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Seventy-Seven Years ago

Beauchamp's Career by George Meredith first appeared in *The Fortnightly Review* in 1874. A generation ago it was commonly seen on bookstalls, with other works of the same calibre, as a paper-covered 'ninepenny.' It was re-printed as No. 519 of "World's Classics" last year.

Chapter XVIII is headed "Concerning the Art of Canvassing," and, omitting some conversational passages is as follows:—

Tories dread the restlessness of Radicals, and Radicals are in awe of the organization of Tories. Beauchamp thought anxiously of the high degree of confidence existing in the Tory camp, whose chief could afford to keep aloof, while he slaved all day and half the night to thump ideas into heads, like a cooper on a cask:—an impassioned cooper on an empty cask! if such an image is presentable. . . .

Mr. Austin replied: "It's disagreeable, but it's the practice. I would gladly be bound by a common understanding to abstain" [from canvassing].

"Ah! pah!" "To beg the vote and wink the bribe," Colonel Halkett subjoined abhorrently:—

"It well becomes the Whiggish tribe
To beg the vote and wink the bribe."

'Canvassing means intimidation or corruption.'

'Or the mixture of the two, called cajolery,' said Mr. Austin; 'and that was the principle art of the Whigs.' . . .

It is not possible to gather up in one volume of sound the rattle of the knocks at Englishmen's castle-gates during election days; so, with the thunder of it unheard, the majesty of the act of canvassing can be but barely appreciable, and he, therefore, who would celebrate it must follow the candidate obsequiously from door to door, where, like a cross between a postman delivering a bill and a beggar craving an alms, he attempts the extraction of the vote, as little boys pick periwinkles with a pin.

'This is your duty, which I most abjectly entreat you to do,' is pretty nearly the form of the supplication.

How if, instead of the solicitation of the thousands by the unit, the meritorious unit were besought by rushing thousands?—as a mound of the plains that is circumscribed by floods, and to which the waters cry, Be thou our island. Let it be answered the questioner, with no discourteous adjectives, Thou fool! To come to such heights of popular discrimination and political ardour the people would have to be vivified to a pitch little short of eruptive; it would be Boreas blowing Aetna inside them; and we should have impulse at work in the country, and immense importance attaching to a man's whether he will or he won't—enough to womanize him. We should be all but having Parliament for a sample of our choicest rather than our likest: and see you not a peril in that?

Conceive for the fleeting instants permitted to such insufferable flights of fancy. Our picked men ruling! So despotic an oligarchy as would be there, is not a happy subject of contemplation. It is not too much to say that a domination of the Intellect in England would at once alter the face of the country. We should be governed by the head with a vengeance: all the rest of the country being base members indeed; Spartans—helots. Criticism, now so helpful to us, would wither to the root: fun would die out of Parliament, and outside of it: we could never laugh at our masters, or command them: and that good old-fashioned shouldering of separate interests, which, if it stops progress, like a block in the pit entrance to a theatre, proves us equal before the law, puts an end to the pretence of higher merit in the one or the other, and renders a stout build the safest assurance for coming through ultimately, would be transformed to a painful orderliness, like a City procession under the conduct of the police. and to classifications of things according to their public value: decidedly no benefit to burly freedom. None, if there were no shouldering and hustling, could tell whether actually the fittest survived; as is now the case among survivors delighting in a broad-chested fitness.

And consider the freezing isolation of a body of our quintessential elect, seeing below them none to resemble them! Do you not hear in imagination the land's regret for that amiable nobility whose pretensions were comically built on birth, acres, tailoring, style, and an air. Ah, that these unchallengeable new lords could be exchanged for those old ones! These, with the tradition of how great people should look in our country, these would pass among us like bergs of ice—a pure Polar aristocracy, inflicting the woes of wintriness upon us. Keep them from concentrating! At present I believe it to be their honest opinion, their wise opinion, and the sole opinion common to a majority of them, that it is more salutary, besides more diverting, to have the fools of the kingdom represented than not. As professors of the sarcastic art they can easily take the dignity out of the fools' representative at their pleasure, showing him at antics while he supposes he is exhibiting an honourable and a decent series of movements. Generally, too, their archery can check him when he is for any of his measures; and if it does not check, there appears to be such a property in simple sneering, that it consoles even when it fails to right the balance of power. Sarcasm, we well know, confers a title of aristocracy straightway and sharp on the scone of the man who does but imagine that he is using it. What, then, must be the elevation of these princes of the intellect in their own minds! Hardly worth bartering for worldly commandships, it is evident.

Briefly, then, we have a system, not planned but grown, the outcome and image of our genius, and all are dissatisfied with parts of it; but, as each would preserve his own, the

surest guarantee is obtained for the integrity of the whole by a happy adjustment of the energies of opposition, which—you have only to look to see—goes far beyond concord in the promotion of harmony. This is our English system; like our English pudding, a fortuitous concourse of all the sweets in the grocer's shop, but an excellent thing for all that, and let none threaten it. Canvassing appears to be mixed up in the system; at least I hope I have shown that it will not do to reverse the process, for fear of changes leading to a sovereignty of the austere and antipathetic Intellect in our England, that would be an inaccessible tyranny of a very small minority, necessarily followed by tremendous convulsions.

