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VOICE

INTEGRITY
FREEDOM
RESPONSIBILITY

Vol. 3. No. 4.

SATURDAY, JUNE 16, 1956.

6d. Fortnightly.

VOICE

A JOURNAL OF STRATEGY FOR PERSONAL,
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FREEDOM.

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Offices—Business: LINCOLN CHAMBERS, 11, GARFIELD STREET,
BELFAST. Telephone: Belfast 27810. Editorial: PENRHYN
LODGE, GLOUCESTER GATE, LONDON, N.W.1. Euston: 3893.

Automation: Two Questions

The frequent references to automation in the Press often confuse two issues which need disentangling, for the question of redundancy of workers is often slurred into the distinct problem of their finding interest in paid employment.

For instance, the enlightened industrialist, T. M. Heron, reviewing M. D. Chenu's *Pour Une Théologie Du Travail* (For a Theology of Work) in the May number of *Theology*, complains of the theologian that "his ignorance of the new forces and stresses which the atomic scientist has let loose in industry prevents him from experiencing and taking upon himself the 'uncanny' temptations and aspirations which our new power and knowledge have brought in their train," but says "Père Chenu has seen into the heart of the present situation." We find Père Chenu applying the vocational teaching of St. Thomas, "involving a forgetfulness of self in pursuit of the product," to industrial employment, and making the doubtful statement that the perfecting of the work comes before the perfecting of the worker, which might appear a confusion of means and ends.

Mr. Douglas Hyde tackles redundancy in *The Catholic Herald* and states in successive numbers (May 4 and 11, 1956), "The civil authority has a large responsibility from its duty to care for the common-good in ensuring stable and widespread employment." This deals most inadequately with the problem, and although we welcome Mr. Hyde's conversion from Communism, and appreciate its value, we would stress the need in this and countless other cases of the conversion of the intelligence, which is so apt to carry over or to pick up the Communist approach to the problem. A Christian can hardly suggest that the purpose of man is to be employed as an industrial wage earner, and if so could make nothing of automation which releases man from industrial employment.

In fact of course a very little work would ensure a good standard of living for the country which has substituted a moralistic attitude to "work" in place of Jesus Christ's preference for Mary's activity over that of Martha. St. Paul's dictum about working and eating was addressed

to a hysterical populus and is normally quoted mischievously out of its context. It requires no great effort of intelligence to distinguish between a man of leisure, who has time and means at his disposal, the unemployed who has time but no means, and the sponger (known as a 'bum' across the Atlantic), who has time and expects other peoples' means. Air is free, and automation is setting the stage for a reasonable living standard to be almost as free as air: and we are set quibbling about other peoples' air.

Returning to the Press, we find *The Tablet* (May 4, 1956) remarking staidly enough that there are strong reasons for effecting the changes of automation gradually but that the country cannot possibly afford "to go on with the old methods when new methods for achieving the same final product with the use of less labour are known, . . . and are being used elsewhere." But we fear that the paper has its eye on the export market rather than on producing as much as is needed as easily as possible. *The Church Times* warns that automation may "do more than anything else to disrupt labour relations in Britain" (May 11, 1956). The Editorial then quotes Sir Hartley Shawcross on his disillusionment with politics, "'when one finds personalities playing more part than policies,'" and notes, "Labour has not got a policy." The writer, after referring to Lord Home's speech claiming that the Commonwealth "seems to answer the fear that the tendency to centralise power is in sight of destroying the personality of individuals," rounds on Mr. Macmillan. He calls the speech in which the Chancellor admitted deterioration in the financial position of the middle classes and expressed sympathy, "extraordinary," for Mr. Macmillan claimed that for those in employment, "It is just not true that their position has got worse under Conservative government." The writer concludes, "Does Mr. Macmillan really think that the fall in the value of the pound since 1951 has escaped the notice of those who are suffering most as a result?"

A. Valente, in *ABC* (Rome), warns that if automation increased industrial production and at the same time decreased employment, then "a lessening of purchasing power throughout the world would give rise to grave economic disequilibrium." This diagnosis remains fully correct as long as it is assumed that paid industrial employment is the only, or major, source of purchasing power. Another contributor to the same issue of *ABC* (May 1) notes that effective liberty is not only judicial but economic, and Signor Valente says that "security and increased well-being" are social aims. Clearly, production must be reflected in purchasing power if these aims are to be realised, and automation could be a friend instead of enemy if the finance system were brought up to date.

We may be surprised to learn from *The Sunday Times* (May 13) that automation may be applied to Agriculture and Forestry, as well as to other types of production such

as dangerous activities like "the supervision and control of atomic energy plants." The author of the article adds that automation "gives us the facility to produce at less cost more articles of higher quality and greater consistency." It will also make life more interesting, for "people will have an outlet in their work for their latent creative talents."

