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FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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Frank Lloyd Wright: Architect

King George VI conferred the King's medal for Architecture on Frank Lloyd Wright, the American son of a Welsh mother and a Yorkshire father. As holder of the Sir George Watson Chair of the Sulgrave Manor Board, Lloyd Wright gave four lectures before the Royal Institute of British Architects in May, 1939. The text of the lectures attracted the attention of English Social Crediters at the time. It was published, with an account of discussion which followed, by Messrs. Lund, Humphries and Co. Ltd., of 12, Bedford Square, under the title "An Organic Architecture." The following are extracts, by no means exhaustive, from this account, which were published in The Social Crediter in January, 1941.

"I believe the time is here when Beauty must make sense and make superior sense with individuality undiminished, not only for our own day but for all time.

"Civilisation, chiefly a money matter, approaches its inevitable end."

"So here I stand before you preaching *organic* architecture; declaring organic architecture to be the modern ideal and the teaching so much needed if we are to see the whole of life, holding no 'traditions' essential to the great TRADITION. . . . When this deeper concept enters the mind it all means this—that imposition upon our life of what we have come to call the '57 Varieties' is dead wrong; that classicism, and all *ism*, is really imposition upon life itself by way of previous education.

"Seriously. . . going back again into the nature of this thing that I would champion, getting back to the minority report—the 'Declaration of Independence,' we may now ask, independence of what? Well, let me say again, independence of all imposition from without, from whatever sources not in touch with life; independence of Classicism—new or old—and of any devotion to the 'Classics' so called, independence of further crucifixion of life by current commercialised or academic standards and, more than that, a rejection of all imposition whatsoever upon life; . . . I am declaring resolute independence of any academic aesthetic, as such, whatsoever—however and wherever hallowed.

"Now, looking back at the old Order it comes to this . . . does it not . . . that instead of going to the fountain-head for inspiration, instead of going to the nature-principle by way of our trust in life and love of life, going there for inspiration and for knowledge, where have we been going? Going to the armchairs of universities, going to their hallowed musty books, going to the famous armchair men who were tutored by armchair men, themselves famous offsprings of the armchair. We have been getting mere instruction and dubious information in this vicarious left handed way until the whole social fabric educated as it is far beyond its capacity, is unable to bear up, longer, under the strain of Reality. . . ."

"Education is not even on speaking terms with true culture at the present time."

"You may see that it is quite a 'job,' this one the young in spirit have on hand; quite a work they now have to do. Some fight this: to clear away our dead-past, by clear thinking to make way for direct and honest building out of what ground we have to what light there is. No, it is all not so simple, nor is it too difficult. But it cannot be done by the architect alone while our social structure is in the same senseless chaotic state. But our spirits are still alive in this rubbish heap professional aestheticism has left to us. The old order passes and the new, mean-time, is groping, growing and hoping to find some way through the heap to something more integral and consistent with the laws of nature; the love of human-nature square with human life."

"I urge you to be a little less self-consciously educated and conservative, to be a little more liberally reasonable, and all of you—every architect included—should—daily for seven minutes if possible—do a little more serious and a little deeper thinking on the subject of what constitutes organic character in economics, in statesmanship, in architecture, yes and why not in salesmanship?"

"Nations have run out of ideas because the individuals composing them have none."

"I am speaking of this new movement, tonight, as the ideal of a life organic, of buildings as organic, of an economic system truly organic."

"But under this thing that I have been talking to you about, a man soon gains a sense of the whole and a feeling of complete responsibility as a unit in the whole develops in him, not to be pigeon-holed. The only way he can 'uneducate' himself is by going to work with this new sense growing up in him, getting out to work somewhere where life is actual, not theoretical. In that way, holding to the larger view, he will be likely to forget everything he was taught because what he was taught just would not work."

"Really there is no good reason why a Democracy
(Continued on page 3.)

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From Week to Week

In view of the current propaganda concerning 'automation,' it is desirable to state some main facts baldly.

To anyone who will consider the situation factually, free from the jargon of official economics which does not distinguish money from real assets, or useful production from waste, certain principles stand out plainly.

