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FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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Social Engineering

An address given by Major C. H. Douglas to the Women's Engineering Society in London on January 19, 1938.

I was proposing to-night to give a talk to engineers, but on looking round I see that a number of quite respectable people have drifted into the room, so I had better say at once that any bad language I may use is directed to engineers, who generally learn all about that sort of thing early in their career.

While I am addressing engineers primarily, I should like to take a somewhat wider view of the profession of engineering than that commonly taken to-day; to take instead a conception of engineering which in my opinion it has deteriorated from (if I may give emphasis to a sentence by being allowed to end it with a preposition).

There are certain aspects of engineering with which engineers are quite familiar, and in which words are used that have become common language, and one of these aspects is comprised in the word "efficiency."

Perhaps it will help to an understanding of what I am going to say about efficiency if I recall a story current in the Royal Air Force of a capable young pilot who was sent on a special mission to visit a sheikh in some comparatively inaccessible spot 100 miles inland of the Red Sea. The journey took him thirty hours, and as it was part of his mission to impress the sheikh with the marvels of modern European efficiency, he enlarged on the fact that the trip had taken him only thirty hours, whereas it was a journey that could not have been made with camels in less than six weeks. So, as he emphasised, he had been able to save nearly six weeks. To this the sheikh replied with a question very pertinent to what I shall have to say: "And what are you going to do with the six weeks?"

There is a great deal of loose talk about efficiency, the engineering definition of which is the ratio of input to output. But that definition is not quite comprehensive enough, for the important question is, "output of what?" That is the question that should be answered clearly whenever there is talk about efficiency.

It is quite possible to have an inefficient machine with highly efficient components. A nut and bolt, for example, may be very efficient, but there is no guarantee that the machine of which they are a part is efficient; and, from a similarly small point of view, there is no doubt that many departments of engineering, just like the nut and bolt, are extremely efficient. I should like to emphasise very strongly that any particular section of industry is, in the modern world, like the nut and bolt, part of a larger machine, so that it is possible to have many very efficient parts while the machine as a whole is decidedly inefficient.

Before starting on an enterprise of any kind it is essential to have a clear idea of the objective. Otherwise it is true to say that no one and nothing can be efficient in a universal sense. For example, the objective of engineers is, fundamentally, to save labour. Engineers are engaged essentially in the substitution of power-driven machinery for manual labour, and, in doing so, they are consciously or unconsciously applying the principles contained in the Charter of the Institution of Civil Engineers, which defines the profession of engineering as the direction of the greatest sources of power in nature for the use and convenience of man. Now if you are trying in every possible way to substitute for the labour of man the forces of nature derived in the main from the energy of the sun, while at the same time the small group of men who are in charge of policy—who control the destinies of this and other countries—say that the objective we must strive for is the employment of everybody, then, with such a conflict of objectives, there must be complete inefficiency.

You must know your objective before you can have any real efficiency; and until you have a clear conception of the objective, any talk of efficiency is useless, except in a very limited and delusive way. For example, to facilitate rolling motion, ball bearings are highly efficient, but for the purpose of generating heat—as a heat engine—they would be extremely inefficient.

If the various departments of modern industry—and the smaller sub-division the truer this becomes—are taken at the equivalent of the nut and bolt stage of my argument, they are, in the main, extremely efficient; but the more you try to enlarge the sub-divisions the less the efficiency becomes.

Consider for a moment what happens in this vast hive of activity which we call London. Stand on one of the principal Thames bridges at about 9 o'clock in the morning, or in one of the main thoroughfares from a big railway station, and watch the people teeming in, and consider what most of them are going to do. I do not think it would be an exaggeration to say that at least 80 to 90 *per cent.* of them are going into offices to make marks on bits of paper. Now the efficiency of what these people do in relation to the realities of economic life is practically nil. These people are wasting their own and other people's time, and I hope that none of them will imagine for a moment that I am being offensive to them when I say so.

Take, for example, insurance. Thousands of people are engaged in making marks on paper regarding insurance, and insurance is nothing but a parasite on a particular system.

(*Continued on page* 4.)

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From Week to Week

The almost negligible reaction to the partial publication of the Yalta documents demonstrates once again that public opinion has been mesmerised, and that the peoples of the world need to undergo some further painful experiences before they awake to the new world which is possible.

