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Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"Government is, in its essence, always a force working in violation of justice."
 —LEO TOLSTOY

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The New President Takes Over NEW DEAL OR MORE ILLUSIONS?

UCH has been written about Senator John Kennedy both before and since his election to the Presidency of the United States of America. His personality, politics and pledges have been scrutinised and analysed by knowledgeable and so knowledgeable pundits on both sides of the Atlantic. The picture which has emerged, of this country at any rate, is of a young, aloof, intelligent, ambitious politician who has brought dignity and dedication into American political life. The fact that he is rich has not been enough acted in his favour. It has not been argued even by his opponents that his political ambitions are tied up with his economic interests, and his choice of administrators on the basis of ability rather than on a "jobs for the boys" quota has led many people to believe that a new era in American politics has begun. Many American intellectuals hitherto disgusted with politics in their own country, now see in the new administration the beginnings of good and just government. One British political commentator

who has just returned from the U.S. and himself a Kennedy supporter, confirms this view, and suggests that the despised intellectual is now decidedly "U" in America because of Kennedy's Presidential success. Faced with this wave of enthusiasm for a youthful intelligent man dedicated to changing the face of America, it may seem churlish to dampen the zeal by expressing doubt, but the man cannot be separated from his political party, and we can find no signs within the Democratic Party with which to herald the beginnings of a revolutionary era. If it is argued that degrees of government matter, and that an administration, attempting to govern honestly is preferable to one which allows a certain amount of graft, then the Democratic Party is the obvious choice. But the issue in the world today which affects us all is not exclusively domestic; it is not only a question of choosing a party which will help the poor rather than one which will further the interests of the rich; of choosing a party with a nationalisation programme or supporting one

which believes in private enterprise. The question we have to ask is, can we find wise men free from party and national interests who are sufficiently concerned with the survival of the human race that they will relinquish power to achieve it and have the necessary influence to get the people behind them? In his inaugural address President Kennedy was eloquent in his defence of human rights; we believe he meant what he said, and that he is as anxious as anyone to avoid war—but not at any price—as the following paragraph implies: Let every nation know, whether it wish us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend or oppose any foe in order to assure the survival and success of liberty. There was nothing else he could say in the circumstances. The weakness of the political "lesser evil" argument is that whether the politicians be young and dedicated or old and cynical ultimately they are all bound by party and national interests.

In practical terms today this means that however much any politician abhors war or the manufacture of nuclear weapons or the threat of using them, he is in danger of political suicide if he says so and means to act on it. Any politician, particularly in America, who hints that he would rather see the Russians taking over than go to war, even if he has a political history of anti-communism, would be shunned by all political parties. Certainly Kennedy would not have been elected on a pacifist ticket. He can talk of peace while his own party plans to spend more money on armaments, but the image which attracted America, and got him into the White House, is one of youthful strength and the willingness to "oppose any foe" at any price. IT is argued forcibly that it is possible to be a patriot and at the same time peacefully "co-exist" with other nations who may have very different political systems. This is not denied. Throughout the history of the "nation states" there have been long and short periods of co-

existence between different countries but eventually, when their interests clash, co-existence is immediately forgotten. The "lesser evil" advocate further argues that if we elect reasonable and just men who are willing to negotiate with other nations harmony is assured, thus it is imperative that we make the right choice between . . . Democrat and Republican, Labourite and Tory, Communist and Capitalist . . . or whatever. The simple lesson of history is that whatever government we support within a country, none has seriously attempted to outlaw war beyond the stages of political slogans. The very existence of the nation state is by its nature a threat to any permanent co-operation between countries, but we know of no politician who has ever suggested abolishing the state! The best "lawful government" can do is to work hard at "peaceful negotiations" but sooner or later, whether imaginary or real, one state will feel its interests are threatened by another and the people will be asked to unite "against the common enemy" by forgetting all party differences and remembering our "ancient heritage". The choice we have to make is between survival through world co-operation or extinction through government.