The first is that a given population has a basic requirement of the elementary necessities of food, heat, clothing and shelter. Disregarding catastrophes and 'acts of God,' mankind has always been able to meet these requirements, even before machines were thought of; were this not so, we'd not be here.

Insofar as these requirements involve the conversion of material from one form to another, or its transport from one place to another, the application of energy is required. This energy may be provided by human muscles, by animal muscles, or by machines utilising stored solar energy, such as coal, oil or water power.

In industrialised countries, the ratio of machine-applied energy to human energy is hundreds to one. This means that a given community could provide its basic requirements with a very small fraction of its total available man-hours of energy. If we define basic requirements as those necessary for bare subsistence, and set a basic 'standard of living' of as much as ten times those requirements, the fraction of available man-hours necessary to their production is still a very small fraction; in any moderately industrialised country it is certainly less than one per cent.

The ratio of machine-hours to man-hours of available energy is evidently an economic quantity of fundamental importance; and together with the availability of necessary raw materials, indicates the capacity of that country to produce goods.

The effect of 'automation' is to increase the machine/manpower ratio.

The product of industry is of four elementary types:

- (a) goods required for existence;
- (b) goods for individual personal use;
- (c) goods for use by organisations (including public works);
- (d) goods for export surplus (including munitions).

Only goods of types (a) and (b) are of direct use to the individual; he has a conditional interest in (c) and (d) insofar as their production increases the proportion of (a) and (b)

and of services which he receives in return for a given expenditure of his own energy.

The proportions in which (a), (b), (c) and (d) are produced constitute what we may call the 'programme of production.' And the ratio of (a) and (b) to (c) and (d) measures approximately the use-value of the programme to individuals.

While (a) and (b) has increased continuously, and, since the industrial era began, very largely, (c) and (d) has increased, and is increasing, even more largely and rapidly; so that, in relation to possibilities, individuals are increasingly badly off.

This situation, which is fundamentally simple to grasp, is almost completely obscured by the operation of the financial system. Because money is paid for any sort of 'work'; because money is obtained increasingly only for 'work'; and because money provides practically the only access to goods and services, work for waste is not distinguished from work for use.

Viscount Chandos, Chairman of Associated Electrical Industries, says (*Observer*, July 10, 1955) "that continuity of employment should be the first object of industrial policy." No doubt the first objective of breathing is to exercise the lungs, of eating to employ the bowels, and of going to the theatre to provide employment for usherettes.

Sir John Cockroft, in *Nature*, May 21, 1955, points out that natural radiation, derived from the sun, cosmic rays, and the earth-itself, amounts to three units for thirty years. In Nevada, close to the site of a number of atomic explosions, the dose so far has been 0.05 to 0.2 units. In Great Britain there has been, so far, 0.01 units of radiation from the falling out of radio-active debris derived from atomic explosions, and a further amount of 0.02 units is expected to fall out during the next few years. In short, the radiation scare is bunk.

Although viewers are irradiated by television receiving sets, we notice that that arch-conditioning medium has not been condemned in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.

Size

"For there is a limit, fixed by Nature, to the optimum growth of anything—and that is especially true of the associations formed by men in order to get what they desire, both economically and socially. There is a maximum size beyond which there is a steady decrease in efficiency, and that holds true whether it is the social or the economic structure which is in question.

"If self-development is the end of man, then it is the differences between individuals that require encouragement; it is the variations that are valuable, and the larger the unit, social or economic, the less it is possible to cater for individual idiosyncrasy. The more numerous the voters, the smaller the chance of any one of them to get his wishes attended to, and the less is his individual power in the community. The larger the economic organisation, the more it can afford to neglect the wants of the individual customer. Indeed,

(Continued on page 4.)

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT: ARCHITECT—

(continued from page 1.)

should not have, and be free to will and to possess the best. Is not democracy the highest form of aristocracy that the world has ever seen—the aristocracy of the man, the individual, his qualities as a man making him the aristocrat?”

“All that we ask is action, more action and then some more action.”

