NEW YORK OR LOS ANGELES gives the reflective observer the uneasy notion that American society is badly misdirected and without purpose. In particular, Los Angeles is an example of civic gangrene: Shacks, beer parlours, blacktops, and swimming pools are spread over the hot countryside by the action of self-generated noxious gases. This is the "good life" in a society where the quality of living is tied directly to technical innovation, manipulation, and the trashy images of status without excellence. A nation founded on radical political and social ideas evolves none of them while the middle-mass pursues those demanding processes attendant to the acquisition and digestion of national resources. The strident pace of life furnishes no opportunity for inward speculation which might lead to the realization that American society is not divine act, but accident, and that life could be made freer and more rewarding, not futile and distracting, as it is for most people. The scene is somewhat reminiscent of a Florentine plague-party; people try to forget unpleasant facts by means of organized fun. Americans are much more likely to accept the realities of Disneyland than they are of the bomb. Easy wealth has created its own burden and its own justification; this, in a democratic country, has made it almost impossible to alter the present accidental course or to improve on the quality of life by radical and deliberate change in the social-economic mechanism.

The large commercial organization is the most prominent feature of social topography in the New Jerusalem, therefore, the most obvious place to begin an autopsy, especially since a nation of employees professes such suspicious loyalty to a "free enterprise system".

The 18th-century ideal of rationality and individualism has a cherished place in the American garden of myth. The justification for such an entrepreneurial society is that it is free and flexible and that the individual is the best judge of the ways and means of attending to his own satisfaction. Of course, to apply this same sanction to the immortal, amoral, commanding corporation is one of those incombustible errors which generations of liberals have not yet succeeded in exploding. In an entrepreneurial society, an impartial market place for all goods and services is an essential part of mechanism. No trader is to enjoy a favoured position and the most successful will

someday die. The large corporation, however, has advantages over the individual; no bothersome conscience, infinite life, and the economic drive and potential to abrogate those unprofitable social benefits of the impartial market place and perfect competition.

A commercial undertaking is brought about through some social need or desire, or some useful innovation. And, though it may not be true when organizations have budded from some parent body, the success, as measured by the growth of the enterprise, is roughly in proportion to the price society is willing to pay for the services it performs. This is a mixed blessing in a society which is debased and willing to reward innovators of anti-humanitarian things. However, "free enterprise" on a small scale is a useful device because it innovates, functions automatically, and does serve to ration goods and services in a way to ensure maximum satisfaction and utility with a given distribution of incomes. Attempts by governments to burden such small activities with bureaucratic controls are a great mistake as these organizations are a source of novelty and without political power—that is, they stand only on their economic merits and thus, are socially useful. If anyone should want to introduce an invention, or run an efficient store, by all means, allow him.

A successful small enterprise will eventually grow into, or be bought by, a big one. There comes a point where it can no longer expand rapidly as it must now function in a market shared among a few large competitors. In the new environment, however, there are compensating advantages of bulk. Profits which formerly financed expansion are now applied to maintaining the organization's position and in providing economic safety for it and its management. Unfortunately, a complex technical society requires large organizations; there is no other way of making such things as automobiles. Further, the work can be so sub-divided that the whole can be the sum of the efforts of second-rate hands and brains who can master the codex of regulations and their own narrow specialty within the framework of the organization. In selling the end product, it is, in many cases, the practice of purchasers to buy an accustomed brand from an habitual source in order to save the trouble and uncertainty of making their decisions in the market place. Lastly, large corporations enjoy the privilege of a sanctuary where casual competition cannot venture by reason of the high cost involved in mastering the required techniques and in developing contacts and paths of communication. In an environment of few competitors, an accord usually exists whereby price competition ("unfair competition, unethical business practices, chiselling") is accepted as being beyond the bounds of corporate warfare and not a respectable part of the "free enterprise" ethic. Rounds of price cutting have a disastrous effect on the profits of the industry as a whole, so smaller companies usually set their prices in line with the leaders in the field. Once a corporation has reached the commanding heights, it enjoys relative safety and has, at its disposal, profits which arise, in part, from the degree of monopoly it has been

able to acquire. These are not the fruits of present innovation, but of present position and they can be used in an anti-social way, without fear of a higher subordination. In addition, the Government maintains tariffs to lessen foreign competition and the policy of full employment keeps the marginally efficient employers in business while it augments the profits of others.

From the inside, a large corporate bureaucracy resembles a club or masonic lodge. Its favoured economic position allows for feeding and upkeep of a large corps of managerial hangers-on who can do well for themselves, not on the basis of any useful work they generate, but by their agreeability and political skills. A successful executive may invent much unnecessary work and then persuade others to do it in the hope that his energy will attract higher recognition. In such a situation, it does not do to have too sharp an eye for the quality of work or its real utility, because, in the regions of middle management, there are always the eager and unprincipled who will mount, and try to inflate, all available molehills, in the hope of achieving some kind of bubble-prominence in that warped society.

The action of Social Darwinism is evolving some strange and malproportioned pathological specimens within the womb of the corporation. Aside from the outright drudges and the misfits who wonder what it's all about, there is a type of organization man whose drive, augmented by a good grounding in basic ignorance of the eternal verities, is rather frightening. In a series on successful young executives appearing in *Fortune*,¹ the most remarkable characteristics of men on the way up were found to be a humourless intensity coupled with confidence and the ability to concentrate on business problems. Now it is a rather shallow mind that can generate deep confidence in matters of business and war, and, in passing, the author mentions Ian Fleming as a typical literary diversion for the thoroughbreds of the business world. The deficiency in broader interests and in the humanities is mentioned as an impediment to the top positions, though one would think they would be a formidable bar to getting in at all, for the successes of Willis Wayde and Widmerpool are due to this shortcoming, as much as anything else. Known to others who read more than Bond books, the possibilities of such unbecoming, unpalatable, specialists commanding increasing authority and power over their mental and moral betters in an organized society, are not pleasant. The *Scientific American*² which is generally accepted as a publication for rational people (though presumably read by the young executive), has taken to running automobile advertisements whose appeal(?) is evidently slanted to the upward mobile:

Chrysler Imperial—Leathers, hand-rubbed with Tahitian coconut and wale oils to make them more supple. . . . And there's even a master gauge to watch over all the other gauges. . . . Interior appointments include rare, 100-year-old claro walnut.

¹June, 1964, *et seq.*, "The Young Executive", by W. Guzzardi, Jr.

