

The SOCIAL CREDITER

For Economic Democracy

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Editorial

People of one faith or another, or no faith at all, have been called to cease wrecking this 'little blue planet' and to bring an end to poverty and war. The titles of key texts are evocative: *Silent Spring*, *The Rape of the Earth*, *How the Other Half Dies*, *Fighting Like the Flowers*, *Stupid White Men*, *Unto this Last*, *The Death of Life*, *The Killing of the Countryside*, *The Minding of Planet Earth*, *Things Fall Apart*, *What Are People For*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *So Shall We Reap*. Over the decades of the past two centuries the cry spelled out in those titles, and many other works with less evocative titles, has resounded loud and clear, calling common humanity to stop and think. These works are all discussed, dispassionately and objectively in the institutions of learning which prepare youngsters to take their

place in the 'real' world of practical economic life. Yet once they enter into the economy as-we-know-it, Upton Sinclair's adage kicks in: "It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it."

There was a story told of a Christian preacher who confronted his congregation with the following scenario. "One day you hear a knock on the door. You open it, and on the doorstep stands Jesus asking to come in. You recognise Him at once. Proudly, you invite Him over the threshold, telling Him to make Himself at home. He does exactly that. He talks and preaches all round the clock. He invites everybody in – the down-and-outs, the habitual offenders, the wild destructive children. He breaks every modern regulation on the statute books. One by one the members of your family storm out of the house, leaving you

alone to deal with the distinguished visitor. You try to keep some kind of order as the neighbours move out and property prices on your street plummet. Finally, you turn to Him. ‘Lord,’ you say, ‘I can’t do anything worthwhile with you here. Can you tone it down a bit?’ And you invite Him to move into a little ornamental shrine by the door, where you can give him a nod and a quick prayer as you go about your daily business.”

No doubt those listening to the preacher’s story paused momentarily in their tracks. Like the readers of the books listed above, they sensed something important was being voiced. Soon, however, consoling thoughts flood the mind. “I’m doing my bit,” “I’m doing what I can under difficult circumstances,” “What if everybody left everything and followed Jesus? Who would run the everyday social institutions upon which we all – whether you like it or not – remain completely dependent for our everyday needs? Who would put the bread on the table? Tell me that, will you! We cannot all afford the luxury of thinking. There’s urgent work to be done.”

If we do react in this way to the preacher’s story, perhaps that is because it makes us uncomfortable. I certainly felt most uneasy when I first heard it. Friends of mine are prepared to care for difficult characters in night shelters, even taking potentially aggressive youngsters into their homes on night-stops or on a longer term basis. All are volunteers, with a full range of other commitments and responsibilities. Yet, curiously, those very people have found the time to engage in discussion of alternative economics, recognising that all is not well in the social order when being

‘economically active’, regardless of age, caring and family responsibilities, is presented as a necessary pre-requisite for receipt of an income

The concept of a secure ‘basic’ / ‘citizen’s’ income, or national dividend, payable to all on the same basis as child benefits, has already appeared from time to time in these pages. In this issue, and for the immediate future, we are reviewing the potential for the topic to illuminate our everyday relationships with producers and consumers across the globe. As Douglas never tired of saying, the economy is no more than a man-made ‘game’ whose rules we can abide by or change at will. They are not set in tablets of stone.

The global economic system has come to dominate all aspects of the social order. Every day of our lives, as we set about getting and spending money, we are enmeshed unthinkingly in a world economy which is well on its way to making poverty history by eliminating humanity from the face of the earth. It does not have to be like that. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to use the resources made available by the authors of the works mentioned above as a motivational springboard for practical action. Such action may be no more than passing your copy of *TSC* to somebody else, or placing it in your local library. Further ideas, backed by resources, are available from the Secretariat (see contact details on back page).

H.J. Massingham *The Tree of Life*

Rachel Carson *Silent Spring*

Jacks and Whyte *The Rape of the Earth*

Lawrence D. Hills *Fighting Like the Flowers*

(contd opposite)

The Economics of Waste

Eimar O'Duffy

Excerpt from 'Life and Money' (first published 1932)

A very crude form of Sisyphism¹ is shown by those who advocate *spending* as a solution of our problems—I mean spending not for one's own purposes, but for the sake of 'giving employment' to others. A short time ago it was seriously proposed that the textile industry should be helped out of its difficulties by women patriotically adding a couple of inches to the length of their skirts; and a year or so earlier a well-meaning person wrote to the papers urging householders to assist the miners by burning as much coal and gas as possible—that is to say, to waste an irreplaceable national asset; for the supply of coal is strictly limited and cannot be increased.² It never seemed to occur to these bright intellects that if people spend more on one thing they will have less to spend on other things, and that therefore the employment given to the miners and textile workers would be taken away from the workers in other trades. Thus Sisyphism defeats itself.

A prominent advocate of the spending policy is Professor Keynes, an economist of such learning and renown that an

(contd from previous page)

Susan George *How the Other Half Dies*
 Wendell Berry *What Are People For?*
 Cardinal Cahal B. Davy *The Minding of Planet Earth*
 Thomas Berry *The Dream of the Earth*
 Sean McDonagh *The Death of Life*
 Graham Harvey *The Killing of the Countryside*
 E. F. Schumacher *Good Work*
 John Steinbeck *The Grapes of Wrath*
 Mae-Wan Ho *Genetic Engineering: Dream or Nightmare?*
 Martin Gilbert *Descent into Barbarism*

amateur like me is terrified at the thought of clashing wits with him. Still I must be brave and do it.

In *The Listener* for January 14th 1931, Professor Keynes wrote:

"There are today many well-wishers of their country who believe that the most useful thing which they and their neighbours can do to mend the situation is to *save* more than usual. If they refrain from spending on buying a larger proportion of their incomes than usual, they believe that they will have helped employment. If they are members of Town and County Councils they believe that their course at such a time as this is to oppose expenditure on new amenities or new public works.