[Of Broadacre City]:

“In education to-day what have we—actually—to help realisation of Broadacre City? Well, our own country is filled—and, this is incidental to my topic Broadacres, although it may not seem to be—with young but helpless collarites all walking the streets, looking for a job and not knowing a job when they see it unless it happens to be one of those particular perquisites of education such as selling bonds or stocks or being made agents for selling something somehow, somewhere or becoming an acceptable son-in-law. It has never occurred to these young men, scholars and gentlemen at that, to go back to their own country-side, or to go out to the old farms, to go again, enlightened now, to native ground to make life there so beautiful as they might, making their land and buildings and way of life there homely and surpassingly lovely. Were they so minded that would mean the beginning of the actual building of Broadacre City if they would qualify. There in the beauty of vernal country-side to-day they might so easily have on liberal terms anything a great city has to give them except the gregarious pressures of humanity upon humanity, and such excesses of the herd instinct as are there inevitable. But tragic as it all is, we must face the fact that even the United States of America now no longer owns its own ground. Its ground has gone into the hands of brokers, banks, insurance companies and other money-lending institutions of our country, until to-day to find any true popular ownership of ground is rare indeed. . . .”

“Soon however we come up against the fact that it is useless to attempt to free humanity by way of architecture (organic) so long as humanity itself is unorganic, therefore in gaol. So long as nothing else—social—is free, the social mind being essentially in darkness and the economic system knowing only the profit system, nothing of the nature of money, we were faced with one tremendous obstacle after another. Who knew the nature of money? No one seemed to know. Was that ever taught in school? It seemed to have been accepted as an abstraction even by kind old Karl Marx. And we found that we must have ground free in the sense that Henry George predicted free ground—I am not speaking of the single tax—and we found that we must have not only free ground but free money, that is money not taxed by interest but money only as a free medium of exchange, and as ground would be free to those who could and would use it. Then we ran against another dark-place iniquity, lurking there: the ideas by way of which society lives, moves and has its being, all become speculative commodities. A little further on we began to realise that everything we had to live on—this, remember, was during the 1929-1935 depression—was some form of

speculative commodity. We found that life itself with us had practically become a speculative commodity; yes the matter had gone down so far as that. Of course, having everything in life down on the level of speculative commodity, you would naturally enough have a nation of gamblers; and you would have gambling not only as the principle money-getting device but the great romance of being of a whole people. And that is what the capitalist system (call it capitalist but it isn't really) became in America. It is very largely so to-day, perhaps not knowing how to become essentially capitalistic or probably now unable to become so.”

A questioner referred to the idea of Broadacre City with its acre a head and contended that England would be ruined as a playground for those who live in the towns and take their holidays enjoying the country. He said, “there is no better man than the cockney soldier and no one who can bear hardship with greater fortitude and cheerfulness.” He thought this was due to “a battleship existence through living in crowded quarters. . . . I think.” He said, “we should have people who will go back to the land and live on farms, making everything for themselves. It means that the women will have to work from morning to night, but they can do it easily if their minds are not on other things. The men will have to work all day as well, and they will not be able to afford to buy newspapers or have a radio or anything of that kind. Provided they are willing to do without those things they can live in the country.”

Mr. Lloyd Wright replied:—

“Is that drudge-a-day life the beau ideal, then, of modern civilisation—the battleship existence of which you speak? If it is then I think the speaker perfectly right, and suggest that the more we can compress our people the better. . . .”

“The existence the speaker describes is however, to me, a negation of life rather than any affirmation of it. I deplore the circumstances in which such lives must be spent. It is just that kind of thing that the modern movement and life itself go up against. It is true that human life may be satisfied or habituated under pressures to adapt itself to whatever circumstances, even the bombing of women and children as modern warfare. But is life to end there? . . .”

“I feel, however, to be humane we must stand for the philosophy of freedom rather than for any philosophy of battleship sacrifice whatever, because what has the fighting Cockney soldier achieved in life, so far, by his fighting except *the need for more Cockney soldiers?*”

“What worth having has civilisation to show gained from the human sacrifices?”

Another questioner:—

“... These individuals may be happy on their acres, but they will have to co-operate among themselves.”

Mr. Lloyd Wright:—

“Yes they will—why not?”

The questioner:—

“But having got the people where you want them.”

Mr. Lloyd Wright:—

“Not, sir, where *I* want them, but where *they* want to be. . . .”