²April, 1965.

Lincoln Continental—It is an automobile owned by more and more men of accomplishment. It distinguishes them from among fine car owners.
Mercedes-Benz—Arrogant, Mercedes-Benz may be . . . but a little arrogance never hurt anyone.

Where's there's muck, there's money. Also, one does not place oneself in the line of march between the slightly arrogant young executive and his pacifier.

As has been illustrated in a large number of recent books on the subject, the grey, banal, society of the organization is composed of two sorts of people; the mediocre, and the energetically so. The innovator is faced with frustration because the prosperous atmosphere engenders solid conservatism. If things are going well, why change? Because of this, and policies of company secrecy, much of the scientific and engineering talent the large corporations buy with their heavy earnings and defence contracts is cruelly wasted. It is set to work on problems which are not problems, but symptoms of corporate politics, on problems whose solutions must be in line with short-run policies or goals. A company with a large interest in vacuum cleaners is not going to develop a means of doing away with rugs. With some exceptions, radical innovations (Xerox copying, the polaroid camera, the ball-pen) have to be introduced by small outsiders because, paradoxically, large corporations are not really interested in the good ideas—the ones that may put them out of business. The only progress acceptable, indeed necessary, since the aim is always to develop from an established position, is a step-by-step evolution, maintaining full protection, and innovating, as required, to expand a given market or to cut costs (not overheads). Above all, one must not upset the existing situation—which is hardly a creative one.

Some exceptional, well-rounded people do survive the climb up the corporate ladder, as they do in the Army. But, it is an ethical strain to live with the pretence of an organization personality. The masquerade can lead to moral self-destruction in the process whereby, supposedly individualistic, freedom-loving, red-blooded American louts are turned into the liveried house-serfs of the organizational feudality.

People have always accepted the division of labour as a mixed economic blessing. The performance of boring tasks as only a small part of an obscure manufacturing process was thought to lead to de-humanizing of the industrial proletariat—and it does. Personnel managers who try to build a "team image", build with sand. Most intelligent workers want the most compensation for the least effort, because the work is not demanding or enduring, it is simple and pointless. This is an honest attitude compared to that of the white-collar worker, writing odes to arrogant automobiles, proclaiming to his fellows (and supervisor) that this is his great life-calling. The marginally more intelligent see all this as a little too ridiculous and, therefore, the work may be represented to them in terms of "career goals and opportunities", that is, as an arbitrary vehicle to rise to higher salary/status levels in the corporate lodge chapter, not as a

service or *summum bonum*.

If something is difficult to change, and is esteemed, "as is", one can generally make more of it, or make it bigger. Growth is a way of life for organizations and cancer. A growing company is getting nourishment and plush vacancies in the bureaucratic pyramid are to let. Mistakes are easy to forget. Since a growing economy has a high demand for investment goods which will drop off if the rate of growth falters, the Government will always apply the balm of public funds to keep the machine growing, going, and providing full employment. The simple expansion of an existing market is one avenue left to large concerns which have passed their peak in technical or economic innovation. To try to foster growth in the demand for a product at a profitable price, the consumer must be influenced on non-economic grounds. This is the function of advertising.

It is in advertising that a corporation assumes a political role which is not to the benefit of society. Because, in spite of all the efforts of P-R men who seem to do best in dazzling their own managements, the corporation is not a genial sugar-daddy of infinite wealth and wisdom, but an amoral automaton which pursues its own short-run interest by any means within and, in the case of G.E. price-fixing, outside the law. The reason for corporate lack of feeling for social consequences is the fact that everyone in it likes to see it make money, but, in the specialized, compartmented, committee-ridden, decision-making process, no one can be pinned down with moral responsibility. Not even Quaker Oats would be a conscientious objector. Thus, when advertising is used to "create" a demand for a product, or a brand "image", the specialist uses every psychological trick and gimmick to bias the market and to build a degree of monopoly in the company's favour. There is every appeal, in advertising, to primitive sensibilities; sex, power, and self-indulgence, in all guises. The capsule sell simply cannot convey, except by triggering a chain of thought, messages to the higher emotions, and, in any event, a reasoned analysis by the consumer might lead to the conclusion that he didn't need the product in the first place. However, there is a notion, perhaps well founded, that people have begun to like the primitive stimulus for its own sake. The following appeared in *Sunset* (June, 1965), a Californian publication catering to middle-class housewives with the most up-to-date behavioural reflexes, consumption-wise. As a sort of reverent preamble to the advertising section, to develop the right image, as it were, a man and woman are shown drinking a toast by candle-light. From their mysterious, intent expressions, this might be a suicide tryst; unfortunately, not.

METAMORPHOSIS

To them, the right bank of the Hudson may be the
left bank of the Seine . . . for theirs is that special
magic of imagination.

Compelled to tread the footprints of the past . . .
Challenged by the unknown of the future . . .
They constantly seek new things to do . . .

. . . new places to go . . . new sights to see.
Within these pages they find information and products
that motivate their desires . . . stimulate their
understanding.

They are the people who want to *see for themselves* . . .
. . . and they read this magazine, just as you do.

Evidently, there has now arisen a class of consumers which plies itself with commercial aphrodisiacs for the purpose of "motivating" itself to consume still more. Modern advertising is hardly a public service, it is the very essence of social aimlessness and irresponsibility. Because it is used to create an irrational desire for a particular brand, it leads to monopoly profits. Because it is regarded as a cost of production, society, as a whole, must pay for it. Because it uses "the communication media", it corrupts them. It is the driving force behind the senseless, "Brave New World", drift of society.

Much promotion would be wasted, were it not for the fact that the great American goal of making and spending is tied up with women. A country which revolves around females of all ages, shapes, and dispositions is at the mercy of their sensual, superficial, and narcissistic attitudes. Other populations are less inclined to accommodate themselves to the artificial burden of suburban houses, squashy automobiles, turquoise-tinted dishwashers, and disposable dinners. The American male slides unwittingly into early marriage and a process whereby *he* goes out and tries to make enough (never mind how) to support *her* material appetites. Appetites, by the way, which have been fostered in her by the advertising industry or by the social values of conformist suburban society.