Now in certain circumstances all this would be quite right. But in present circumstances, unluckily, it is quite wrong. It is utterly harmful and misguided—the very opposite of the truth. *For the object of saving is to release labour for employment on producing capital goods such as*

Richard Mabey *The Common Ground*
 Thorstein Veblen *Absentee Ownership*
 Robert Tressell *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*
 Marilyn Waring *If Women Counted*
 Vandana Shiva *Staying Alive*
 Maria Mies *Patriarchy and Accumulation*
 Juliet Schor *The Overworked American*
 Tolstoy *War and Peace*
 Chinua Achebe *Things Fall Apart*
 William Cobbett *Rural Rides*
 J.K. Galbraith (various)
 Colin Hines *Localization: A Global Manifesto.*

houses, factories, roads, machines and the like. But if there is a large unemployed surplus already available for such purposes, then the effect of saving is merely to add to this surplus and therefore to increase the number of unemployed. Moreover, when a man is thrown out of work, in this or any other way, his diminished spending power causes further unemployment amongst those who would have produced what he can no longer afford to buy. And so the position gets worse and worse in a vicious circle.”

Now I would have said all this to Professor Keynes several years ago, if I had had the honour of his acquaintance; but, not being a Sisyphist, I would have phrased it differently. For the words italicised above I would have substituted: “The object of saving is to release labour to produce capital goods such as factories and machines, *which in turn will produce more consumable goods.* But if there is already a large surplus of goods over and above what the community can purchase, then the effect of saving is merely to add to this surplus—*which, by the way, is only surplus because those whose work is not needed to produce it are not allowed to take part in consuming it.* Saving, in fact, under present conditions simply means allowing goods already produced to go to waste, in order to create means of producing more goods. But woe betide the individual who does not save. What will become of him in his old age when his work is no longer needed?

Professor Keynes gaily continues: “Therefore, O patriotic housewives, sally out tomorrow early into the streets and go to the wonderful sales which are

everywhere advertised. You will do yourselves good—for never were things so cheap, cheap beyond your dreams. Lay in a stock of household linen, of sheets and blankets to satisfy all your needs. And have the added joy that you are increasing employment, adding to the wealth of the country, because you are setting on foot useful activities, bringing a chance and a hope to Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Belfast. These are only examples. Do whatever is necessary to satisfy the most sensible needs of yourself and your household, make improvements, build.

For what we need now is not to button up our waistcoats, but to be in a mood of expansion, of activity—to do things, to buy things, to make things. Surely all this is the most obvious common sense. For take the extreme case. Suppose we were to stop spending our incomes altogether, and were to save the lot. Why, everyone would be out of work. And before long we should have no incomes to spend. No-one would be a penny the richer, and the end would be that we should all starve to death—which would surely serve us right for refusing to buy things from one another, for refusing to take in another’s washing, since that is how we all live.”

With the greatest respect I must insist that that is not how we all live, and that the ancient proverb maker was wiser than the modern professor when he said that we cannot live by taking in one another’s washing. We do not live by making one another work, but by consuming the produce of one another’s work. And if we stopped spending altogether, the cause of our starvation would be, not that we should be out of work, but that we should be without goods. In that case we should be

much better out of work, as we should thus conserve our energies a little longer.

It is hard to say which is weaker, Professor Keynes's economics or his logic. Seeing that the community is in distress, and also that people are not spending much, he has jumped to the conclusion that the latter fact is the cause of the former; and to prove it he asks what would happen if everybody stopped spending altogether—forgetting, apparently, that what is contingent on an impossible assumption is itself impossible, and therefore proves nothing. So much for his logic. His economic remedy is based on the fundamental idea (Sisyphist in origin) that the purpose of consumption is to make work. It isn't. The purpose of consumption is to support life. To consume we must produce, and to produce we must work. In logical order, the purpose of work is to produce, the purpose of production is to consume, and the purpose of consumption is to live. No economic remedy that is not based on the recognition of these realities is worth discussing. People spend or save not to 'help employment', but to live. They spend as much as they can afford, and they save the rest against the evil day when they can work no longer, or when their work will no longer be needed, and a Sisyphist society will leave them to starve in consequence. A propaganda campaign may induce them to buy a few bargains now with a view to saving money later on. But it can do nothing more. It is merely tinkering with our troubles.

¹ **Sisyphus, in Greek mythology, was condemned, in punishment for his sins, to spend eternity in rolling up a hill a huge stone, which rolled down again as soon as it reached the top. His sterile labours furnish an**

excellent symbol for the policy of 'making work' instead of distributing the product.

² **So far as we know there is less than enough for four more centuries. The supplies of petroleum are also limited, and are being even more lavishly expended. [written 1932]**

Tribute to Eimar O'Duffy

In the untimely death of Eimar O'Duffy the world has lost something which it can ill spare and can, with difficulty, replace. It has economists – and he was one of no mean order – in profusion, and many of the better known of these have provided us with gems of unconscious humour, for which a future generation will, I feel sure, feel grateful. And, of course, we still have with us Professor Stephen Leacock. But Professor Leacock rather ostentatiously keeps his unconscious humour and his conscious humour in separate compartments, much as if he recognised that they were both a species of leg-pull, each having a market but distasteful to that of the other.

O'Duffy would have none of that. Accepting the fact that we live in a lunatic world, he saw no reason why we should not get a little fun out of it. To him, Mr. Montague Norman, masquerading as Professor Clarence Skinner, with a hat drawn low over his eyes, was not half so funny as Mr. Montague Norman speaking as the Governor of the Bank of England, interpreting God to Man. Joining, as he did, the typical Irishman's hatred of pomposity with a delicate sense of proportion, which, I think, is the foundation of any appreciation of a humorous situation, he has been able to draw for us effective pictures of the deadly danger of taking ourselves and our economic system too seriously.

Eimar O'Duffy is dead, but if I am not mistaken, his books will for many years provide a touchstone of reality in the moving events of the world, which, unlike so many valuable and useful things, can be used not merely with subsequent profit to the user, but with great pleasure at the time of their use.