A Ministerial 'Hand-Out'

In order to mask the autocracy of the Ministry of Education working through a number of regional "Directors of Education" there were constituted a year or two back "Boards of Governors" up and down the country. They have what power is or may be incidental to (more or less) continuous observation of what goes on in the day-to-day running of a school (primary or secondary); but the idea took root chiefly because of what public interest there is in secondary education (the second rung of 'the ladder').

It is these boards, and their relatively accessible members, that the suggestions embodied in a recent circular issued by the Ministry to the newspapers (a 'hand-out') has most interest, however close a relation there may be between electioneering and the announcement. The document, headed "Report Recommends Greater Freedom for Local Education Authorities" is as follows:—

"Recommendations designed to give greater freedom to Local Education Authorities are made in a report by the Education Sub-Committee of the Local Government Manpower Committee, which has [August 15] been circulated to authorities by the Ministry of Education. The report is signed by the Chairman (Sir Griffith Williams, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education) and the Convener (Dr. W. P. Alexander, Secretary, Association of Education Committees).

"The Sub-Committee makes suggestions for simplifying the supervision by the Ministry of Education over Local Education Authorities; for reducing the need for such supervision; and for ensuring that, wherever possible, more responsibility rests on the Authorities. In a covering circular, it is pointed out that Local Education Authorities will be notified of consequent changes in procedure from time to time, but that the Minister cannot commit himself at this stage to carrying out these recommendations which require legislation.

"The report states that both local government and departmental representatives worked as a team to produce the report and that 'suggestions for simplification of procedure, relaxation of control and changes of method have not emanated from one side only; nor have we felt that there have been any reservations, on the one hand about the retention of the key points of control which we think are required if the Minister is to carry out his duties, or on the other hand about the vesting of a greater measure of responsibility with local education authorities.'

"The Sub-Committee adds that it is their hope that as the Ministry reduces to the essential minimum its control

of authorities and improves the methods of exercising it, not only will efficiency be increased, but greater freedom and the sense of responsibility will encourage and promote the provision by authorities of better educational facilities.

"'When children are well provided for parents are contented,' states the report, 'and when parents are contented the work of the authorities and the Ministry in considering complaints and appeals is much reduced, setting them free for more constructive tasks.'

It looks as though Mr. Butler's Act may have done all that was required of it.

PARLIAMENT

House of Commons: July 30, 1951.

Supply—Foreign Affairs (Middle East)

Mr. Fitzroy Maclean (Lancaster): In a broadcast the other day, the Prime Minister went back to the Battle of Waterloo to prove how wicked the Tories were. I have had to go back a couple of thousand years before that to find a parallel for Socialist stubbornness, stupidity and lack of foresight. In the tragedies of the ancient Greeks, the principle character is always the last to foresee the disasters which ultimately overtake him. The other characters and the audience always see what is coming to him long before he does, but he blunders on blindly to meet his fate.

That, it seems to me, is exactly the position of the present Government. It is rather like "Twenty Questions"—everybody knows the answer long before the people principally concerned. Everybody saw ages ago that the Government were heading for trouble. Everybody warned them, but in spite of these warnings they persisted in their foolish muddle-headed course, and now, of course, their follies are coming home to roost at the most alarming rate, and nowhere more than in the Middle East.

To grasp just how disastrous the Government's conduct of affairs has been, we have to go back a full six years to the summer of 1945. At that time, our position in the Middle East was one of great strength. Alamein and our other war-time victories had brought us immense prestige—and then there was a change of Government. The mournful notes of the "The Red Flag" resounded in the Chamber. Once again, one is reminded of a Greek tragedy. In the opening scene, everything is for the best. Then comes the first warning of trouble ahead, and from then onwards things go from bad to worse.

Looking back, it seems strange now to recall that six years ago the Labour Government actually had a foreign policy. But they had. It was a Labour foreign policy, a Socialist Foreign policy, an ideological foreign policy. It was framed very largely by Mr. Zilliacus, the former Member for Gateshead, and it was summed up by the late Foreign Secretary, when he said in 1945:

"Left will talk to Left in comradeship and confidence."

In other words, it was based on the principle that a Socialist Government in this country should have close and intimate relations with Communist Russia, and distant and distrustful relations with capitalist America.

It seems extraordinary, looking back, that even the silliest of Socialists should have believed that such a policy was practicable. For one thing, one would have thought they

would have known enough about the Russians and about Communism to realise what was their attitude towards them. One would have thought they would have remembered what Lenin said when he was asked whether he and his friends would support the British Labour Party:

"We will support them"—

he said—

"as the rope supports the hanged man."