Many other newspapers discuss the question from various angles. *The Daily Telegraph* looks at it through American eyes, and says that objection to automation seems to Americans, "Short-sighted and doomed ultimately to complete failure." (May 8). *The Church of England Newspaper* tries to look through the eyes of the Coventry strikers, asking (May 11), "Why should they carry the whole burden of society's advance?" and concludes that no one can answer the question, "because there is no answer to give." *The Daily Express* (May 6) quotes Mr. R. Edwards, M.P., as saying that mechanisation and the means of increasing production without so decreasing purchasing power that the people could not buy the goods produced was the greatest challenge of our time, but remarks that the Minister of Labour said it was the business of industry, not the Government, to solve it. *The Daily Mail* (May 3) in a leader entitled "Fear of the Robot" forecasts, "in the long run automation will mean a stupendous rise in standards of living."

Doubtless many other such reports are available, but the main points are that automation could undoubtedly ease and increase production, and it could decrease the *real cost* of production, for the real cost is what is consumed in producing. But we have no assurance whatever that the consumer is to benefit by reduced financial costs, or that society is to benefit through increased leisure—which is free time with money.

Trial and Error

In approaching this and other problems, we need integrity, and are glad to see *The Church Times* (May 18) deploring its disappearance in the case of the missing frogman, Commander Crabb. The paper says, "Coming on top of the episode of Burgess and Maclean, when misleading statements were issued from the Foreign Office, this sorry business suggests that there is little respect for integrity left in some quarters in Whitehall." The same issue of the journal notes another lapse of even graver consequence. The reviewer of the first volume of Mr. Truman's *Memoirs (Years of Trial and Hope)* complains, "what he apparently never understood was that the Balfour Declaration, in promising that Palestine should be a national home for the Jews, reserved the rights of the Arabs." I doubt whether Mr. Balfour was much more concerned about the Arabs than Mr. Truman.

Integrity

The *St. Martin's Review* (April, 1956) deplores the situation of a man who has to resign his job in protest. "Such was the case of Mr. Randall, Chairman of the London Electricity Board, who to maintain his integrity resigned his job rather than acquiesce in a policy that he felt to be wrong." The same periodical lists as one of the objects of Industrial Sunday: "To teach the true meaning and purpose of work."

We Have Seen It All Before

In October, 1929, a period of amazing prosperity in the United States came suddenly to an end, and the greatest depression in history began. Even today, more than a quarter of a century later, the cause is still being hushed up, but is not in doubt. It was restriction of credit by the New York banks. With a bottle-neck in the supply of money, industry was paralysed and business came to a standstill.

The purpose can be judged from what was in fact achieved:—The smaller units in industry and commerce were eliminated. It was concentration of power, the march towards monopoly.

In this country parallel action was taken by the Bank of England and our Great Depression was inaugurated. Without the money necessary to permit it to carry on, the economy was throttled and a half of British industry closed down.

When the process had gone far enough it was decided to call off the depression in both countries. The restriction of credit was relaxed, money flowed freely, and as C. H. Douglas put it, the red light was replaced by green and the traffic was allowed to proceed once more.

Early in February of this year Sir Anthony Eden said, "The nation has thrived and come to a state of prosperity greater and more widespread than ever before in our history. There are signs of this all around us: higher production, more investment, people with more to spend and more to spend it on, unemployment never lower."

Surely that is clear enough. And a Prime Minister is in a position to know. But those words did not conclude his speech. What followed shook my faith in Prime Ministers:—"We had to stop it, so early last year we began to apply the brake. The measures we have taken are naturally not pleasant." He was referring to the restriction of credit. 1929 all over again!

Labour and Conservative governments ever since the war have made full employment their first objective. The greatest-ever number of fully employed persons could only be kept at it by paying them wages. They could only be paid by advances of credit from the only institutions which can do so, the banks. Of course, the banks do not advance credit to everyone who applies. Only customers whose plans were approved received advances. The plans which were approved were for building colossal new factories. These may be seen everywhere ruining the countryside.

And now after ten years, all the new factories are swinging into production and it is quite clear that all the new factories and all the old factories are not going to be able to sell their wares. Motor-cars, for instance.

Bear in mind that everyone is continually clamouring for more money to make ends meet now, so that if they are to have all the new goods that are coming on the market they will have to be given more money than their wages to buy them with. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* only the banks have the privilege of creating the means of payment out of nothing, and so it is to the banks that we should all have to look for this extra money. It would be a pity if the goods had to lie there unsold because the banks refused to create the means of payment, even

although they create the means out of nothing, as the Encyclopaedia says. That would be a very dog-in-the-manger attitude, wouldn't it?