SUMMERHILL SCHOOL 40th ANNIVERSARY

40 years at the head of any school would be something of an achievement; to have steered a school as original, as revolutionary, as controversial and as subject to attack as Summerhill through such a period, including the war, to have survived the social and economic vicissitudes of the post-war era and to be still going strong now is something indeed remarkable and worthy to be celebrated. This all the more needs saying because the modesty and, I think, shyness of the man A. S. Neill tend to obscure his very real achievement.

varied assembly of friends of Summerhill, from grandparents down to present pupils. How easy and relaxed those present and past pupils of Summerhill looked, and what a genuine deep warmth of affection was in the air for Neill and the other members of staff, past and present, who were able to come. Neill's own evident delight in the proceedings was, anyway, justification enough for the decision to honour him this way.

To those who are better acquainted with the more bohemian aspects of Summerhill a formal dinner in town might seem a strange form for the celebration to take. In the event, the Summerhill School 40th Anniversary dinner, which took place on Friday, January 13th, at the Connaught Rooms, was an enormous success, not least because the comfort and spaciousness of the venue made it so easy to circulate and meet old friends. It was a very

Dr. W. Lindsay Neustatter, Neill's stepson and the President of the Summerhill Society, perhaps exaggerated in his speech the extent to which Neill's teachings have in fact been incorporated into the corpus of orthodox educational thought, but was quite correct in stressing the wide dissemination of these ideas through Neill's genius for writing eminently readable books which have been translated into many languages and are known throughout the world, so that even were the school physically to close, Summerhill in a sense cannot now die. Replying to the toast to the guests, Mr. Otto Shaw, Secretary of the Association of Teachers of Maladjusted Children, started by acknowledging his own great debt to Neill whose ideas he follows in his own work at Redhill School. He pointed out the change in the atmosphere since Neill started Summerhill; then he had been a rebel but now his was a name commanding respect even from those who most strongly disagree with him.

The evening was remarkable for one more achievement: Neill had been allowed to say on BBC TV, in a filmed interview, the one thing that has hitherto been the subject of the most stringent taboo of all in all the organs of the establishment: open advocacy of a free sex life for adolescents.



A Deserving Cause The Plight of the Surtaxed Classes

THE National Union of Manufacturers issued last month a booklet with the title "A Tax on Progress", copies of which were sent out to, among other influential people, all Members of Parliament. The purpose of the booklet is to persuade the government to raise the starting level of income at which surtax is payable, from the present £2,000 a year to £6,000. Naturally the grounds on which the N.U.M. (not to be confused with the National Union of Mineworkers, who are not concerned with the problems of surtax but with odd ten-bob-a-week increases in pay to keep up with the increased cost of living) put their case to the government, is that of national productivity! At present for some married couples of the professional classes either the woman finds it uneconomic to continue in her profession after marriage, or if she did, then in extreme cases the husband's income would be virtually wiped out by surtax, or so drastical-

ly whittled down that the "net reward was not worth striving for". Something had to be done for these "hard-working and ambitious men and women" who were being unfairly penalised. Surtax is a "tax on merit and almost an incentive to immorality". (Is it suggested that professional women are being driven into the oldest profession, the rewards from which need not be disclosed to the greedy tax-collector?) What a heart-breaking picture is presented of these our "most valuable citizens" having to "work harder and harder" or in the end "being driven overseas". Think of it "our most valuable citizens" driven into exile by the tax collector! Compared with their fate that of the thousands of hungry unemployed throughout the world who gather up a few personal belongings and leave their villages in search of a job in any corner of the globe where there is a shortage

of men and women to do the dirty jobs, is a mere holiday. "Soaking the rich" was all very well in the '20's for it only affected 10,000 people. But to-day 319,000 are bearing this horrible burden, which goes to prove that the professional classes are much worse off now than they were in the '20's whereas of course it is well known that it's the workers who are now living off the fat of the land. After all they are not being driven into exile, are they? And all said and done it wouldn't cost all that much to do justice to our professionals. It has been officially estimated that to raise the starting level of surtax to £6,000 would cost a mere £60 million in a complete year and this loss to the revenue declares the National Union of Manufacturers, would be offset "by the incentive to greater effort, by lessened costs of collection and by the all-round industrial expansion that would certainly follow".