Of course, it very soon turned out that the comradeship and confidence were all on one side. Hon. Members opposite regarded the Russians with sympathy and admiration, but the Russians regarded them with nothing but contempt.

Nor was it possible in practice for the Government to be quite as offhand with the Americans as they had hoped to be, for the simple reason that they very soon found out that the only way in which they could hope to finance their famous Socialist experiment was with good capitalist dollars from the United States. In other words, their Socialist foreign policy was no good.

And so what did the Government do? They sacked Mr. Zilliacus. [Laughter.]

. . . Of the old policy, three things have remained; three things have gone on hanging about in the air like a bad smell. The first is an unhappy love for the Soviet Union, a nostalgia for what many Socialists long regarded as their spiritual home; a hankering which the hon. Member for Coventry, East (Mr. Crossman) once diagnosed in an interesting article as the "Russia complex." Sometimes one is rather inclined to say to him, "Physician, heal thyself."

Secondly, the party opposite, while accepting American dollars by the sackful, have never really been able to get over their dislike for the American capitalists who provide them—"shabby moneylenders," in the vivid phrase of the hon. Member for Nelson and Colne (Mr. S. Silverman).

. . . Finally, at the back of the minds of a great many hon. Members opposite—and sometimes not very far back—there lurks another prejudice, a prejudice against the British Empire and feeling that the Empire is something shameful and something which, in the picturesque Left-wing phrase of Sir Stafford Cripps, should be liquidated. Of course, that has not been a very happy psychological background to the conduct of our affairs. It has led to all kinds of things—to half-hearted appeasement of Russia and her satellites, to constant misunderstandings with America, and to a progressive weakening of our position throughout the world.

I said that in 1945 our position in the Middle East was one of great strength. Since then, in so far as we have had a policy at all, it has been one of withdrawal and abdication and a refusal to accept our responsibilities. Everywhere we have pulled out prematurely, letting down our friends and leaving those who looked to us for a lead to sort out affairs as best they could. Everywhere the result has been the same, chaos and bloodshed—chaos and bloodshed in India, where, in the space of a few weeks, more people were killed than in two centuries of British rule, and in the Middle East where the Government attained the remarkable feat of earning the hatred and contempt of Arabs and Jews alike. Above all, our Middle East defences have been so weakened that today they no longer serve to encourage our friends not to deter our enemies.

The result has been to produce throughout the whole area uncertainty, disorder and disunion—in other words, a power vacuum. A power vacuum, like every other vacuum, is something which offends Nature and is bound to be filled. If one is created right up against an expanding aggressive Power like the Soviet Union, there is little doubt who will fill it. Russia is as much an Asiatic as a European Power, and every time she has been blocked in the West she has turned Eastwards. For a century or two the Dardanelles and the Persian Gulf have been traditional targets of Russian expansion, and they remain so today. Let us make no mistake about that.

That is the background to everything that is happening in the Middle East. That is the real danger of which we must never lose sight. Fifty years ago Russia was checked in her progress by the knowledge that if she went any further she would encounter the embattled might of the British Empire. What is to stop her now? Very little indeed. I recently spent a couple of months travelling around the Middle East, and I must say that I came back profoundly disturbed by what I saw and heard there. In my view, not one of these countries could stand up to an all-out attack by the overwhelming armour, artillery and air power of the Soviet Union for more than a few weeks, unless they received early and effective help from outside. In other words, if they are to be saved, their salvation must come from the West, and it is to the West that they are looking for help in the case of Soviet attack.

What are their prospects of receiving such help? In the minds of a great many people in the Middle East I found an uneasy suspicion that for them war would mean occupation by the Red Army followed, with luck, at some future date, by liberation at the hands of the West by when, on all probability, there would be nothing left to liberate. . .

. . . I should like to hear the Government make their position clear in advance—much clearer than they have hitherto made it, certainly much clearer than the Foreign Secretary made it in his speech. I should like to hear the Prime Minister, when he winds up the debate, state specifically that in all circumstances we intend to stay in South Persia, and that the Government will protect British lives and interests there by all means at their disposal. If that object can be achieved by negotiation, so much the better.

I hope that he will make it equally clear that we intend to stay in Egypt. I think that on both sides of the House, and certainly in the country, there is a feeling that the Government have been deplorably weak in their dealings with the Egyptian Government; a feeling that it is high time we stopped letting the Egyptians kick us around. It is a feeling, I may say, which is particularly strong amongst people who were in Egypt during the war and know that country and its inhabitants at first hand.

I should like to see the Prime Minister do three things: first, reaffirm our Treaty right to maintain a British garrison in the Canal zone; second, take all necessary measures to restore free passage of shipping through the Suez Canal; third, make clear our determination not to leave the Sudan until such time as the Sudanese people can freely determine their own destiny. . .

. . . I believe that if we stand up for our rights, if we take steps to protect our legitimate interests, if we make

(Continued on page 7.)