Although Douglas considered that it might be possible to avert the catastrophe which evidently awaits us, he never showed any special optimism that the possibility would be realised; and the depth from which he elaborated the Social Credit doctrine is evidence that he never thought of it as an immediate panacea.

As things are, the task of Social Crediters is to carry the seed of a stable order through the storm that is to come. It is not to be thought for a moment that the forces of Evil, now apparently so near the consummation of their designs, will allow any sort of electoral victory, anywhere, to divert them.

But we know that they cannot achieve a permanent victory, though they might achieve permanent destruction. Short of this, they will be defeated, *by events*, because their conception of society is not in accord with Reality.

The Big Idea may be too big; there may be a real revulsion of public feeling at the stark horror of the alternatives of an atom-armed World Policeman or atomic devastation. Or the idiocy of full drudgery instead of constructive leisure may break through the inertia of mass mesmerism. The Big Players may overplay their hand.

There are, from time to time, slight pointers in these various directions.

Be prepared.

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Personality is a force, and is measured by the effect it produces. The force of Sir Winston Churchill's personality is probably to be measured exclusively by his power to move mobs. Insofar as he moved mobs in the right direction, during the war, he was of value to his country: but beyond that it is difficult to go. There seems to be no evidence that he had any real vision of his own, beyond the practical necessities of the case. He did not keep his country and the Empire in the front rank of world affairs. However little contemporary Russia or pre-war Germany can be admired, they represent the materialisation of the visions of their creators, and are evidence of the force of personality. What, indeed, has Churchill created but some good prose and vast ruin? It is doubtful whether history will reveal that he had any original policy; his one-worldism was an adopted policy—and, in all probability, the price of his notoriety. He appeared and disappeared from a position of power when it suited the needs of an alien, international policy. And *if* he alone could 'save' Great Britain from a quick defeat in the Second World War—a long and destructive war was essential to the furtherance of the Big Idea.

Concentration of Power

"I start at all events from this premise: that the concentration of power in Society has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished. This is curiously the same charge as was brought by the representatives of feudal Society against those who were trying to destroy the feudal system, and the Barons who dictated Magna Carta at Runnymede were animated by exactly the same idea. "We object," they said, "to changes in the Laws of England"—*Nolumus leges Angliæ mutari.* The Laws to which reference was made were the Common or Customary Laws, to which the King himself had to bow. Custom has always been a surer protection of the individual than changes in custom by law. One has the sanction of long experience and is enforced by common consent; the other is enforced almost always against common consent, and the narrower the consent it receives the greater the force necessary to support it. If anyone is surprised that the most famous of the documents associated with the claim by the subject to liberty, the best known historical assertion of the Rights of individuals, should be of this nature, I can only suggest that it may be a case of the mis-presentation of history now rampant among us. "Absolute power corrupts absolutely." The modern claim to the supremacy of Parliament is a claim to a supremacy to which all must bow but Parliament. When Kipling advised us to "Suffer not the Old King, under any name," he was warning us against the consolidation of Absolute, irresistible power masquerading as Liberty; against the absurdity that we could establish our individual power by surrendering it to an oligarchy acting as one man, and be hidden from sight and immune from detection or attack. The actual state in which men and women in this and other countries have been living is one in which power has been concentrating."

—Tudor Jones, *States, Actual, Real and Potential.*

Vicious Cycle

"[The] masses are not only at the beginning, but at the end; I mean that they are themselves—as masses—partly the result of mass production and its consequences in every economic field. There is also the fact that big industry tends itself to create the needs which it later claims to satisfy. And no doubt it must be added that this whole process becomes increasingly inevitable as time goes on, or if you prefer, *it tends to create its own inevitability.*" (Gabriel Marcel: *The Decline of Wisdom.*)

A Visit to the Hon. Paul Martin*

Mme. GILBERTE COTE-MERCIER

Paul Martin, the Minister for Health and Social Services, granted me an interview with Gerard Mercier on Wednesday, 23rd February, just before the House began to discuss the Argue motion for a rise in Family Allowances.

The Minister shook hands. We sat down.

I said I had come to learn the response of the Government to the universal demand for a doubling of the family allowance.