C.H.Douglas Social Credit Fri 11 Oct 1935

The Dearth of Purchasing Power: International Experience

Margaret Legum

Excerpt from **It doesn't have to be like this** (Wild Goose Publications 2003)

In the UK a campaign group, the Basic Income Research Group (BIRG) was started at the London School of Economics. It is linked to the European BIEN (Basic Income European Network) Federation of groups proposing and researching Basic Income. They exist in Holland, Ireland, Spain, Sweden, France, Germany, New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, Canada and the US. BIEN's 2002 Congress had the backing of the ILO [International Labour Organisation], in whose offices it was held.

New Basic Income Groups are constantly in formation. Information is available at bien@etes.ucl.ac.be. Perhaps the current debate most relevant to South Africa is that taking place in the Canadian Supreme Court. Like South Africa, the state of Quebec includes social and economic rights in its human rights legislation. The recent case of *Gosselin v. Quebec (Attorney General)* 2002 involved a welfare claimant who pleaded that she should receive a consistent and adequate level of social assistance that cannot be cut, because it is a human right. In effect that is a claim to a BIG [Basic Income Grant]. In the event, the case was narrowly defeated, but it is interesting to note that, in one of their rulings, the judges almost unanimously agreed that there was a possibility that in the future the law could be interpreted to include positive obligations on the government to provide a minimum standard of living.

Brazil is out in front. Some municipalities are already paying something like a BIG. It is a monthly payment to households, not

individuals. Following a campaign by Senator Eduardo Suplicy, an economics professor elected for the Workers' Party, the idea is catching on and spreading. Research shows that where the household grant is in place, employment rises and crime drops.

In Japan, the government's response to the collapse of purchasing power after the Asian Crash was to try to stimulate the economy in a direct way by giving everyone money to spend. In January 1999 children and low income elderly people were given shopping vouchers for use in the shops in a particular area. This was designed not only to stimulate the economy but also to regenerate certain local economies. It was a one-off rather than a regular payment.

Thus there is a large international movement in favour of a Basic Income Grant. Imagine if South Africa once again gave a lead by introducing a measure based in compassion, as well as having massive practical benefits. From the viewpoint of business the imperative is to get money – purchasing power – into the hands of potential consumers. The BIG is an essential part of that process: it distributes income to people from whom the current economic system removes it. Nothing would so quickly and directly get to the root of poverty. But it is not the whole story. Public funding for badly needed 'commons' and infrastructure will be a vital part of the growth of a newly civilised society. And that means public finance...

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The Iona Community, Glasgow

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The National Dividend

C H Douglas

(Extract from *The Douglas Manual*, compiled by Philip Mairet, 1934)

Dividends and 'Doles'

Since the institution of a modified financial system of a suitable nature would rapidly increase the (what is called) material wealth of everyone without detracting from the wealth of anyone, it would be imagined that, when once agreement had been obtained as to the feasibility of such an readjustment opposition would cease. But this is far from being the case. The more important the individual with whom one is dealing in these matters, and the more able such a person may be to assist in the end desired, the more likely one is to find a very definite dissent, not as to the competency of the mechanism, but as to the desirability of the end. It is a curious feature of the average human being that he deems himself singular in the ability to make a right and proper use of wealth. 'It is a good and desirable thing for me to have ten thousand pounds a year. I am a sober and right-minded person. But it would be absolutely disastrous for my neighbour over the way to have a comfortable income. He would not know what to do with it, and it would only hasten his career of drunkenness and depravity.'

(*Warning Democracy* 5-6)

I have heard innumerable cases of furious resentment against the grant of what is so improperly called 'the dole' (which is, of course, a form of contributory unemployment insurance, to which the workman himself contributes), and these denunciations, proceeding from normally kind-hearted persons of both sexes, are

usually accompanied by remarks on the demoralizing effects of money received without working. If you enquire, as mildly as possible, of such people, if by chance they receive any dividends which enable them to exist without working, you will, of course, be very unpopular, and you will be told that that is different, and if you suggest that a generalization of the dividend system if it could be obtained (and it can) would be desirable, you will be called 'Socialistic', a Parliamentary epithet for dangerous. (*Warning Democracy* 7)

Fundamentally, when it ceases to be an insurance claim, the dole is a small dividend on the National Income—a fore-runner of 'Dividends for All'—it is certainly the Cinderella of dividends, and is treated accordingly. Collectively, it is put in the foreground as being one of the chief sources of expense contributing to the burden of taxation under which the rest of the community is struggling, and thus has the effect of creating a feeling of hostility against its unfortunate recipients, which may be compared with the orthodox socialist outcry against other and more familiar forms of dividend. The enforced leisure enjoyed by those who participate in it, is rendered practically valueless by the regulations which surround it. (*Social Credit* 111)

Work as a moral imperative

It used to be a very common argument that the spur of economic necessity was ennobling to the character...The struggle to

overcome difficulties is most unquestionably ennobling, but we have, I think, reached a stage when our attention may with advantage be diverted from the somewhat sordid struggle for mere existence. (*The Control and Distribution of Production* 38-39)

The existing economic system, on the contrary, ably backed by the Marxian Socialist, takes as its motto that saying which I cannot help thinking proceeded rather from Saul of Tarsus than from the Apostle of Freedom — ‘If a man will not work, neither shall he eat’ — defining work as something the price of which can be included in costs and recovered in price.