Efficient capitalism requires knowledgeable buyers, not gulled housewives who make most of their purchasing decisions while under the influence of the practitioners of psychological manipulation, or who are looking for the status symbols to compensate for well-founded feelings of personal inadequacy. Household appliances are a good example of the latter; they flatter by the implication that the few minutes they may save are commensurate with their costs, or, as gifts, that somebody cares about the time a bored clubwoman has neither the brains nor the inclination to use productively. Children in the suburbs are rather an enigma. Barely hatched, they are dispatched to a nursery school to pick up all the values of their peer-pack at the first glimmerings of consciousness. Not encouraged to be individuals, or even disciplined, it is difficult to imagine the satisfaction in owning one. Perhaps they are all a part of God's plan for supplying the next generation of consumers.

There was a time, in Great Britain, when draper's apprentices worked long hours in shops which stayed open to attract custom. Realizing that the total amount of trade was constant, Parliament set limits to open hours so that shop assistants, instead of pursuing flash pleasures for relief after work, could use their greater leisure to cultivate their intellectual and moral resources. Likewise, reformers

thought that shorter hours, provided by the same industrial revolution which had rendered work life so debased, would act as a counter-balance by permitting cultivation of civilizing interests in politics, music, art and literature. That this basic assumption was so innocent, and is so ludicrously contrary to the fun-loving pattern of modern society, is an indication of the great failure of modern liberalism; it has concentrated on material welfare, and not on education in the broadest sense. The working day has been shortened, but a greater portion of the people are no longer their own masters and, released from the day's insect-efforts, they escape to the embrace of the one-eyed Baal, or to the bowling alley.

The disagreeable aspects of the undirected, money-motivated society have been described, in detail, by liberals for over a century, with only limited and superficial results. The reason is, there has never been a solution put forward which did not introduce more problems than it attempted to solve, and that there has been no desire for utopian plans in the advanced countries where material wants were satisfied, with a vengeance. However, the pressing need at the moment is for a means of control for society, to direct the blind forces of organized units away from the direction of atomic war.

The US "defence" costs are about two-thirds of the Federal Budget and, paradoxically, under the present rules of society, contribute to the superficial interests of influential segments of both business and labour by creating artificial demands for goods and services which, in the short-run, lead to higher levels of activity and profits in the large defence sector, and elsewhere, than would otherwise be the case. From the economic view, the situation is somewhat similar to the community which existed by breaking and repairing its own windows. But, established interests are usually without vision, conscience, or even a redeeming modesty in pressing their own advantage.

Like halitosis, the Communist Menace has been merchandised to the point of reflex action. Those who regard themselves as the defenders of the nation, in industry and in the Pentagon, see it as their justification and, though all but a few could be said to want war, most would stand to profit in terms of status, purpose, and cash, from an increase in the cold war activity in their own particular domain. It is easy to see the importance of adequate control here, for, if each interest would be given latitude to ride its own hobby-horse, the United States could be levered forward, as each step brought a response from the other side, into the final war. It was mainly by a process of successful, unauthorized adventures by the military machine in China, sanctioned by mob patriotism at home, that Japan managed to manoeuvre herself into the choice of 1941.

For control, it is necessary to have a definite policy or goal, the correct tools for executing it, and the quick and accurate determination of its effects, so that the policy can be modified, if required. In other words, like many natural processes, this involves a feed-back loop.

Now, one of the present defects in the American democratic process is that the framers of policy are men whose great virtue is their political expediency and whose public views are at all times co-ordinated with the shifting, inconsistent, consensus of their ad-educated, lemming-like, constituents. The cardinal goal in periods of prosperity is a conservative programme of maintaining high business activity, not of making changes to improve the efficiency of the system or of promoting revolutionary doctrine in the undeveloped areas of the world.

Foreign policy is not the best topic with which to illustrate the virtues of a democratic society, especially a powerful one. There is a defect in the feed-back path as those most intimately concerned with the effects (foreigners) are not able to make their responses felt through domestic parliamentary channels except very imperfectly. Therefore, in former times, and in other countries, much foreign policy has been left to an establishment, sufficiently well-educated and cosmopolitan to be sensitive to foreign aspirations and to temper the voice of the people and effect compromise. In the present situation, the State Department is only one of several organizations playing with foreign policy and its own executors are often second-rate political appointees. Feelings of revolt at US policies are allowed to prosper in indifference, or, worse yet, reinforce "hard-line" domestic opinions which strengthen the Government in its prevailing attitude. There are loops of cause and effect in operation which work approximately as follows:

1. Communism and sin are interchangeable words to a large portion of the American public. A fear reflex has been generated by the right wing, and by business interests at work on the press. These organizations stand to profit by the cold war, or have been in the habit of opposing attempts at regulation by labelling them as "socialistic" while trying to infuse a fear of Red Revolution, aided by politicians out to promote their own futures.
2. The Government takes a very firm stand "against communism", since very few votes will ever be lost thereby. Just how, or by what natural authority, this policy is to be implemented, is not well defined.
3. Rather than concocting an American counter-reformation, a sort of *ersatz* communism, for parts of the world which seem to have a taste for it, the Government, being in the nature of a short-sighted organization itself, adopts short-run methods for countering the symptoms of a political movement by means of military force and sponsored repression to "contain" it on an *ad hoc* basis.
4. The executors of the policy are the same organizations reporting on the results. Therefore, information flowing back to the public and the Government is distorted in the interests of some puppet ruler, the C.I.A., etc. The lack of reliable, speedy information—or even outright lies invented by interested parties in the Government—leads to a false understanding of the realities of the situation,

and the pushing of policy up a blind alley, as in the case of the Dominican and Cuban fiascos. Did it also occur in Vietnam?

5. Depending on the vigour of communist response, an awkward move by the US may generate more anti-communist sentiment at home which, coupled with war-boom, brings on a positive reinforcement of the reflex and the development of an existing situation into something worse, starting again at step 1, and so on. But only for a little while. . . .

It is easy to see how, if the leaders of the nation are without vision and values, or even comprehension, such a situation could develop without anyone being able to stop the process. However, building saleable images for ordinary politicians is a job of Madison Avenue, and the erosion of independent judgement and character is the effect of the activities of organized commercial interests. As long as "the business of America is business", it is marked for death, in one way or another, as each minor mandarin pursues his own avenue to the satisfaction of insatiable, artificial appetites. The ungrounded life, the pointless life, will demand distraction of an increasingly superficial kind. Any inquiry into the basic significance of these organized activities is met with incomprehension and resentment because, like death, which this state resembles, reality cannot be accepted.