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From Week to Week

The mind of "the democracies" (if there are any pockets of aristocracy not smoked-out we should be glad to receive information concerning their whereabouts) has been submerged beneath a deluge of chatter, an avalanche of print and smothered into complete insensibility. This deluge, this avalanche is not exclusive of "anti-Semitic" chatter, "Social credit" chatter (save the mark), "progressive" chatter, "reactionary" chatter, which merely swells the still-rising tide of "mere" chatter. If a tiny fragment of mankind cannot reach to the surface and float on the rot there will be no Man in the century after this—and even that fragment is at its last gasp.

What Social Crediters chiefly ask (and are denied) is application to their main propositions of the test of experience. Social Credit is (we are so often asked what it is) the continuous application of the test of experience, not ideally but really. So we of all people must become alert to any claim made on behalf of a genuine philosophy (*i.e.*, one which is not merely a rag-bag of fustian; one which is traceable in its entirety to a Father, a Parent) that experience has continuously validated it. Examples are Catholicism (which word we use to exclude the 'Christianity' of red or reddish Deans) and Confucianism. The examples cannot, of course, be exclusive. They are outstanding examples.

So when we are told that twenty-four centuries ago Tsze Sze needed to continue his comment with a profession of faith, stating what the Confucian idea would effect, we understand that we are invited to inspect the millennial history of China, and we may agree that "The dynasties Han, Tang, Sung, Ming rose on the Confucian idea;" that "it is inscribed in the lives of the great emperors, Tai Tsong, Kao Tseu, Hong Vou, another Tai Tsong, and Kang Hi." Further, we may agree that "When the idea was not held to, decadence supervened." Likewise, the Church is at the same point of 'faith,' and likewise it watches decadence supervene.

Why does decadence supervene? We cannot (yet) 'look back over the millennial history of Social Credit.' Yet it is our contention that the continuous operation of Social Credit would remove a *causa sine qua non* of decadence. What the Church lacks is not the knowledge of it but the means of eliminating it. So we believe. But the occasion for these paragraphs is not Christ but Confucius, whose metaphysics we have spent some time in studying. This metaphysics is supposed not to exist, but has been alleged to be stated in the Chung Yung, 'the Unwobbling Pivot,' the unchanging that is bent neither to one side nor to the other. It asserts

that "Only the most perfect sincerity under heaven can effect any change."

We note, with satisfaction, that what is meant by 'sincerity' here is not the *alibi* claimed by our multifarious practitioners of gnostic heresies. The Chinese ideogram is 'the sun's lance coming to rest on the precise spot verbally. The right-hand half of this compound means: to perfect, bring to focus.' Social Credit is a stickler for precise spots. On this point, then, no further comment.

There are further political and ethical parts of the metaphysic. "In cutting an axe-handle the model is not far off, in this sense: one holds one axe-handle while chopping the other. Thus one uses men in governing men." And the ethics: "The archer, when he misses the bulls-eye, turns and seeks the cause of the error in himself."

Tsze Sze did not, of course, know our archers. But, quite apart from that, if what is chiefly to govern men is the unwobbling pivot, other governors must be so related to it as not to unseat it? The man who shows superlative cleverness in deceiving others was first superlatively clever at deceiving himself. If he is a ruler, he is undecieved at the cost of the common wealth, whoever does the undecieving—himself? A technique for the establishment of the correct relationship between Power and Authority remains to be defined. Social Credit defines it.

MODERN LITERATURE: "Other people do the work, and it does the groaning."—(I Tourgenieff.)

Morrison's Folly

"Yeah . . . So we moved down to the . . . Hotel which, I guess, was nearly as bad. We called for lunch The steak and kidney-pie was 'off' and so was some kinna mince-meat. So I asked the waiter what he thought we *could* have. He said fish, and my wife kinna groaned out loud and said, 'What! fish again!' And at that the waiter, what you call a cockney, I guess, said, 'Between you an' me, Ma'am, I feel that way meself; I've 'ad so much fish lately me stomach goes in an' out with the tide!'"—(A Canadian recently in England).

Appropriate?

In 1947, to house their Department of Research into the processing of food, Unilever's bought from the late Lord Melchett a Bedfordshire Manor House described in 1806 as 'one of the most elegant Manors in the Country.' An article in Unilever's Magazine *Progress* on the conversion of this house to Research purposes mentions:—

" . . . The motto, 'Make yourself necessary,' inscribed on the crest situated high up on the original front of the house is that of the Mond family; it may be considered perhaps not inappropriate for a research department."

On Planning The Earth

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by

NORMAN WEBB.

Scene Two:

(The same study fire-side, a week later. The same trio, just assembled.)

THE ENGINEER (*settling himself in his chair, and lighting his pipe at the invitation of his host.*): Shall we get right down to it without the polite preliminaries?