And yet that is exactly what the banks will do. They will refuse to create the means of payment, and the products of industry will go unsold. If they did create the means of payment and allow the output of the factories to reach the people it would open people's eyes as to the possibilities. A dangerous situation would at once arise. They might start to think it would be a good idea for the banks to create the means of payment of income tax. And purchase tax. And all the other taxes. The banks' customers, too, might look at things differently. Why should they have to repay the money which the banks had created for them, when everybody seemed to be getting money without having to return it? Were not these same customers performing a most meritorious service in building the factories with the money the banks created for them? Why then should they be penalised? Do the banks own the money they create?

It is quite plain that the banks would be on the spot. No inkling of the possibilities must become generally known. What courses of action then are open to the banks in the embarrassing dilemma in which they are placed?

They might arrange for the sabotage of the supply of goods, so that there would then be no need to supply people with more money than their wages. The supply of goods could be discouraged if there was no sale for them. There would be no sale if people had no money to buy them. People would have no money if taxation was stepped up, and the prices of the necessities of life were raised. Taxation is being stepped up! The subsidies which were paid in order to keep down the prices of milk and bread are being withdrawn! The price of coal is being hastily increased, and that will raise the price of everything!

Mr. Butler has been a Chancellor of the Exchequer and knows the ins and outs of taxation and the money business. Early in May Mr. Butler said, "We cannot guarantee success but we have been working to a grand design." Of course, he was referring at the time to the Prime Minister's attempts to preserve the peace by fraternising with President Eisenhower and then the Russian leaders, but one wonders whether the control of the money supply was one of the components of the grand design.

It would help to absolve the banks from suspicion if the attack upon prosperity were to seem to proceed from some other quarter, not the banks. Suppose, for instance, that a politician could be induced, unconsciously if possible, to father the ruin upon the nation. For any one to do it consciously would be to descend to unheard-of depths of treachery and depravity.

Mr. Butler was the man in the shop-window. For weeks before he announced his restriction of credit the newspapers cried havoc and woe and ruin and prepared the public for the dismal announcement. When it came, Mr. Butler was most careful to stress that he hoped for the co-operation of the banks in this matter!

But every one quickly recognised an unacceptable policy, confidence in him was badly shaken, and he was straight away promoted out of the job to be Leader of the House.

Over now to Mr. Macmillan who is uneasy about the

part he is billed to play, makes many appeals to our sense of decency and public spirit, from which we deduce that he knows the credit squeeze will operate to private disadvantage. He says it is for our good, but the Englishman loses his money and his security. We now await a demonstration that public good can come of private loss. Mr. Macmillan is as strident as Mr. Butler in calling upon the banks to co-operate with him. I don't know what his qualifications are for the terrific responsibility of the job he has assumed but he is always protesting that he is only a new boy and will need time to settle in, which does not fire me with confidence. No one would like to charge Mr. Macmillan with conscious turpitude, so we must all hope that he is unconscious.

But back to what must be the point of view of the banker. Obviously, if the supply of goods were to be slashed by making it impossible for people to buy them, manufacturers would become despondent and factories would close down. But which ones? The new ones, whose erection was sanctioned by the banks, and which are mortgaged to the banks, could hardly be allowed to shut up shop. They are all part of the big combines, the concentration of power, the monopoly which the banks support. If there is any closing down, it will be by the smaller concerns and the privately owned ones. And that would help the combines by eliminating competition. Control by the banks would become absolute.

Automation is much in the news. It would help in the grand design by reducing the wages bill. The volume of money to spend would be decreased. We are being told, "Automation must come."

The Bank of England was "nationalised" under, I think, a Labour Government. If any attempt has been made since then by any government to impose upon the Bank a policy acceptable to Englishmen, it has not received the limelight. The banks cannot be entirely blamed for their misappropriation of power, because they have never been directed to the task which they should perform, and could perform so easily. Their task should be to create the means of payment FOR US. They create it out of nothing.

John Brummitt.

No Poverty?

Few people can realise the patient, courageous endurance of poverty and privation which is the lot of many widows of deceased clergymen. They are accustomed, of course, to rigid economies while mistress of the vicarage. But when the husband dies the widow has to leave the house at short notice and find a place to live with little or no money with which to buy a house. . . . And so the struggle begins and goes on year after year in a doleful combination of wistful memories and grinding penury.

—*Truro Diocesan News Leaflet.*

Untold Ruin

"Where complete 'planning' has been established, some results have been achieved, but at the price of untold ruin caused by an insane and destructive fury." His Holiness the Pope, *Catholic Herald*, April 20, 1956.

Book Review

Mission at Rome by W. Watson.