Myself: Everyone demands that, Mr. Minister.

Martin (in a violent tone): I realise that the whole population of Quebec wants that. But there are other provinces. The Province of Quebec is not the only one in Canada. There are nine other provinces! And the other provinces are opposed to family allowances. Read the Toronto papers! You don't read the papers! Inform yourselves. You will see that the Toronto papers reproach me. They overwhelm me—I, who defend family allowances.

(I cannot get a word in. He bawls. He gets angry. And then goes on):

Martin: I read the journal *Vers Demain*. You are not honest in *Vers Demain*. It is not true that in France family allowances are greater than here. And in *Vers Demain* you do not do justice to the Liberal Party. You are not just. It is the Liberal Party which has provided family allowances. And you do not say so in *Vers Demain*. And it is the Liberal Party which will give them again. And it is the Liberal Party which will increase them when the time comes.

And he continues: "Help me, you others. Help me!"

Myself: Mr. Minister, we greatly wish to help you. And we are open to suggestions. What do you want us to do to help you? Who, anyway, is against family allowances? Who is opposed to seeing them doubled? Who should we see for that?

Martin: It is I you must see.

Myself: Then it is you who does not want them doubled?

Martin: We are going to discuss the question in the House to-day. I am going to state the attitude of the Government to the Allowances.

Myself: You are going to discuss the Argue motion in the House. But the Argue motion is not a Government motion. That is to say, the Government has no intention of increasing the Family Allowances this year?

Martin: We have no money. Social Security is costly. You want us to increase unemployment insurance. It is very important, unemployment insurance.

Myself: I agree, Mr. Minister.

Martin: And we are going to establish health insurance. You want that too?

Myself: No, Mr. Minister. The *creditistes* do not want health insurance.

Martin: You do not want health insurance? Why?

Myself: Because it is socialistic, Mr. Minister.

Martin: Health insurance socialistic? They have it in Europe!

Myself: There are plenty of socialistic laws in European countries, Mr. Minister.

Martin: Solon Low stands for health insurance.

Myself: That's his affair. But French-Canadian *creditistes* are not in favour of health insurance. Neither are the English social crediters. State health insurance is socialism. And *creditistes* want freedom. Family allowances mean freedom.

Martin: But Solon Low, your leader!

Myself: No, Mr. Minister, Solon Low is not our leader. We are independent of him.

Martin: But isn't your doctrine the same as his?

Myself: Yes, it is the same doctrine so far as it derives from Social Credit. But not the same methods of realising it. We are not a political party, we French-Canadians—and English Canadians hold the same view. We are a Union of Electors. We do not enter candidates in the lists.

> (The Minister seemed very surprised that we are not a political party. He pretends that he reads *Vers Demain*, and he has not yet read that in *Vers Demain*—as if he had not seen stated there, more than once, that Family Allowances were established in 1945 by his darling Liberal Party.)

Myself: It isn't possible, Mr. Minister, for the Government to refuse what 100 *per cent.* of the population demands. It isn't possible. Won't you increase the allowances?

Martin: I will give my reply in the House.

Myself: I believe, Mr. Minister, you will be our advocate in the cause of Family Allowances.

Martin: Your advocate? But I am the advocate of family allowances. I alone defend them. It was I who established them!

Myself: Then, Mr. Minister, we can count on you?

Martin: No, madam. What you must do is catch a train for Alberta at once, and set about winning over the world, propagandising in the West for family allowances.

And the Minister rose and led us to the door. He opened the door himself, and showed us out, saying: Run along, run along!

GILBERTE COTE-MERCIER.

*A free translation from *Vers Demain*, March 15, 1955.

The Age of Care

"It does seem in the last analysis that, for the seeker, wisdom is in a sense indistinguishable from the pursuit of it. We shall have to see why it is that this pursuit is today generally held suspect. . . . Let us consider firstly that, if not by right, at least in practice, in real life, the patience needed to attain wisdom goes perhaps not with leisure but certainly with a state that can be negatively described as not-being-careworn. In an age more favourable to this pursuit than ours, not even the humblest artisan knew anything of the kind of care that obsesses the proletarian of today." (Gabriel Marcel: *The Decline of Wisdom.*)

SOCIAL ENGINEERING— (*continued from page* 1.)