THE RECTOR (*busy with his pipe also*): Yes, do. (*After a pause*) D'you know, what you said last week has been recurring to me again and again in a curiously persistent way. It must be your approach to the matter; it's so different from other ideological enthusiasts I encounter. It's new to me. Go on. I feel I'm in a more receptive mood to-night to hear Major Douglas's proposals.

THE ENGINEER: And supposing you weren't to hear them to-night; supposing I weren't to expound them, but instead set out to tell you of the effect they were calculated to have, would you feel put off?

THE RECTOR: Oh, no, not at all.

THE ENGINEER: You mayn't like it, you know. It may lead us very far afield—into strange and possibly uncomfortable places.

THE RECTOR: If it leads to an equitable distribution of the community's wealth, I can stand anything. Besides, I'm interested to see if you can keep the attitude of our first discussion. I leave the matter with you.

THE STUDENT (*turning to the Engineer with a smile*): You see, in spite of all you said about being a bad propagandist, you've made your mark!

THE RECTOR: Come on—what are these results of Social Credit you think I mayn't like?

THE ENGINEER: Well, one of the first results of the complete system of Social Credit in operation would be the removal of the direct compulsion to take on a job of work—work of any kind—through fear of actual want.

THE RECTOR: But . . .

THE ENGINEER: Just a moment. You don't like the sound of that. But surely no civilized community in these days of mass-production should be able to cling to the old-fashioned idea that the necessary work of the community needs to be carried out under a sort of official threat of an alternative of actual privation. So little manual labour is wanted nowadays to produce all the necessities.

THE RECTOR: Yes, ethically, I agree. But then I take that to be the underlying theory of the much-criticised Welfare State. Perhaps I'm wrong, but I had the idea you Social Crediters were opposed to it. Or do you approve of the way things have been going in this country since Socialism took over?

THE STUDENT: Well, hardly. I'd thought I'd made that pretty clear. As a matter of fact, it's exactly what the Social Credit Movement has been warning you of—trying to convince you of how it might be avoided—for the last twenty-five years.

THE RECTOR: It's a little confusing, you'll admit.

You've been warning us against the Socialist state for the last quarter of a century, and yet you say you stand for instituting the same idea? I wonder if you've examined its results carefully enough; at close quarters, for instance, as I have. Haven't you seen enough of the effects of this Socialist theory in practice to make you chary of advocating anything else of the same kind?

THE ENGINEER: It looks bad to you?

THE RECTOR: Well, yes; and to any thoughtful Christian, I should have imagined. It's not what political Socialism does that really depresses me. I admit, after starting favourably disposed, I've come to the conclusion I don't like it; I disapprove of most of its activities, but that may be merely a matter of political opinion, and I'm sure they're well meant. No, it's the deplorable moral effect on the behaviour of the community, of all of us, of this obviously humane policy of theirs and of an assured standard of living for everyone, that's what I can't get over.

THE ENGINEER: It's not a pretty sight, I own.

THE RECTOR: And you tell me that's what you Social Crediters are aiming at—to provide the individual with his basic needs irrespective of whether he works for them or not?

THE ENGINEER: My answer to that is, yes and no.

THE RECTOR: But whatever your expectations may have been before we had an effective Socialist Government in this country, surely the experience of these last years, if it has shown you nothing else, has demonstrated the painful weakness of the individual conscience when it is deprived of the urge—or threat, if you like—of unemployment? To me it looks . . .

THE ENGINEER: You've completely changed your ground you know, when you introduce unemployment.

THE RECTOR (*ignoring the interjection*): It looks like a complete vindication of the whole cynical, Darwinian philosophy of the Nineteenth Century. It's enough to turn us all into Spencersians! I just hate to talk like this, but it's the bare Truth about all of us, even if it's most obvious in the case of the so-called Workers—the hewers of wood and drawers of water.

(*Suddenly pulling himself up.*) But I seem to be monopolizing this exposition which was dedicated to your-self and Social Credit.

THE ENGINEER: No, no. Go on. We'll arrive at our goal—if we ever do—quite as likely by a process of elimination as directly. I assure you it's most illuminating to me.

THE RECTOR (*not quite sure if the other is entirely serious*): Well, if you really mean that—let me see, what was I saying? I was just uttering a warning, you know; for like all thinking individuals for the last two centuries at least, I've dabbled quite a bit in Humanism, and the rational aspects of the human mind. We've all done it, I'm sure. And I've been more than a kind of humanitarian Socialist in my day. I still am, I suppose, as we all are; more because we see no alternative than anything else.

THE ENGINEER: Yes, that's the pity of it; that's the sort of "rational" thinking I've been working to cure myself of for years now.

THE RECTOR: You've still to convince me of your

cure. I'm still doubtful if you've faced up to the full implications of this creed of yours. (*Turning squarely on his companion*). You don't suppose I enjoy laying myself open to the charge of being a cynic, do you?—but considering all the humane intentions behind this Welfare State, its results seem to me just the most dispiriting thing imaginable; that is, looked at from the ethical angle, as I must do. Perhaps you can hardly be expected to realize how horribly depressing it is for a sincere minister of Christ to be a witness of what I can only describe as the active de-Christianization of this country, that is taking place in spite of all the practical humanitarianism of this present age. It's almost as if we had tried the experiment of trusting ourselves—as a community, I mean—and were forced to admit complete failure.