The decline of France after 1919 can hardly be hidden, their literary magazines still cling to 1920. The Librairie PLON, having a reputation for printing rather loose volumes, that is those written in the kind of journalism that seldom tells anything with enough precision to enlighten the reader, and which invariably skirts round the edge of the vital question: Who issues the money, has brought out a new volume by Hubert Lagardelle, who at least knows something but never quite enough. We have yet to find a socialist, other than the late A. R. Orage, who ever cured himself or was cured of the initial clumsiness of Marxian thought. Neither do we know of a Henry-Georgite arriving at monetary understanding. A thomist is said to have been cured in Australia, case history still to be examined.

One doubts if Lagardelle understood Mussolini as well as René Benjamin but this was not due to intention, simply to general dimness of comprehension of anything, but he is looking for French errors of policy: our own probably start with Ronald Graham. René Rodd would not have slipped on such a banana peel as our ineffable Eden. France did not enjoy anything like British prestige in Italy, the "latin sisters" propaganda appealed to a very small minority; if there ever was a cooked-up propaganda line, that was it. The prestige of the English "milord" was still in 1939 and even in 1944 almost as strong as that of the American Uncle, recently effulgent in Naples for the benefit of "Prendergast's boy," Naples, home of the slave population. ("Francia o Spagna, pur che magna.") Delcroix was heartbroken by the conflict, but he was not in a majority. So we approach Lagardelle with a certain reserve. *Mission at Rome* (as seen by a French socialist journalist) is advertised as containing unpublished documents. "France with her instability, governments changing overnight, ministries lasting 24 hours, is she capable of HAVING a foreign policy?" That was, and perhaps still IS the question. It was asked in 1937.

In 1933 our King still called himself "of Ireland" and Emperor. The "Pacte à Quatre" was signed by von Hass de Juvenal, Graham, and "le chevalier Benito Mussolini." Article IV mentions "a common economic interest," and only the ignorance of old school diplomats can allow anyone to suppose that this clause was seriously considered by Juvenal or the British *ambassadeur extraordinaire et plenipotentiaire*. We concede Graham's ignorance; Hoare's total ignorance must be doubted, but he did not sign this document. Buchanan did not adore the Sassoons, but he was removed from Italy after a couple of years to make room for Ronald the "Très Honorable."

The Laval-Mussolini Agreement was signed January 7, 1935, the phrase "traditional friendship which unites the two nations" is usual diplomatic politeness; "brief and occasional" would have been more accurate, but would have been thoroughly undiplomatic. The chevalier and the citizen said their governments were determined to develop it. The agreement occupies less than a page of Lagardelle's volume.

On December 22, 1935, Laval hoped for a peaceful settlement, and expressed his difficulty in sticking to the League and to Italy simultaneously. The four Laval-

Mussolini, Mussolini-Laval letters are we suppose "the unpublished documents" advertised on the cover-band. Mussolini replied on the 25th, with a letter containing the paragraph:

"I do not think it necessary to take time to explain to you the reasons why the first proposition, made to me by Mr. Eden at Rome last month, cannot be considered."

There was an English Colonel named Rock or Roque who might shed some light on this subject, but so far as is known his knowledge of Abyssinia has never been warmly welcomed in England, nor did we home-dwellers receive very explicit information as to the habits of Ethiopians, the slave trade, for instance, and their penal institutions, even though relatives of our statesman sometimes visited that country.

The "general mobilisation" by the Negus may have alarmed Mussolini. No reader of Major Douglas had, for a long time, had implicit confidence in the League of Nations. Also the first application of Article 16, was considered, "even at Stresa a problem à préciser."

Hoare's resignation at a critical moment would be worth study, which Lagardelle is, evidently, not in a position to undertake. Sir Samuel had opportunity, perhaps, to gain a more detailed understanding of the Judean Lion than had other British Statesmen, and certainly inspired more confidence abroad than Vansittart. January 23, 1936, Laval on the eve of his resignation still hoped for franco-italian amity.

All of this is long past, and may perhaps be left to students of archives. The brief chronology is that The Negus announced his mobilisation to the League on September 29. Italy mobilised on October 2. The League ordered ambassadors out of Rome on the 11th. The interesting phrase in the Italian statement of October 3 is: 'mobilisation . . . aggravated by the constitution of a neutral zone which is nothing but a strategic movement to facilitate assembly and aggressive preparation of the Abyssinian troops.'

The Englishman most competent to pass judgment on this phrase is General J. F. C. Fuller. The British Ambassador's "fears for an attack on Egypt and the Soudan" could also be referred to General Fuller's judgment: we doubt if a Talleyrand, or even a Metternich or, coming down to more modern date, a Rennel Rodd would have shared them. Edward and Eden appear not to have seen eye to eye at this moment. Charles-Roux who transmitted the Pope's efforts at mediation seems to have dropped out of the news. As general estimate, one would say that Hoare and Londonderry are approved. Despite his socialist past, when Lagardelle returned from Italy with personal assurance of adherence to the agreements of 1935, Leon Blum refused to receive him.

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