The less organized man lives in contact with the means for looking after his own basic needs and can take pride in his own creative ability, craftsmanship, and independence, not in his neuroses. Under such conditions, there is no variety of goods, but one of character and temperament. There are communities which have spawned genius and others which have managed to suppress it. Wichita, Kansas, has more wealth and leisure, and roughly the same population as Periclean Athens, 15th-century Florence, or Victorian Dublin. It is only a part of American efforts at cultural sterility that causes everything to be reduced to the same merchandiseable, low level.

Automation is another step in releasing man from the need to labour in order to survive. Are the benefits to be used in increased consumption? Though many Americans manage to consume more than the 18th-century aristocracy, they think a lot less on matters of importance. They are so damnably wrapped up in the process of production and consumption that they do not realize that even their present industry could be re-directed along lines of increased economic efficiency. People could work less, retain their present living standards, and use their leisure for creative or instructive pursuits, in functional work where the ultimate reward is not a meaningless title or a rising level of personal waste.

Avoiding the system is difficult. Luddite utopias demand too great an adjustment and a sacrifice of conveniences along with distractions. The course adopted by some artists and other outcasts is to work in some industrial *oubliette* only long enough to supply funds for basic needs. This work habit has, incidentally, been found in

backward countries where native labour will put in fewer hours if paid a higher wage rate. Of course, the practice runs counter to the corporate ethic and such people are frowned on. But, they can lead fuller and more interesting lives than the organization man, if they so choose. The signs that the top and bottom elements, the bread of the social sandwich, are withdrawing from middle-brow society and living on temporary jobs, or on the dole, are greeted by cries of outrage from the more energetic elements of the population.

There is little hope for a reformation of the bee-hive society. It has strong perpetuative forces and almost everyone sees it as a good thing. There are only minor symptoms of disintegration which are found among the outcasts at the bottom of the social ladder. Without marketable skills, and without a set of values to provide any non-material sense of achievement, they are exhorted by example and advertising to glory in excessive consumption and, being highly suggestible, they adopt short-cut, violent avenues to status symbols and power as frustrations are released in riots and looting.

American society is literally a self-destructive and accelerating rat-race. Building a rational one, one that offers more than one path of satisfaction and achievement, is going to require a new spirit of radicalism implemented by a political theory of social dynamics which can describe the flow of information, the feed-back loops and control of the large organization. Conventional nationalization is no solution so long as it is only the substitution of one form of inefficiency for another. All bureaucracies are basically beastly and must be developed on different lines if they are to be made tolerable to live with, and in. The present society, because it is wasteful and materially inefficient, works to create false standards and ideals which direct people into fields of functionless activity which serve no moral purpose. It is going to be the task of some latter-day Marx to find a solution that is at once so simple and so necessary that it will withstand the test of application and, hopefully, will provide an outlet for the free exercise of the higher and more creative human aspirations.

Malcolm, semper Malcolm

CHARLES RADCLIFFE

"When I am dead—I say it because from things I know, I do not expect to live long enough to read this book in its finished form—I want you to just watch and see if I'm not right in what I say: that the white man, in his press, is going to identify me with 'hate'. He will make use of me dead, as he has made use of me alive, as a convenient symbol of 'hatred'—and that will help him to escape facing the truth that all I have been doing is holding up a mirror to reflect, to show, the history of unspeakable crimes that his race has committed against my race."

MALCOLM X, IT HAS BEEN ASSUMED both in the USA and elsewhere, was simply a Negro fascist, whose extremist attitudes bedevilled the "peaceful solution" of America's racial crisis. This view has arisen mainly because of the liberal belief in the efficacy and rightness of the non-violent civil rights struggle and the illogical "corollary" belief in the inefficacy and wrongness of other methods of struggle. If anarchist commentators have been less ready to denounce his violence they have as happily contributed to the public image of Malcolm as a hate-crazed racist.¹ Now that his autobiography has been published, it should, if nothing else, correct this false but convenient image; false because it denies the complexity, inconsistency and evolution of Malcolm's ideas, and convenient because it enables these ideas the more easily to be dismissed. In a way that most biographies are not, this book is Malcolm X.*

His father was murdered when Malcolm Little² was 6; his mother was as casually declared insane by criminally indifferent public authorities when he was 13. For the next seven years Malcolm's life followed the archetypal pattern of ghetto delinquency. He was a shoe-

*THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM X, with Alex Haley (New York, Grove Press \$7.50, London, Hutchinson 45s.)

shine boy, a pimp, a hustler, a procurer for white sex perverts, a pusher and user of drugs and the leader of a burglary gang. By the time he was jailed, in February, 1946, shortly before he was 21, he was carrying at least two, and often three guns. In jail he proudly accepted the nickname Satan—until he met a convict called Bimbi. "What fascinated me with him most of all was that he was the first man I had ever seen command total respect . . . with words". Bimbi "turned Malcolm round" and Malcolm started correspondence courses in English and, later, Latin. It was not until 1948 that he first heard of Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam—the so-called Black Muslims—from his brother Philbert. "I wrote Philbert a letter which, although in improved English, was worse than my earlier reply to his news that I was being prayed for by his 'Holiness' church". Later came a letter from his brother Reginald: "Malcolm, don't eat any more pork, and don't smoke any more cigarettes. I'll show you how to get out of prison". Malcolm's automatic response was to think "he had come up with some way I could work a hype on the penal authorities". Gradually, however, Malcolm was convinced. He wrote frequently to Elijah Muhammad and he left prison in 1952 a Muslim, though, as he later discovered, a somewhat unorthodox one for the Nation of Islam bore much the same relationship to Islam as the various apocalyptic Christian sects do to the major churches.