It completely denies all recognition to the social nature of the heritage of civilization, and by its refusal of purchasing power, except on terms, arrogates to a few persons selected by the system, and not by humanity, the right to disinherit the indubitable heirs, the individuals who compose society. (*The Control and Distribution of Production* 15-16)

When we leave the easy ground of generalities and come down to concrete detail, we find it overwhelmingly difficult to define useful work. Not only is it difficult, but it is in the highest degree mischievous. (*The Control and Distribution of Production* 10-11)

Real Demand should be made Effective Demand

Before an intelligent system of regional planning can be inaugurated with any hope of success, some agreement is necessary as to whether unemployment, in its alternative

description of leisure, is a misfortune, or whether it is a release. If it is a release, then obviously it must not be accompanied by economic, or rather financial, penalization. If it is a misfortune, then clearly every effort should be directed to restraining the abilities of those engineers and organisers who are prepared to make not two, but two hundred blades of grass grow where one grew before. (*Monopoly of Credit* 78)

Now if there is any sanity left in the world at all, it should be obvious that the real demand is the proper objective of production, and that it must be met from the bottom upwards, that is to say, there must be first a production of necessaries sufficient to meet universal requirements; and, secondly, an economic system must be devised to ensure their practically automatic and universal distribution; this having been achieved, it may be followed to whatever extent may prove desirable by the manufacture of articles having a more limited range of usefulness. All financial questions are quite beside the point; if finance cannot meet this simple proposition then finance fails, and will be replaced. It has been estimated that two hours per week of the time of every fit adult between the ages of fifteen and forty-five would provide for a uniformly high standard of physical welfare under existing conditions, and without endorsing the exact figures it is perfectly certain that distribution and not manufacture is the real economic problem and is at present quite intolerably unsatisfactory. (*Economic Democracy* 85-86)

The Leisure State

If we assume that the constant efforts to reduce the amount of labour per unit of

production are justified, and we recognize the unquestionable fact that the genuine consumptive capacity of the individual is limited, we must recognize that the world, whether consciously or not, is working towards the Leisure State. The production system under this conception would be required to produce those goods and services which the consumer desires of it with a minimum and probably decreasing amount of human labour. Production and still more the activities which are commonly referred to as 'business', would of necessity cease to be the major interest of life and would, as has happened to so many biological activities, be relegated to a position of minor importance. (*Monopoly of Credit* 78-79)

In a physical sense we should then be living in a world in which economic processes were carried out by two agencies, one as heretofore, the agency of individual effort, and from the economic point of view of decreasing importance; and the other, the result of the plant, organization and knowledge which are the cumulative result of the effort not only of the present generation, but of the pioneers and inventors of the past. The second agency can, of course, be collectively described as real (as distinct from financial) capital. Now it is quite easy to make out a perfectly simple ethical justification for the proposition that the share of the product due to the individual under such a state of affairs would be (1) a small and decreasing share of the product due to his individual efforts, and (2) a large and increasing amount due to his rights as a shareholder or an inheritor, or if it may be preferred, a tenant for life of the communal capital. (*Monopoly of Credit* 79)

We want, therefore, to put more and finally all people in this position, not to remove from it those who are already there, always assuming that the alternative exists; and to do that we want so to organize the machinery of production that it serves the single end of forming the most perfect instrument possible with which to carry out the policy of the community; and so to empower the community that individuals will submit themselves voluntarily to the discipline of the productive process, because in the first place they know that it is operated for production and so gains their primary ends with a minimum of exertion, and in the second place because of the interest and satisfaction of co-operative, co-ordinated effort. (*The Control and Distribution of Production* 39-40)

Shareholders in the Community

Let us at this point for the sake of clarity identify the community with the nation and in doing so be careful not to confuse administration with ownership. It ought not to be difficult to see that a situation which may truly be described as revolutionary is disclosed. In place of the relation of the individual to the nation being that of a taxpayer it is easily seen to be that of a shareholder. Instead of paying for the doubtful privilege of being entitled to a particular brand of passport, its possession entitles him to draw a dividend, certain, and probably increasing, from the past and present efforts of the community of which he is a member. (*Monopoly of Credit* 80-81)

Under these conditions the community can be regarded as a single undertaking (decentralized as to administration to any

extent necessary) and every individual comprised within it is in the position of an equal Bondholder entitled to an equal share of product. The distribution of the product is simply a problem of the arbitrary adjustment of prices to fit the dimensions of a periodical order to pay, issued to each bondholder, and it will be found that such prices will normally be less than cost, as measured by existing methods.

Let this annual order to pay be inalienable, but carrying the assumption that a definite percentage of the individual's stock of time-energy units is freely placed at the disposal of the community.

(Economic Democracy 114-5)

The Social Heritage

The National Debt, which he, (the citizen) did not create, becomes a national credit which is a reflection of the national capital which he did create. His budget is not required to balance because his wealth is always increasing. He does not require to fight for foreign markets since obtaining foreign markets merely means a longer working day. Having more leisure he is less likely to suffer from either individual or national nerve strain, and having more time to meet his neighbours can reasonably be expected to understand them more fully. Not being dependent on a wage or salary for subsistence, he is under no necessity to suppress his individuality, with a result that his capacities are likely to take new forms of which we have so far little conception.

(Monopoly of Credit 80-81)

The early Victorian political economists agreed in ascribing all 'values' to three essentials: land, labour and capital. But it is rapidly receiving recognition that, while

there might be a rough truth in this argument during the centuries prior to the industrial revolution consequent on the inventive period following the Renaissance, and culminating in the steam engine, the spinning jenny, and so forth; there is now a fourth factor in wealth production, the multiplying power of which far exceeds that of the other three, and which may be expressed in the words of Mr. Thorstein Veblen as the 'progress of the industrial arts'. Quite clearly no one person can be said to have a monopoly share in this; it is a legacy of countless numbers of men and women, many of whose names are forgotten, and the majority of whom are dead. And since it is a cultural legacy, it seems difficult to deny that the general community, as a whole, and not by any qualification of land, labour, or capital, are the proper legatees. But if the ownership of wealth produced vests in the owners of the factors contributing to its production, and the owners of the legacy of the industrial arts are the general community, it seems equally difficult to deny that the chief owners, and rightful beneficiaries of the modern productive system, can be shown to be individuals composing the community, as such.