Under some other system practically the whole of what is done in the insurance world at the present time would be totally unnecessary. The same remarks apply to the immensely complex, irritating and time-wasting taxation system, which keeps hundreds of people busily working, and is a complete waste of time. The whole of the results which are supposed to be achieved by the system of taxation could be achieved without any book-keeping at all; they could be achieved entirely through the price system.

In the early days of the engineering profession, the great engineers all began as mechanics. Men like Boulton, Watt, Stephenson, were engineers with their hands; but as the engineering profession expanded, they grew into professionals, but still keeping close to the earth—to realities. They became great men, like Telford and Brunel, who were authorities on engineering, who established a situation in which they gave orders instead of taking them. From these high standards the profession of engineering has degenerated during the last 20 or 30 years, and the business of engineering is becoming more mechanical, though the mechanics of to-day are mechanics of the brain instead of the hand. The ability to handle a slide rule and make the complicated calculations and adjustments which are the business of engineering at the present time, are purely mechanical unless there is a consciousness, a real consciousness, of what it is you are doing, and why you are doing it.

I think this degeneracy of which I am speaking is much more pronounced in European countries than in America. There, there are engineers who are endeavouring to take a wide view of the profession of engineering. They have taken the stand that it is necessary to have a common knowledge of the objective, and this is extremely important, even though the objective they may be thinking of is a wrong objective. I am referring to what is known in the U.S.A. as an industrial engineer. We have no industrial engineers in this country like Gantt, who died some years ago.

Such men are breaking into a new type of engineering. They have a knowledge of the capacity of tools and materials, and how to get a job of production done. They are interesting themselves in a new kind of mechanics, examples of which will be found in the well-known time-study methods and efficiency mechanisms connected with their names.

These men are delving into and building up something which may be called the dynamics of society, which is equivalent to a study of the way in which the economic machine as a whole can be used to reach the objective. Once again, I would stress that it is immaterial at this point that the objective may be wrong. The fact is that these people are framing the dynamics of social action in the same way that earlier engineers built the dynamics of physics, built the theory of structures, of thermodynamics, of aerodynamics and so forth.

The point I am trying to make is this: There is a type of engineering for which there is a clamant need in this country. I will call it social engineering, and it is perfectly possible to go to work on just as sound principles as those which are used for bridge building; and just as, when you are building a bridge, there are certain principles which must be followed or the bridge will not stand, so there must be principles of social engineering which, if respected, will produce workable results.

Now the people who are actually engaged in this work at the present time are pre-eminently unfit for the job. For example, the man who rules this country is a man who knows nothing about figures. Another man who was a blacksmith—and I have nothing whatever to say against blacksmiths except that they are not necessarily fit for work outside the smithy—is ruling Italy. And another man who was a paperhanger rules Germany. Not one of these men has the very slightest idea of attacking a problem as an engineer would.

There are three simple principles which must be observed if any organisation in which human beings are concerned is to be continuously successful. They need not be taken too literally, but the fact is that they are universal in their application. The first of these principles is called policy, the second administration and the third technique.

It is impossible for people to work together satisfactorily for any length of time unless they are agreed upon policy. Policy is in the nature of things democratic. In fact, the real difference between dictatorship and democracy is exactly equivalent to the difference between, say, compulsory and voluntary cricket. While no one in his senses would say that a game of cricket should be RUN on democratic principles, the question whether to play cricket or not is for democratic decision. If you play cricket, you play according to M.C.C. rules; the game is not held up while votes are taken on what to do next. But if you don't like the rules, then you don't play cricket.

(*To be concluded.*)

The Big Idea

In the main, no great error is involved in dividing responsibility for world disasters into action on two planes. The first is that on which very long term policy, as we consider length of time, is pursued by the same organisation. *The Big Idea* is an outline of policy on this plane.

Like all undertakings which have been pursued to the stage of realisation, the Big Idea has first an objective, secondly a method of technique, and thirdly a dynamics by means of which the human individual can be made to conform to the technique so that the objective may be realised or attained.

The objective is World Domination.

The technique is centralisation by a graded executive, operating through Law and Finance. The dynamic forces are Fear and Desire. (*The Big Idea* by C. H. Douglas.)

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