To another questioner:—

"...The result of our education is the folly which does not wish to see change nor allow for it as a law of growth. So the young man of to-day is helpless. Knowing nothing of the changing life of organic growth, spiritual or material—he is a parasite not born a parasite, perhaps, but if he is not so born he is made one to breed one...."

"I know little about politics. I confess I respect politicians not at all. But as an Architect studying structure I find it deplorable that no sense of structure as something organic exists to-day in their minds to make them statesmen so as to help save the life of the world. And I am certain if that sense of structure does not get into action among you soon where will civilisation be found? At an end."

"All of our culture has been this poor second-hand attempt to, on the left or on the right, escape from the actualities of existence by way of taste-created fashionable *illusions*. Spurious education has confirmed the fashionable illusions from generation to generation, confirmed them by book, by order and by reward. Economically, as architecturally, nearly everything with which we started to build the democracy of our United States—like our inherited cultural lag—was a feudal hangover, some unsuitable hangover from feudal times...."

"What prevents this realisation and the cultural utilisation of science in creating a better to-morrow to-day? What prevents true statesmen (architects of the social order) arising among us at a time like this? Why are the peoples the world over at the mercy of scheming industrialists and wily politicians? Why do national intrigue and plotting come to be accepted as normal statesmanship? Why is it now accepted by civilised nations that women and children may be mass-murdered in their own homes by wholesale mechanical 'improvements' as an accepted form of warfare in modern civilisation? Well...economically our so-called capitalist system may need such degradation and worse to keep it going on. That alleged system is of course primarily a matter of money—but, believe it or not, nobody, the 'system' least of all, really understands money. During the late breakdown in the United States—they like to call it a depression there, but it was a breakdown—I do not think any one in our country (or in yours, either) ever heard during that dreadful time one single enlightened official suggestion as to the why or wherefore of the circumstantial mystery called money, nor listened to any sensible remedy in the circumstances. And this was so simply because 'they' did not understand the nature of the thing—money.... Dear beneficent old Karl Marx and noble Henry George did not understand it either; they accepted it as an established abstraction or as something from God. And we have so accepted it. I only mention money as one instance of the lack of any *sense of structure* in economics of society and in this search for organic structure for which I am pleading in architecture."

"I believe human nature still sound and recognise that science has done a grand job well; but well I know that

science cannot save us. Science can give us the tools in the box, mechanical miracles that it has already given us. But of what use to us are miraculous tools until we have mastered the humane, cultural use of them? We do not want to live in a world where the machine has mastered the man; we want to live in a world where man has mastered the machine! At least, or at long last, I have brought you this message; what we call organic architecture is no mere aesthetic nor cult nor fashion but an actual movement based upon a profound idea of a new integrity of human life wherein art, religion and science are one: Form and Function seem as One, of such is Democracy."

SIZE—

(continued from page 2.)

by its very size it is forced to cater for the similarities and not the differences between its clients. The similarities are very necessary up to a point: we all want bread, but we do not live by bread alone.

"Moreover, by this immunity from criticism, power is thus concentrated at the apex of the organisation, and it is unquestionably the seeking for such power that is the drive between such apparently unrelated phenomena as the chain-store, the trust, and Federal Union. And this power is gained at the expense of the individual.

"Since the organisation exists for the individual, therefore, and not vice versa, it becomes plain that 'bigger' is most likely 'worse,' and that the present-day movement towards centralisation is of the devil. It is the creation before our eyes of the Servile State, and if such a state is established, though it cannot long endure, its collapse must destroy much that is precious in human life and living."

—R. L. Northridge (1940)

THE FIG TREE

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CONTENTS.

<i>The Fig Tree</i>	The Editor.
ROOTS OF SOCIAL CREDIT	Tudor Jones.
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY APES OF GOD	Dryden Gilling Smith.
REVIEWS:	
M. JACQUES MARITAIN'S <i>Man and the State</i>	(by Beatrice C. Best).
LORD PERCY OF NEWCASTLE'S <i>Heresy of Democracy</i>	(by John Mitchell).
DR. J. F. L. BRAY'S <i>Financial Justice</i>	(by T. N. Morris).
RULE OF LAW	(by T. N. Morris).
MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS'S <i>The Demon of Progress in the Arts</i>	(by T.J.).

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