(Social Credit 49-50)

The Unearned Increment of Cooperation

This unearned increment rests inalienably on a basis of Capital, not of Labour; and if Capital derives from, and should be vested in the community, as is broadly speaking, incontestable, then it is as members of the community, tout court, unconditionally, that individuals should benefit by this unearned increment. The dividend is the vehicle for the distribution of this unearned increment,

and it is in the universalization of the dividend, and not in its abolition, that we shall obtain freedom. Only when this is realised will it be grasped that it is better for everyone concerned, and especially for Labour, that the routine operators of the plant of civilization should be selected solely for efficiency, subject to the most drastic competition, and progressively displaced by machinery.

Dividends on Capital, then, come from a true unearned increment, and the recipient of dividends is only the pioneer of the future Citizen. But a dividend, in the ordinary sense of the word, is a payment of 'money' of which, we have already seen, credit is the vital component, and although credit derives from the community, the organ of credit-issue, its mobilizer, is the bank. The most important and fundamental function of a bank should be to envisage the capacity of the community it serves, taken in conjunction with its plant and culture, to meet the demands made upon it; and, under democratic control, to issue purchasing power, on behalf of the community (the true State) up to the limit of this capacity, so that as individuals the units composing the community can set in motion the machinery which will make such demands effective. (*These Present Discontents and the Labour Party* 13-14)

Under such an arrangement, wages and salaries become what they are in fact at present — merely a credit grant against future production, and a measure of the human energy put into production. This credit grant would be cancelled by the writing down of the national assets to an extent represented by the sum of wages and salaries, the assumption being, of course, that the wages and salaries represent the

consumption of goods over a given period which have to be debited against the production of the same period. The dividend which is declared over the equivalent period represents the division of the difference between actual consumption and actual production (both of actual products and production capacity) over the same period. (*Social Credit* 186-7)

This scheme has been fairly widely discussed, both here and in America, but there is one feature of it which will perhaps bear a little elaboration — the obvious traversing of all accepted Socialist policy in the provision not only for the continuance of dividends to present shareholders, but the wide extension of those dividends to still more shareholders. (*The Control and Distribution of Production* 40)

In passing, it may be observed that Labour has never been in danger from the Idle Rich — it is the hardworking rich who are the chief champions of the status quo. (*Credit Power and Democracy* 13)

Freer Distribution the Condition of Improved Production

The more the maintenance of life can be shifted from the backs of men on to the backs of machines, the more important it is to find a creative outlet for the human energy released, and the more certain it is that a considerable portion of this energy will, without compulsion, be devoted to the improvement of the industrial machine. That is to say, if a practical policy based on these considerations be pursued there will be a fall in the man-hours required for routine or operating work, and a consequent rise in the man-hours available

for design and research work. The industrial machine is a lever, continuously being lengthened by progress, which enables the burden of Atlas to be lifted with ever-increasing ease. As the number of men required to work the lever decreases, so the number set free to lengthen it increases. It is true that, owing to the defective working of an outworn financial system, the lengthening of the lever has been offset by obstacles to its beneficent employment, but these very obstacles, by raising up a world-wide unrest, will secure a rectification of the means of distribution, which is the first step to a better state of things.

(Credit Power and Democracy 20-21)

Common Objections to Social Credit

The most grotesque objections have been raised to issues of credit in the manner I have just outlined; in fact, it is a remarkable thing that large numbers of persons, who cannot honestly be suspected of direct connection with the banking system, seem feverishly anxious to ridicule it. The first objection raised is that it would raise prices, a really remarkable statement in view of the fact that the suggested use of credit is absolutely contingent on a fall of prices. If cornered in regard to this objection, these persons say that it would result in a queue of the type familiar during the latter years of the first world war. The answer to this is, of course, that again the suggested credit issue is contingent on the ascertained fact that potential production is always in excess of consumption. It will usually be found that when the quasi-practical objections have thus been disposed of, the objector discloses his real position, which is what he calls a moral objection, that he hates the very idea that

anyone should be comfortable in this world without being made very uncomfortable in the process. Some years ago I had the experience of discussing these proposals with Mr and Mrs Sidney Webb, and after disposing, one after the other, of the objections raised to the feasibility of the scheme, I was met with an objection with which, I confess, I found myself wholly unable to deal, and I recognize that objection in the Labour Party Report on the Douglas proposals. The words in which it was made to me are worth putting on record. They were: 'I don't care whether the scheme is sound or not; I don't like its object.' That is a clear-cut issue; it is an issue which goes right down to the bedrock of human philosophy. It claims that human nature is essentially vile, and can only be kept within bounds by being kept so busy that it has no time to get into mischief. *(The Breakdown of the Employment System 11-12)*

Leisure and Progress

It is more generally suggested that leisure, meaning by that freedom from employment, forced by economic necessity, is in itself detrimental; a statement which is flagrantly contradicted by all the evidence available on the subject. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that 75 per cent of the ideas and inventions, to which mankind is indebted for such progress as has been so far achieved, can be directly or indirectly traced to persons who by some means were freed from the necessity of regular, and in the ordinary sense, economic employment, in spite of the fact that such persons have never been more than a small minority of the general population. Even where transcendent genius has been able to overcome the limitations of financial

stringency, it is highly probable that the results achieved have been nothing like those which would have enriched the world had those barriers been non-existent....It is probably true enough that there is an appreciable percentage of the population in respect of which any sudden access of material prosperity would be attended with considerable risk, and for that reason the transition from a state of artificial scarcity such as exists at the present time, to a state of prosperity, is most desirably accomplished by methods which do not too suddenly invest such persons with powers which they have not learnt to use. But to suggest that an obsolete and outgrown system of organization must be retained because of this risk, is to refuse to develop the railway, because of its detrimental effect upon the stage coach.

(Social Credit 115-7)

At this point we begin to touch the conflict between a classic morality and a modern scientific effort. Oblivious to the fact that practically all advance in the world's history can be traced to a condition of leisure, however that leisure was obtained, we find a large number of people prepared to argue that the object of modern scientific progress is to increase employment, and that only the 'employed', in the economic sense, have a right to exist.