Black Nationalism is not a recent phenomenon in the USA; during the 1920's Marcus Garvey's movement attracted sufficient attention for him to be deported, and the roots go back to slavery. The Black Muslims themselves were founded in the 1930's by W. D. Fard, salesman of Oriental carpets, whose beginnings and end no one knows, but who is assumed by the Nation of Islam to have been the incarnate Allah, visiting the USA to free the Negroes. The movement gained strength at almost the same points in time as the Civil Rights Movement, after the war and particularly in the early mid-fifties which were, curiously, periods of limited but genuine advance in race relations. Such improvements have been slow; often they have succeeded not so much in affecting the status of individuals as in raising their aspirations and, with them, their frustrations. Likewise the collapse of African colonialism in the years since the war has been an incentive towards the destruction of a remarkably similar structure in the USA. However, the largest single factor in the rise of the Black Muslims, and the one they significantly do not share with the Southern Civil Rights Movement, has been their appeal to the urban Negro lumpen proletariat, the section of American society described by the Negro poet Calvin Hernton in the following words:³ "The people are cold, they live with rats and roaches, the people are dying, their faces, before they reach fifteen years of age, are ruined with the poverty of centuries; their minds are thoroughly deprived from public and private denial of dignity as human beings. In the 'Negro section' of every town in America, on the 'main drag', in liquor joints and beer joints, in pool rooms, barber shops, in dingy luncheonettes, at 'hangout'

corners on the streets and milling around stations such as the court house or the local branch of a national bank—everywhere the black masses are the ‘hoodlums’ of our civilisation. They are the cultural alienates. Unlike the professional and skilled Negroes, the black masses of domestics, unskilled labourers, hustlers and the unemployed (over 50,000 are unemployed in Watts!), all are without hope of ever achieving a better life. For the black masses never have enough money! They possess no land and there is little chance of ever acquiring land; they have nothing to claim or reclaim; deep in the recesses of their psyches they are aware that the respectable Negro revolution is not, when it comes to them, really a revolution; they are totally demilitarised; although they have fought and died in many foreign lands and jungles, in the jungles of their own country they cannot defend themselves when whites are setting dogs on them and throwing bricks and kicking them and calling them niggers and killing them. And there is the police, whose sole function in the ghetto is much worse than the function of the SS guards of Nazi concentration camps”.

The condition of these people has in fact grown worse over the years, just as their aspirations have risen. For example, in 1952, before the “breakthrough” in race relations, the average Negro family’s income was 57 per cent of the average white family’s income. Ten years later it was 54 per cent. The following is taken from an article written in 1963:⁴ I have not been able to obtain more recent figures but I understand the situation has further worsened, and almost certainly these figures are misleadingly optimistic. “Negro unemployment has been growing constantly since 1958, for unlike whites, Negroes do not recover any losses made during recessions. Negro unemployment is now two and a half times that of whites. In some major cities the figures are even more striking. In Chicago, with a total unemployment rate of 5.7 per cent, 17.3 per cent of the Negroes are jobless; and a quarter of that city’s Negroes are on relief. In Detroit 60 per cent of the unemployed workers are Negroes, though only 20 per cent of the city’s inhabitants are Negroes. In Philadelphia the general unemployment rate is 7 per cent, while Negro unemployment is 28 per cent; in Gary, Indiana, the community as a whole has an unemployment rate of 6.3 per cent, while the city’s Negroes have one of 44 per cent. According to official AFL-CIO statistics, the overall rate of unemployment of Negroes is 20 per cent, which is higher than the rate of general unemployment during the depression”.

Despite the support of the lumpen proletariat (for whom the main appeal of the Black Muslims was almost certainly in the violent directness of their critique of white society) it was from the lower-middle-class that the Muslims made most of their recruitment; they might have grown even more had they not preached an almost impossibly rigid morality, for their message had a direct simplicity, a powerful mythology, an inflexible vision and an emotional force which made a powerful appeal to the dispossessed urban Negroes. It was

no coincidence that many conversions took place in prison for the Black Muslims taught that the white man was cunning, vicious, lazy, untrustworthy and compulsively evil and that the future would see the ascendancy of the Negroes with their inherent superiority. They saw their aim as creating a unified solidarity among black people and to do so they preached powerfully against the white social and political structure—many of their statements would have been echoed by civil rights leaders—and created in the white man, as a complete entity, an archetypally villainous enemy. They demanded separation from the USA and a territory where the Negro could evolve his own society. They damned Christianity, with every justification, as being one of the chief weapons in their exploitation and attacked the Civil Rights Movement for “begging” for integration which was, in any case, completely undesirable. They saw in Islam the proper religion for the black man.⁵ In essence they became a voice for those people, by-passed by progress in race relations, who no longer had any faith in white America’s good intentions towards the Negro. Yet in their own way they were curiously unrevolutionary. Their criticism of white society echoed criticism made of Negroes by white racists and their social and moral code produced results which likewise echoed the white bourgeois ethos they despised. Their belief in a final, Allah-given Black Utopia also tended to dim both their violence and their revolutionary potential. Revolutionaries are essentially people who *want* something, not people who know they are going to be *given* something.

On his release from prison Malcolm moved to Detroit, immersed himself in the Nation of Islam and rapidly assumed importance, becoming Muhammad’s right-hand man, and travelling from state to state, to organise temples and denounce the “white devils”. His devotion to Muhammad as a man and to his ideas was never in doubt. He drove himself mercilessly, with a sort of passionate, controlled fury. His appeal was immediate. Unlike the downtown (bourgeois) civil rights leaders Malcolm was of the ghetto and was trusted there. He never hid his criminal past, holding himself up as an example of what Islam could achieve, giving dignity to those who never expected to leave the gutter. Even those ghetto Negroes who did not accept his theological stance recognised the truth of his condemnation of white indifference. Malcolm saw clearly that in order to combat the casual tyranny of white America the first essential was Negro unity. He united Negroes in condemnation of the white man and the belief that no white man could ever be trusted.

Malcolm X had the charisma which is an essential feature of all great leaders. In him it was combined with something close to insanity, a programme which recognised the desperation of the situation and a personal courage which is outside most people’s experience. In a very real sense Malcolm became the voice of the ghetto, of people who were not meant to have voices. He understood their language and their despair and he was able to articulate it, to carry it into the heart of white America in terms which lost none of the force of the

original emotions. He told it "like it is". He knew that the white man in America had systematically plundered the spiritual resources of the Negro and, with Malcolm, many whites realised for the first time that one day they might face the logic of their unthinking disregard. It was this confrontation with their own guilt and the near certainty of ultimate justice that terrified them. No hate that Malcolm preached could match the hate that America had practised; if Malcolm, along with thousands of other Negroes, was as he was, America had more than partial responsibility. Much of the hate that was heard in Malcolm's speeches and statements was not hate in Malcolm but anger and pride; it was the self-hatred triggered by Malcolm that most of his opponents felt.

Perhaps inevitably, Malcolm's powerful political attitudes led him into conflict with the Black Muslims. When he said of President Kennedy's death that it was the result of white racism spreading unchecked, a case of "the chickens coming home to roost", Muhammad officially "silenced" him for 90 days. His knowledge of Muhammad's sexual life—as the leader of a rigidly monogamous and stringently disciplined sect—further estranged him from the movement. Shortly afterwards the Nation of Islam issued the first direct order for Malcolm's death. Malcolm's life was saved, on this occasion, by his assassin, who informed him of the danger.