It's positively horrid to watch the gradual disintegration of the simple economic virtues of thrift and husbandry and craftsmanship that we've so laboriously built up over centuries of painful Christian endeavour. Because, in the last analysis, you know, it is the sense of personal responsibility that all these qualities express that constitutes what we mean by Christianity. And they're all on the down grade. You can't deny that.

(*Moodily gazing at the fire*). It's a really horrible thought; or don't you Social Crediters feel like that about it? Do you like change just for the sake of change? Are you like all the other social reformers I meet, chuckle-headed idealists, with eyes for nothing but the theoretical beauty of their political doctrine and obstinately blind to the ugly results of its application?

THE ENGINEER (*tolerantly*): If that last is meant as a straight question, I can't answer you, for the good reason that my ideas have never been tried out politically. If the result of Social Credit was as ugly as Socialism, I can only hope we'd be honest enough to admit it.

THE RECTOR: But are not you proving what I say when you persist in an aim which you admit is the same to all intents and purposes as the Socialist Welfare State, in face of all that's happening about us today as a direct result of that policy?

THE ENGINEER: Oh, no, you mustn't make that mistake. All I admit is that the Social Credit objective is *in fact* what in theory the Socialists *claim* theirs to be; which is not just the same thing. No, I appreciate all you say about what is happening today, and the decline in standards. Where you, and I as a Social Crediter, differ is on this question I brought up at the very start of how we *see* the social problem. I said that for you to understand the Social Credit proposition it would be necessary for me to get you to approach the matter from the same angle as we do. Most importantly, perhaps, that involves your view of Socialist claims and motives; for it's they that ultimately decide the conclusions you draw from the results of the present experiment.

THE RECTOR: But we both agree in thinking them deplorable?

THE ENGINEER: I know we've agreed as to the psychological effects of the Socialist State. Where we appear completely to disagree, though, is in the conclusions we draw from them. Yours, if I don't mistake you, is that the ideals behind the Welfare State are genuinely humanitarian, whilst the Socialists' trust in the goodness and integrity of human

nature is proved by the results to be misplaced or at least premature.

THE RECTOR: I don't like your way of putting it; but I suppose that's substantially correct. Yes, I've admitted as much. We *must* face the facts. We can't ignore the evidence of our senses. You admit that?

THE ENGINEER: Most certainly I do. But what evidence have we got, barring their own word for it, that the Socialists' claim to be humanitarians—to be the only humanitarians—is genuine or sincere? For me, the sincerity emerges in the instinctive reactions of the individual members of society which we have to admit are bad in themselves, and not outstandingly enthusiastic. My faith teaches me that a bad reaction argues a bad cause—or have you ceased to believe in the Law of Cause and Effect? Remember, it's solely on the strength of that Socialist claim that you base your moral condemnation of the whole community.

THE RECTOR: But my dear man, all the really humane elements in society—I leave out the tough big men of business and the little worthless ones—are in sympathy with the principle of the Socialist Welfare State, and quite apart from party-political affiliations. It's unavoidable; don't forget you said yourself that anything less than a recognised minimum standard of living was unthinkable these days. Isn't all that factual evidence to be taken as conclusively in its favour?

THE ENGINEER: Answering for myself, no; not against the evidence of my own senses—or perhaps a better word is intuitions, commonsense,—which persist in encouraging me to trust in the innate decency of human nature, when rightly treated.

THE RECTOR (*with a shade of envy in his voice*): You appear to have great confidence in the soundness of your own reactions.

THE ENGINEER (*with an apologetic smile*): Call them the promptings of the heart, and I'll admit I have. Why shouldn't I, granted I've sifted and analysed my own motives to the very best of my ability? If the issue really lies between the Socialist protestations of having the individual's welfare at heart, and the individual response to them, I am prepared to give human instinct the benefit of the doubt every time, and to distrust the fundamental good faith of the whole Socialist Movement.

THE RECTOR: So that it is in the light of society's reactions to it that you condemn Socialism out of hand?

THE ENGINEER: Rather, I should say that it stood self-condemned, but I don't mind the other.

THE RECTOR: And you put that forward as representing the Social Credit faith?

THE ENGINEER: Well, hardly that; but as a vital aspect of what we are trying to get at, which I take to be the truth of the matter at this stage in our discussion. To the dyed-in-the-wool Socialist obviously a stumbling-block.

THE RECTOR (*with the air of a drowning man clutching at straws*): Rather a negative basis on which to found a Movement, don't you think?—Just a general and sweeping condemnation of someone else's ideas.

THE ENGINEER: Perhaps; but to me it appears less negative than the Socialist alternative—which appears to be yours also—of condemning the whole human species, which is even more general and sweeping, you'll allow.