(Warning Democracy 83)

Present Position and Strategy of Financial Reform

I do not myself believe that we can take to ourselves credit....even as a generation, for being the first discoverers of the true cause of the trouble, although I think probably we have added something to the stock of

knowledge of it. I believe it has been discovered several times before, notably about a hundred years ago, and in every case general knowledge of it has been suppressed, and the troubles caused by it have been used as an argument for some form of centralization of power, of which the latest form comes under the name of 'Rationalization'.

In my opinion there is no fundamental difference between 'Rationalization' as sponsored by Lord Melchett and Sir Herbert Samuel, and 'Nationalization' as sponsored by the Socialist Party, and I believe that the propaganda in regard to them comes from the same source. They are both of them policies for reducing the individual to an impotent unit in an overwhelmingly powerful mechanism.

(Warning Democracy 146)

I should not be honest if I gave it as my opinion that such a radical reform as we desire is at all likely to take place so long as the credit and banking system remains under the control of the individuals who are now in possession of it...

The first point to realize clearly in assessing the practical situation is that the problems connected with the financial system do not arise out of the difficulties of financiers. There is only one uniformly prosperous business in the world today, and that is 'banking' with its twin sister 'insurance'. You cannot realize too clearly that the financier's only anxiety is that the existing state of affairs should be permanent, and he is in a position to see that what are called 'political appointments' are made with this objective in view, and I believe this to be just as true of the Labour Party as it is of the Conservative Party, and rather more true of

the Liberal Party than either.
(*Warning Democracy* 147)

Since, however, most men are complex characters, it is probably true that an effective appeal can be made to a very large majority if the appeal is made in the right way. It is my considered opinion that the right way with most people is to discountenance severely any discussion of the general advisability of such matters as we have been considering, and as far as possible, to put the appeal in the form: 'Suppose that you yourself were offered certain conditions, such as we suggest, under which to carry on your business or your own personal economic life, would you accept them?' (*Social Credit* 202)

It has to be remembered that, unlike the movements commonly called socialistic, which on the whole have been class movements, this steady growth of public opinion as to the vital part played by the financial system in the efforts of mankind is not confined to any one class. It is common ground with the industrialist, the farmer, the landowner, and even the stockbroker: the interest in it is growing daily. I believe most fervently that we are at the very threshold of an awakening which may well alter the history of civilization.
(*Warning Democracy* 139-40)

In conclusion, however, I should like to emphasize one very important aspect of the whole problem. The desired solution has no basis in sentimentality or abstract Pacifism. To be successful, it has to be a solution which can fight. As I have just said, and as must be only too obvious, modern scientific civilization is irresistible in war. I

believe it is possible to provide a financial system which will so abolish the artificial differences of interest between individuals, that any community, nation, or continent which will successfully put these principles into operation will either compel imitation from the rest of the world, or will reduce any attack upon its principles to the relative position of a mob of bushmen armed with bows and arrows who might be so rash as to attack a modern army equipped with all the terrible weapons of modern warfare. In the meantime, a few concrete hints may be useful... Never subscribe to a new issue of shares or Government stock. Buy your shares or stock in the open market, and do not buy new issues. Fight every demand for taxes. Don't imagine it is your duty to pay taxes. You have to, but that is quite a different matter. Take a leaf out of the French taxpayers' book.
(*Warning Democracy* 75-76)

Unselfish aspirations, good intentions, beautiful phrases — none of these by themselves will affect the issue by so much as one hair's breadth. If the public of this or any other country is really desirous of once and for ever freeing itself from the power of the economic machine, and using the immense heritage which science and industry have placed at its disposal, it has to throw up and place in positions of executive authority men who are technicians in so broad a sense that they understand that the very essence of perfect technology is to devise mechanism to meet the requirements, the policy of those who appointed them.
(*Credit Power and Democracy* 85-86)

nb. Apart from *Warning Democracy*, all books by CH Douglas referred to here are available in the Social Credit Library.

Twenty-first Century Noah's Ark

In the year 2006, the Lord came unto Noah, who was now living in England and said: "Once again, the earth has become wicked and over-populated, and I see the end of all flesh before me. Build another Ark and save 2 of every living thing along with a few good humans."

He gave Noah the Computer-aided Design (CAD) drawings, saying, "You have 6 months to build the Ark before I will start the unending rain for 40 days and 40 nights."

Six months later, the Lord looked down and saw Noah weeping in his yard -but no Ark.

"Noah!" He roared, "I'm about to start the rain! Where is the Ark?"

"Forgive me, Lord," begged Noah, "but things have changed. I needed Building Regulations Approval. I've been arguing with the Fire Brigade about the need for a sprinkler system. My neighbours claim that I should have obtained planning permission for building the Ark in my back garden. They say it is a development of the site, even though I have assured them it is a temporary structure. They took it to the local authority, Eventually we had to go to appeal to the Secretary of State for a decision.

"Then the Department of Transport demanded a bond be posted for the future costs of moving power lines and other overhead obstructions, to clear the passage for the Ark's passage out to the sea. I told them that the sea would be coming to us, but they would hear nothing of it.

"Getting the wood was another problem. All the decent trees have Tree Preservation Orders on them, We live in a Site of Special Scientific Interest set up in order to protect the spotted owl. I tried to convince the environmentalists that I needed the wood to save the owls - but no go!

"When I started gathering the animals, the RSPCA sued me. They insisted that I was confining wild animals against their will. They argued the accommodation was too restrictive, and it was cruel and inhumane to put so many animals in a confined space. "Then the County Council, the Environment Agency ruled that I couldn't build the Ark until they'd conducted an Flood Risk Assessment on your proposed flood.

"I'm still trying to resolve a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission on how many BMEs I'm supposed to hire for my building team . The trades unions say I can't use my sons. They insist I have to hire only CSCS accredited workers with Ark-building experience.

"To make matters worse, Customs and Excise seized all my assets, claiming I'm trying to leave the country illegally with endangered species. So, forgive me, Lord, but it would take at least 10 years for me to finish this Ark."