In the early part of 1964 Malcolm X made his pilgrimage to Mecca; it was almost as profound a spiritual crisis as the one he had undergone in prison. His subsequent visits to various African states seem to have excited him as much as anything in his life. He came back to the USA wildly enthusiastic about Africa—and African concern about the fate of the American Negro—and even more enraptured with Muslimism. He discovered that orthodox Muslims were "colour-blind", in marked contrast to the Nation of Islam where colour was the guiding principle. He realised that some white people in America might be genuinely concerned with the endemic racism. When he landed in New York Malcolm was faced with reporters intrigued by the news that he had renounced his blanket-condemnation of whites but still sufficiently worried to ask him about the then-hot news of Negroes starting rifle clubs. Malcolm had changed but there was never any doubt that he still felt passionately about the American situation. "New York white youth were killing victims; that was a 'sociological' problem. But when black youth killed somebody the power structure was looking to hang somebody. When black men had been lynched or otherwise murdered in cold blood, it was always said, 'Things will get better'. When whites had rifles in their homes, the constitution gave them the right to protect their home and themselves. But when black people even spoke of having rifles in their homes, that was 'ominous'."

Malcolm himself had not much longer to live. Just before leaving for Mecca he had formed Muslim Mosque, Inc., in New York. Imme-

diately on his return he formed the Organisation of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). He was evicted from the home "given" him by the Nation of Islam, was subjected to a bomb attempt on his life and was trailed everywhere by Black Muslims. He knew they had orders to kill him. He openly accused the Black Muslims of plotting against his life. Later he was to change his mind about this too. A few hours before his death he told Alex Haley: "I'm not all that sure it's the Muslims. I know what they can do, and what they can't, and they can't do some of the stuff recently going on." Later that day, Sunday, February 21, Malcolm X lay dead on the stage of Harlem's Audubon Ballroom, shot by a "firing squad" of Black Muslim assassins at a meeting.

Calvin Hernton said of Malcolm's death:⁶ "When the bullets ripped open Malcolm X's body every Negro in every ghetto in the United States died." And again: "What Dr. (Martin Luther) King is to and for the middle-class-oriented American Negroes, so was Malcolm X to and for the downtrodden, ignorant, hopeless, deprived and deprived masses." For just as King's essentially trusting and deeply religious attitude to race relations is a reflection of rural southern Negro attitudes, so was Malcolm's emotional fury a reflection of the urban ghetto Negroes' attitudes. The Alabama demonstrations and the Harlem and Watts riots are reflections of the Negroes' refusal to wait; they differ only in their methods, immediate aims and class orientation—the one allegedly "constructive, positive and realistic", the other allegedly "destructive, negative and meaningless".

The Thursday before he died Malcolm X told a reporter: "I'm man enough to tell you that I can't put my finger on exactly what my philosophy is now, but I'm flexible". Malcolm's entire life was subject to changes and it is impossible to predict what might have happened in the future. When Malcolm died he had dropped the racist theology of Black Muslimism but blind spots and inconsistencies remained in his thinking. For while he talked happily of colour-blindness among Muslim nations, and of the dignity of servant-master relationships in those countries, he seemed unaware of the fact that the Muslim nations are virtually the only ones still practising large-scale slavery and that the servant-master relationships, for all the religio-philosophical justifications, were precisely the same as servant-master relationships anywhere—based on servility and patronising superiority. These relationships, had they been based on colour as they frequently are in the USA, would have called forth Malcolm's most damning eloquence. Again his identification with the African states blinded him to their more obvious deficiencies. Possibly this is not very surprising—at least in such countries he was not treated as a fanatic or fool. Malcolm's involvement with Islam also seemed to prevent him developing the necessary thorough-going critique of American society. He had no economic programme and seemed uncertain of whether he wished to follow the orthodox Black Nationalist separatist line or whether

he wanted integration, albeit on terms more militant than those espoused by the Civil Rights Movement. His thinking, perhaps inevitably, was dictated almost completely by his environment. He saw the crisis in America as being wholly a race crisis and despite his advocacy of militant—and, if necessary, violent—resistance to the encroachments of racism, even to the extent of sending OAAU commandos into Mississippi, he had neither a programme for power nor a programme for its dissolution. Although he was potentially the most powerful, as well as the angriest black man in America, and although he had more influence with the ghetto Negroes (potentially the most powerful revolutionary force in American society today) than any other Negro leader, his ideas for mobilising this support were vague. Had he lived he would doubtless have been forced by the pressure of events to consider more clearly the problems he would inevitably face as his influence increased. He might easily have decided to leave America and live in Africa or the Muslim world where social contradictions might not have impinged so forcibly on his consciousness. He might, alternatively, have evolved a position which would have enabled him to “strike the ghettos” and, by implication, alter the entire social structure of the USA. Almost certainly his idea of unilateral treaties with African states was doomed from the start. Ironically Malcolm, the most revolutionary black man of his generation, caused trouble only with his words. Up to his death, he had never attempted to mobilise his support. It was claimed that he was the only man in the USA who could start a race riot. He was not prepared to echo the claim, but he added: “I don’t know if I’d want to stop one.” This attitude placed Malcolm apart from those respectable civil rights leaders, like Bayard Rustin, who see their function, in any riot situation, as being auxiliaries of the police force.

One thing is quite certain; Malcolm X was the *only* Negro leader capable of articulating, with all the emotional fury it required, the agony of ghetto life and, towards the end of his life, the only leader with the personal, magnetic potential to forge from this the revolutionary weapon which is needed if the American Negro is ever to free himself not only from the outward scars of racism but also from the subconscious burden of almost total alienation. He left white America considerably better informed about what it is like to be black in their society. He clearly indicated to many northern liberals that he saw in their liberalism no more than conservative realism and he allowed his own people to feel a pride in their colour and themselves, which may yet be seen as his major contribution to the solution of America’s crisis. Malcolm had his failings but for the most part they were not the failings attributed to him by white people and his approach, for all its limitations, was closer to the reality than that proposed by any other Negro leader. Others will inevitably emerge to carry on Malcolm’s work—to ignore them and the movement they represent is to ignore one of the key movements in American society. Thus this book is amongst the most important to have been published in America

in the last decade; it will undoubtedly become a key work. It is recommended unequivocally and with the hope that readers will have the intelligence to learn something about themselves as well as about Malcolm X.