(THE RECTOR relapses into silence, undecided whether to be annoyed, or to accept the implied rebuke. The atmosphere is quite tense. Then he breaks the silence.)

THE RECTOR: What it boils down to, then, is that my inability to appreciate Social Credit, arises from a lack of faith in my neighbour. Is that it?

THE ENGINEER (almost abashed): Well, but . . .

THE RECTOR (interrupting): No, no. Let's leave it at that for the time being. (He rises and goes to a table in the background on which are the essentials for a cup of tea). We'll allow a little time for that to sink in, if you don't mind. May I offer you a cup of tea. I can't offer you anything stronger owing to a difference of opinion between myself and the Revenue Authority regarding alcohol and its uses and abuses, in which unfortunately he has the last and decisive word.

(All three men have relaxed appreciably.)

(To be continued.)

PARLIAMENT.

(Continued from page 3).

it clear to all concerned, our friends and enemies, that we really mean business, then it will not increase the tension, it will relieve it; it will not increase the risk of war, it will reduce it. But if we drift, as we have done hitherto, then I do not see how disaster can be avoided for us and for the rest of the free world.

House of Commons: July 31, 1951.

TRANSPORT

Mr. Peter Thorneycroft (Monmouth): . . . I now come to the question of finance. The Transport Commission now have an accumulated loss of £40 million, which is a very great deal of money. We must all direct our minds to what can be done to stop that continuing drain. There is one suggestion not contained in the Report which is widely canvassed in the country, namely, that we should solve the problem somehow by fiddling with the interest rates on British Transport Stock. I do not know whether anybody in the House is prepared to defend that argument. I imagine not, and I hope that hon. Members opposite will use their best endeavours in all the various spheres in which they exercise their influence to see that that argument is not advanced. I shall not meet it now; hon. Members opposite can meet it, for they know just as well as I do what nonsense it is. It serves rather to blur the issue and distract our minds from the real difficulties and dangers to which we must direct our minds.

I turn, therefore, to Lord Hurcomb's solution, which at any rate has the merit of simplicity. He says that, in a rapidly changing world, we cannot keep pace with all these price increases. The remedy, he says, is for British Railways to be able to adjust their charges as quickly as prices are rising around them. But he produces a formidable list of difficulties with which he has to contend.

One of the difficulties is the present Chancellor of the Exchequer. Lord Hurcomb finds it awfully difficult to keep pace with him. Chancellors have taken out of this industry in the last three years £9 million in fuel tax—that is, a quarter of the total accumulated loss. It is a formidable

sum and it does not seem to be quite in keeping with everything that the Chancellor is saying these days. If there is one way of forcing up charges in this country, it is to increase the financial difficulties of this great industry.

However, Lord Hurcomb says that on this and other matters we must have greater flexibility and greater freedom—we have to put up the charges faster—the trouble is due to all the delays. Well, he has done pretty well; he cannot complain. He has increased the freight charges by 28 per cent., and the passenger fares are going up; there is an enquiry going on; the London fares are going up and, in regard to the road industry, he has had a free market there. Without let or hindrance he has put on increases of 60 and 100 per cent. but "Faster! Faster!" he always cries.

Whenever I look at the present head of the British Transport Commission—for whom I have a great affection even if I am not entirely in agreement with his policy—I am reminded irresistibly of Tenniel's delightful drawings of the Red Queen in "Alice Through the Looking Glass." Readers of that book will remember the incident where the Red Queen takes Alice by the hand and they tear through the countryside with the Red Queen saying, "Faster! Faster!" Eventually they come to a standstill, and Alice finds herself sitting under the same tree from which she started. She says, "It is curious. In my country, if you run very fast for a long time, you generally get somewhere." "Oh," says the Red Queen, "what a slow sort of country. Here it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place."

I find that Lord Hurcomb has more resemblance to the Red Queen than merely a facial one. However fast he puts up the charges, he always ends in roughly the same position—losing the public money at somewhere between £25 and £50 a minute. But let me say to the right hon. Gentleman in all seriousness that we would hesitate a long time before we were prepared to grant to the British Transport Commission, in the exercise of its vast monopoly powers, greater freedom and flexibility in the putting up of charges.

It is amazing what monopolies can do. I have many examples but I will give just one. It was given to me yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Sir D. Robertson) and it concerns fishermen in the North of Scotland. I choose it because I suppose that no class of person has been harder hit than the fishermen in the North of Scotland by increases in freight charges in recent months. An enterprising firm up there hit upon the idea of shipping lobsters to the South after taking off the shells up North and turning them into fish meal. It was obviously lighter to shift the meat to the South without the heavy shell. That sort of thing can make all the difference between employment and unemployment in the North of Scotland.