Suddenly the skies cleared, the sun began to shine, and a rainbow stretched across the sky. Noah looked up in wonder and asked, "You mean you're not going to destroy the world?"

"No," said the Lord. "The government has beaten me to it."

Freedom and Fraternity

Extract from Charles Davy *Towards a Third Culture*, 1961

Editor's Note: In 1959 Sir Charles Snow (C.P. Snow) gave the Rede Lecture at Cambridge entitled "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution". Subsequently published as a pamphlet, the lecture gave rise to a sustained debate on the old arts culture and the new science culture. In the book from which this extract is taken, Charles Davy suggests that the ongoing evolution of consciousness could lead beyond the 'two cultures' towards a 'third culture', in which science, art and religion would find a common language.

The religious feeling I mean is not exclusively Christian, but it has been given form and force by Christianity in such words as 'children of one Father'. Unless persons are recognised to be not only what they appear to be in the flesh, these words have no meaning. Their implication is that in every human being there is a spark of the Divine, and that this is something to which conceptions of inequality have no relevance. If a strong and clever man is really to regard a weak and foolish man as his equal, he must hold and act on the belief that what they have in common – *ex Deo nascimur* – is more important and enduring than what sets them apart.

This belief can obviously not be held by Communists, and hardly by scientific humanists. Nor is it that the onlooker-consciousness [where the conscious mind is cut off from its unconscious streams] can easily arrive at by itself. But unless such a belief gains fresh strength from a renewal of its old sources, then I think the future trend of society will be away from liberal-individualistic forms, in which the idea of equality survives as a heritage from a declining religious past, towards collective forms in which the individual will count for less and less. This is already beginning to happen in all highly industrialized countries, whatever their politics, if only

because the scale of modern production and the efficient use of science call for large organisations and a great deal of collective enterprise.

If this trend continues, and is not resisted by an effective counter-current, the collective forms of the future will either be Communist or will share with Communism the need to promote a spurious kind of fraternity (perhaps called the 'company spirit') at some cost to liberty.¹ Since many persons will be figuring as units in industrial projects or economic plans, the tendency will be to treat them as units ('manpower', 'man-hours', 'personnel'), and there will be no imperative reason for not doing so.

An imperative reason could spring from a feeling for the transcendental equality of human beings, but that would call for a picture of man very different from the scientific one, which reflects the limitations of the modern consciousness. Unless these limits are surpassed, we may find that we are moving towards a society in which the creations of technology will increasingly determine the character of human living; a society in which human beings would be largely occupied in serving the demands of machines.² If there were still some errant
(contd on opposite page)

Excerpts from **The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos**

Brian Swimme

From the beginning, humans have been pondering the ultimate nature of existence. Shamans and sages, philosophers and saints, richis and rabbis and theologians, all in their various ways, have reflected on the deep and endlessly fascinating questions of existence. What does it mean, as a human, in this vast unfolding universe? What is our role here? What is our destiny?

None of the other animals of the world needs to engage in such reflection. They enter life and are given their basic relationships through the genetic programs that have been fashioned over millions of years. All except the human know their proper place in the world. But the human requires something different, something more than genetic codes. Humans require a cultural orientation. We are not given a fixed and final form to our orientation to life but must discover and deepen this

(contd from previous page)

desires or rebellious ambitions, these could be handled with improved tranquillizer drugs, designed to promote not merely contentment but a permanent mild euphoria. Life would pass by like a not unpleasant dream.

This forward view may be too sombre; I have no doubt that science will continue to learn from its own mistakes. Nor do I underestimate the extraordinary resilience of the human spirit. But although the human spirit cannot readily be crushed, it can be darkened, imprisoned; and an age of great technological brilliance can be an age of spiritual darkness. The onlooker-consciousness, finely adapted to scientific

orientation through the process of psychic development.

It is not because we have no answer to the question, "What does it mean to be human in this universe?" It is rather because we have so many different answers that we need to stop and wonder about the universe in order to sort out our right and fruitful relationships.

Conceivably for as long as three hundred thousand years, humans have huddled together in the night to ponder and to celebrate the mysteries of the universe in order to find their way through the Great World they inhabit. Modern humanity seems to be the first culture to break with this primordial tradition of celebrating the mysteries of the universe. When we learn about other cultures who do, we feel a sense of superiority or nostalgia, depending on our evaluations of such cultures. If we

exploration in certain fields, does tend to imprison the human spirit and to shut it off from light. We can learn more about this from the growing-up of a child.

¹ Cf. *The Organisation Man* by W.H. Whyte, 1957; also *The Lonely Crowd*, by David Riesman, 1950.

² In science fiction one can read of future cities built under vast domes which shut out the weather and ensure a constant air-conditioned climate. In I. Asimov's *The Naked Sun* (1958), people have come to dread any exposure to the natural world 'outside', and a character who has to travel (in a sealed spaceship) to a distant planet can hardly bear, on arrival, his first sight of the open sky. E.M. Forster's early story, *The Machine Stops*, had a rather similar theme.

regard the scientific enterprise as freeing us from earlier superstitions, we look with pity upon these primitives who devoted so much energy to teaching fantasies about the universe. On the other hand, if we think that earlier cultures knew something important about the universe that completely escapes our ways of knowing, we are left with a sense of sadness that such experiences are not possible for us today.

Modern industrial society does it differently. Questions of ultimate meaning and value are dealt with not in caves or on the open plains, but in the churches, mosques, and temples. Here each weekend billions of humans gather to reflect on their relationship with the divine – whether approached under the traditions of God, Allah, Brahma, or the Great Spirit. In all these millions of weekly religious ceremonies, so essential to the health and spirituality of humanity as a whole, one will find such a diversity of religious celebrations, but only rarely will one find serious contemplation of these primal human questions *within the context of the actual universe, a universe of stars, topsoil, amphibians, and wetlands.*

Certainly in the world's scriptures and in the religious rituals performed each week there are powerful uses of such words as "water," "sky," "sun," and "rain." But these are employed in a symbolic, rather than a literal sense. For instance, "water" might be used as a sign of the saving action of God; but it is not used to point to the hydrology of the Mississippi river. Evidence of this is found in our own minds: for us, the Mississippi river and God do not really intersect. God has to do with the gospel of love, with salvation, with care for the poor,

with the drama of the Bible, whereas the phrase "the hydrology of the Mississippi river" connotes for us various "physical" things, like the H₂O molecules, or the dams of the Army Corps of Engineers, or the laws dealing with water rights—and all of it understood as separate from questions of God and ultimacy.