NOTES

- ¹See, for example, Arthur Moysé in *Victims of Our Fear*, Screeches, 1965.
²Malcolm X, in common with many Muslims, took the “name” X as a symbol of his lost African name.
³Calvin Hernton’s “On Racial Riots in America”, *Peace News*, March 25, 1966.
⁴August Meier’s “The Black Muslims”, *Liberation*, April, 1963.
⁵There is, of course, absolutely no historical justification for the Nation of Islam’s view that the Africans taken to America as slaves were Muslims before being forced to accept Christianity by white slave owners.
⁶Calvin Hernton’s “Two Kinds of Leader”, *Peace News*, March 11, 1966.

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OBSERVATIONS ON ANARCHY 64:

MARIJUANA

IN AN ARTICLE ON THE USE OF MARIJUANA IN ANARCHY 64, Ian Vine demurs at the prospect of making access to this drug legal. He writes: “. . . one must have considerable reservations about advocating the legalisation of marijuana. It must be admitted that this would make its use more widespread, and some would always over-indulge, perhaps with serious effects. . . . Some readers may at this point see the expression of any reservation at all as heresy for an anarchist, who should be opposed to all retributive laws. But without in any way trying to defend our system of deterrence, incarceration and revenge, I think that some hesitation is justified. In rejecting laws and governments I do not think one is committed to rejecting *all* control.”

Now, while I am not very interested in the accessibility of marijuana, I am very interested in making sense of anarchism. To my mind the anarchist should not reject “laws and government” out of principle (or bloody-mindedness) but out of an understanding of how things work out in society. Here we have a test case, and it

occurs to me that many bourgeois liberals and utilitarians have got a better grasp of the social reality than Mr. Vine has.

Throughout history people in this country have had legal access to various forms of alcohol. No one has any illusions about this drug. Taken in excess over a period it ruins the health, damages the brain and kills the drinker. Even taken to a less lethal extent, it can certainly ruin a man's life; it is both physiologically and psychologically addictive with people prone to addiction. The short-term effects of large doses of alcohol are certainly worse than those of marijuana, and I hardly need to describe them.

At certain times alcohol has been a real social menace. Hogarth's picture of "Gin Lane" was an apt portrayal of the evil effects of drunkenness in eighteenth-century London. I can remember when, after the pubs closed, certain parts of London had staggering brawling men as a regular part of the street scene. That was in the depression. Now a staggering, quarrelsome drunk is almost a rarity. People have more money to spend on drink, yet the vast pubs in working-class districts are half-empty, for drinking is a less intensive activity among the mass of the people than it used to be.

What I am trying to point out is that we have legal access to a dangerous drug, alcohol. It is abused by a minority of people, but it is less abused today than it used to be, because people have less need to get drunk. Social liberty means that we must learn to live with potential menaces, not to have them kept out of reach by kindly guardians. This is one of the fundamental, rock-bottom truths of anarchism. The enemies of freedom are not just the capitalists in top-hats depicted in the cartoons, but the do-gooders who claim to know what is best for Tom, Dick and Harry. The history of prohibition in America highlighted some of the social effects of legislation enacted by the well-intentioned for the protection of those who might abuse alcohol.

Of course some people would abuse marijuana if they could get it easily. For some, it would become almost as much a problem as alcohol is to others. But is that any argument at all for its continued repression? Tom, Dick and Harry will learn how to conduct themselves socially only when they are free to go and get drunk if they want to. By and large they are pretty sober men today, which says a lot for the general idea of free access.

To my mind the difference between the authoritarian and the libertarian is brought out by this little controversy. The authoritarian is an idealist; he will not let Tom, Dick and Harry off the leash unless he can be sure that they will behave themselves perfectly. As he can never be sure that they will not misbehave, he never, in fact, dares to loosen the leash. The libertarian is a realist; he knows too that when the leash is removed some will misbehave themselves—but probably less than they "misbehave" already. And who the hell is he to set up as a judge of other people's behaviour, anyway?

London

TONY GIBSON

A co-operative hostel for the homeless

BRIAN RICHARDSON

AT PRESENT, when a family becomes homeless in Kent, from whatever cause—bad luck or bad judgement—unless friends or relatives can take them in, they have to resort to "Part III accommodation".

That is, the welfare authority (in this case the KCC) is obliged to provide temporary accommodation under Part III of the National Assistance Act, and this Kent does at the King Hill Hostel at West Malling. (See my article on homelessness in ANARCHY 58.)

A recent pamphlet, "KCC versus the Homeless" has sought to bring to public attention the shortcomings of this establishment and many people have been shocked to realise the degree of hardship which homeless families in Kent endure. Although King Hill has become well known through the active campaign waged in Kent to prevent children being taken into County Council care after 12 weeks at the hostel, there are counties and boroughs with less adequate provision for the homeless than Kent, and few places in the prosperous South East are better. An improvement here could influence the whole situation of people affected by the shortage of low rent housing.

There are different interpretations of the National Assistance and Children's Acts and different opinions of what the Local Authorities' moral obligations are towards the homeless, but it is undeniable that many people at King Hill hostel are dissatisfied with it, and are only there because they have absolutely no alternative. It would benefit everybody if King Hill were not the "end of the road" but there were some choice open to a family faced with being put onto the street.

I propose that a new "co-operative" hostel should be set up to cater for similar needs as King Hill, but in a different way. At least the amount of emergency accommodation would be increased, thus relieving pressure on time and space at King Hill—at best, the opportunity would be presented for homeless people to help themselves and create an organisation capable of improving the quality of service that the homeless are in need of.

The co-operative hostel would provide a service complementary to that of the official institution. While it would not have the weight of the official welfare organisation behind it, nor real influence with local housing authorities, it would be free of the political pressure that makes

King Hill deliberately austere so that people should be discouraged from resorting to it unless in the direst need.

The only limit on the comfort of the accommodation would be financial; residents would be encouraged to make themselves as comfortable as possible. Because it would not be legally bound to keep space in reserve against disaster, fire and flood, it would not be necessary to hasten people out who needed time to build up their resources and find permanent homes themselves. The length of stay would be the decision of the residents. It could be recognised from the start that some families might, for reasons of their own, become virtually permanent and they might in effect become part of the staff.

Most important of all, the hostel would be run by and for the residents, calling on such outside help as they require, rather than being run as an obligation by an authority somewhat remote from the problem of homelessness.

How could it be done?