The day before yesterday my hon. Friend got a telegram saying that after three years trading the railway companies had decided to alter the category of Sinclair Fisheries goods from fish traffic to that of delicatessen, thereby altering the rates from an average price of 13s. per cwt. to 31s. 4d. per cwt., both in the company's risk; and that the increased price was an increased levy of £1,200 per annum, which simply killed this business.

That is the sort of thing which a monopoly can do.

It is the sort of thing which anybody in competition would not dare do for a single instant. I hope very much that we can get this put right. I do not ask the right hon. Gentleman to deal with it today, but to look into it. However, I say that it would be wrong if we were to accept flexibility and freedom in charging policy by some body which has such absolute control as the railways have at the present time over long-distance transport. Our answer on that matter is plain. As long as the right hon. Gentleman has a monopoly and claims a monopoly, so long he must have the controls which go with a monopoly. Let him abandon that monopoly in some degree, as we have often invited him to do and then, and then only, are we prepared on this side of the House to concede the freedom and the flexibility which would undoubtedly be of great advantage to the transport industry.

The truth is that the whole basis upon which the Transport Act, 1947, was framed has now broken down and has been abandoned. Under the Transport Act the road-rail charges scheme was to be drawn up within two years. That charges scheme was to be alike the major weapon of integration and the major safeguard for the consumer. That was the basis of the Act. There were many arguments about it, there were many speeches made about it, pamphlets were written on the principles upon which a charges scheme ought to be drawn up, and others about how the industry could be integrated. It was said to be "vital," "urgent," "supremely necessary"—I quote from various speeches I have read upon the subject. But nothing happened and, at the end of that two years, a further two years were granted. The further two years expire on 6th August next, and it is now 31st July.

What has happened to that charges scheme? I will tell the right hon. Gentleman, although I expect he has been told already. It is dead. It will never see the light of day. As a matter of fact, the cat was let half out of the bag in the Report on page 26, as follows:

"... it is improbable that any such scheme can at present lay down a detailed basis for road haulage..."

The only things wrong with that sentence are the words "improbable," "present," and "detailed." The truth is, and the right hon. Gentleman knows it perfectly well, that they have dropped the road-rail charges scheme. I have no doubt it is the course which the right hon. Gentleman will adopt this afternoon, because it is the practice of the House of Commons to announce publicly that a scheme has gone so that we can all turn our minds to what can be put in its place.

I invite the attention of the House to the situation which this has created. Let us contemplate it, for example, in the case of the British Road Services, who hold today a monopoly of all long-distance road haulage in this country. What a tragedy that industry is! They took over hundreds of profitable firms against the wishes of the men who were running them, running them with profit to themselves and service to the community. They turned those profitable businesses into a vast concern which last year lost £1 million of public money before they had paid one penny piece in interest on the assets they had filched. That is the position.

The basis of that acquisition was that a charges scheme should be put up. But there is to be no charges scheme, and what Lord Hurcomb and the British Transport Com-

mission are claiming in this Report—I hope the Minister will not claim it—is that they should seek to recoup those losses by an unlimited right to raise charges against the consumer. The sky's the limit. To be able to discriminate between one business or industry and another business or industry is a flagrant abuse of monopoly power.

With all the propaganda that they have put out about monopoly, I cannot conceive that the party opposite will support a solution of that kind. Would they dare to come here and say, "Well, we thought we would have some checks to this monopoly but we now find it is too difficult to have them, so we want the monopoly without the checks." If they say that, it will put paid to a good deal of their party propaganda in the country.

... Our policy upon this is quite plain, and I shall state it now, quite shortly. We intend, to start with, to abolish the ridiculous restriction of a 25 miles' limit upon the private road haulier. At a time when this country is short of transport, there could be no more idiotic solution than to impose a 25 miles' limit upon the road haulier. We are not suffering from too much transport. Next winter we may be desperately suffering from too little transport, and I beg the right hon. Gentleman and his associates to stop trying to legislate for some situation which may have existed in 1932 but certainly will not exist in 1952.

We propose also to give an opportunity to those who have been driven out of the business to come back into that business. We propose to re-organise publicly-owned transport—the railways, publicly-owned road haulage, and the canals—in regional boards of a size at which there is some possibility of finding some body big enough to run them. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that one of the biggest dangers into which the party opposite are running is in over-rating the number of men they have, or who are available, anywhere who can run the mammoth-sized industries which they set up. We propose to wind up the functional executives because, in the system which we propose to set up we can see no very useful purpose which they would serve. In that more competitive atmosphere, we propose to give to the railway companies a much greater degree of flexibility and freedom, a degree of flexibility and freedom which is tolerable in circumstances of some competition but utterly intolerable in circumstances of monopoly.

The right hon. Gentleman may agree or disagree with that policy, and he will have an opportunity of saying so tonight, but there is one thing on which hon. Members on all sides ought to agree: the present policy has failed. It has finished. It has been abandoned by the very men who put it up. It is for the right hon. Gentleman either to step in and produce a policy of his own, or to step out and give us a chance.

(To be continued.)

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