The general framework would be a form of Housing Association. There is a National Federation of Housing Societies which can give technical advice on the foundation and running of a Housing Association and which provides a well-worked-out set of rules which satisfy legal requirements and enables money to be obtained on loan for purchasing or building premises, when a scheme has been worked out.

This can be thought out under three related headings—
the method of operation;
physical environment and premises;
finance.

Operation of the co-operative hostel would differ from the KCC hostel in several fundamental ways. Residents would not be licensees of a welfare provision, but tenants of a housing association with the rights and responsibilities that that implies. The tenants would be in charge of the hostel, and would have the assistance of such staff as were needed.

The staff might merely comprise a resident warden to provide continuity in a changing population, or it might extend to trained medical staff to look after children, welfare workers to help with housing problems, and specialist helpers for families that have difficulty in home management.

One would expect that in such a hostel, as elsewhere, there would be a proportion of people who could not cope with all the problems of housekeeping, diet, child rearing and personal relationships, any of which, if they break down, can contribute to a brand of homelessness even more soul destroying than that brought about by the simple lack of a house at a suitable rent.

Already at King Hill where the residents' committee is not officially recognised, it can be noticed that the less efficient managers gain confidence and actual help from living in a community where mutual aid is practised in a number of ways. This could be extended in a hostel fully under the control of the residents.

Cars and vans could be provided to enable residents to visit their

home areas freely for house hunting, lobbying councillors, etc., and for transferring furniture and belongings when a house is found.

There could be a collection and storage service for furniture, both that owned by the homeless and spare furniture collected for equipping a new house when previous possessions have been lost. This might lead to the need for workshop facilities, with possibly an instructor for the repair and upholstery of second-hand furniture.

It would be desirable to build up a close liaison with local employers and schools. A homeless family cannot afford to be deprived of wages for long, and the children's education should receive as little interruption as possible.

The premises would be bound to affect the style of living of the residents, but as far as possible they should be adaptable to their varying needs. There should be the possibility of complete privacy for the family, with separate bedrooms for parents and older children, some cooking facilities and preferably private bathrooms and lavatories.

On the other hand there should be opportunities for the community to operate, with a meeting-room, playroom for children, sick-bay, laundry, office and possibly a kitchen and dining-room for such communal meals as are required.

A workshop is almost a necessity. One could even hope for such a well-equipped one that men could be self-employed there. There should be plenty of storage space, and a garden, preferably producing food.

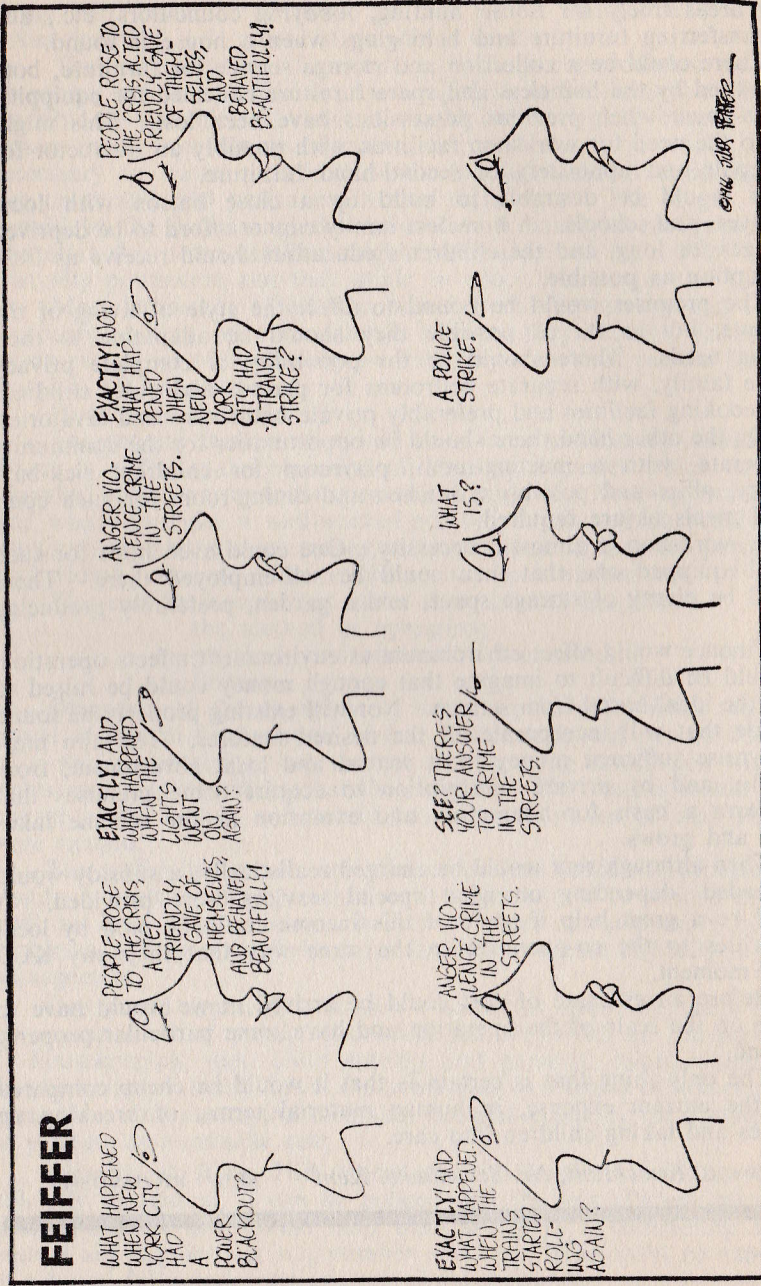
Finance would affect environment as environment affects operation. It would be difficult to imagine that enough money could be raised to build the ideal hostel from scratch. Nor will existing property be found for sale that will incorporate all the desired features. The aim must be to raise sufficient money from central and local government, from charities and by private subscription to acquire some premises that will form a basis for adaptation and extension as the scheme takes shape and grows.

Then although rent would be charged realistically, a subsidy would be needed—depending on what special services were provided. It would be a great help if some of this income could be paid by local authorities to the co-operative in the same way that they pay KCC at the moment.

Before an estimate of cost could be arrived at we would have to decide on the scale of the operation and have some particular property in mind.

The only thing that is certain is that it would be cheap compared with the current expense, in human material terms, of breaking up families and taking children into care.

Greenways, Knockholt, Nr. Sevenoaks, Kent BRIAN RICHARDSON



**Forthcoming
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