The result is that, within our religions, when we do ponder the deep questions of meaning in the universe, we do so in a context fixed in the time when the classical scriptures achieved their written form. We do not worship or contemplate in the context of the universe as we have come to know it over these last centuries, a context that includes the species diversity of the Appalachian mountains, the million-year development of the enveloping ecosystem, the intricate processes of the human genome, the stellar dynamics that gave birth to Earth five billion years ago, and anything else that is both specific and true concerning the Earth and universe. All of that—the Earth and universe as they are and as they actually function—is regarded as "science," something separate from the questions of meaning and value that religions deal with.

Modern humans, instead of gathering in the caves and cathedrals to dance to poetry and music as a way of learning their place in the universe, sit in classrooms and study science. Certainly such education in the sciences is fundamental for the survival of humanity. The challenges that beset us today will grow ever more fierce for our children and their children, and we require the best science and technology we are capable of. But nowhere in science education—not in Europe or Asia or Africa

or the Americas—is the fundamental role and meaning of the human and the universe treated in any significant manner. The ruling assumption is that science is concerned with facts, whereas meaning and purpose and value are the domain of religion.

The tragedy here is that our religions would remain true to their essence if they were to think and work within the larger context of the universe. It would not mean shrinking away from the central religious truths. On the contrary, expressed within the context of the dynamics of the developing universe, the essential truths of religion would find a far vaster and more profound form. The recasting would not be a compromise nor a diminution nor a belittlement; it would be a surprising and creative fulfilment, one whose significance goes beyond today's most optimistic evaluations of the value of religion.

During the modern era of humanity the ancient cosmological enterprise was broken apart, not by some accidental development but by the ways of thought rooted in the very core values of our modern world. The division between science and religion can be argued with libraries of philosophical texts from modern thinkers and defended with mountains of legal briefs. We are prevented from engaging in the cosmological enterprise precisely because the institutional processes of the modern world keep humans away from such questions.,

But if humans, in order to become fully human, truly do need to ponder the universe to discover their place in nature, and if this three-hundred-thousand-year

tradition is rooted in the requirement of our genetic make-up, then we will find our ways to ideas concerning the proper human role in the universe one way and another. And if the institutions of education and religions have, for whatever well-defended reasons, decided to abdicate that role, someone somewhere else is going to step forward and provide it.

Where are we initiated into the universe? To answer we need to reflect on what our children experience over and over again, at night, in a setting similar to those children in the past who gathered in the caves and listened to the chant of the elders. If we think in terms of pure quantities of time, the answer is immediate: the cave has been replaced with the television room and chant with the advertisement. One could say that the chant has been replaced with the television *show*, but at the core of each show, driving the action, and determining whether or not the show will survive the season, is the advertisement. That is the essential message that will be there night after night and season after season. Television's *Bonanzas*, *Cheers*, and *Cosby* shows all come and go; the advertisement endures through every change.

What is the effect on our children? Before a child enters first grade science class, and before entering in any real way into our religious ceremonies, a child will have soaked in thirty thousand advertisements. The time our teenagers spend absorbing ads is more than their total stay in high school. None of us feels very good about this, but for the most part we just ignore it. It's background. It's just there, part of what's going on. We learned to accept it so long ago we hardly ever think about it

anymore.

But at a deeper level, what we need to confront, is the power of the advertiser to promulgate a world view, a mini-cosmology, that is based upon dissatisfaction and craving.

One of the clichés for how to construct an ad captures the point succinctly: “An ad’s job is to make them unhappy with what they have.”

The advertisement is our culture’s primary vehicle for providing our children with their personal cosmologies. As this awful fact sinks into awareness, the first healthy response is one of denial. It is just too horrible to think that we live in a culture that has replaced authentic spiritual development with the advertisement’s crass materialism. And yet when one compares the pitiful efforts we employ for moral development with the colossal and frenzied energies we pour into advertising, it is like comparing a high school football game with World War II. Nothing that happens in one hour at the weekend makes the slightest dent in the strategic bombing taking place day and night 52 weeks of the year.

Eventually we all get the message. It’s a simple cosmology, told with great effect and delivered a billion times each day not only to Americans of course but to nearly everyone in the planetary reach of the ad: *humans exist to work at jobs, to earn money, to get stuff*. And the meaning of the Earth? Pre-manufactured consumer stuff.

The reason for bringing up the advertisement’s hold on us has to do with

my fundamental aim in presenting the new cosmology. If we come to an awareness of the way in which the materialism of the advertisement is our culture’s primary way for shaping our children, and if we find this unacceptable, we are left with the task of inventing new ways of introducing our children and our teenagers and our young adults and our middle-aged adults and our older adults to the universe. These thoughts on a new cosmology are grounded in a contemporary understanding of the universe and nourished by our more ancient spiritual convictions concerning its meaning. These thoughts then are a first step out of the religion of consumerism and into a way of life based upon the awareness that we live within a sacred universe.

This excerpt is published with the kind permission of the author. Please see www.brianswimme.org if you would like to further your interest in his work.

Views on Monetary Reform

Brian Leslie

C H Douglas developed his ideas in collaboration with A R Orage, the editor of the *New Age*, a Guild Socialist weekly, which worked for a fundamentally different form of society: one in which there was neither the exploitation and wage-slavery of Capitalism nor the regimentation and state-hierarchy of Communism, but rather, one based on production for need and the dignity of craftsmanship. The Guild Socialists were aware of the power of the rich deriving from their money-wealth, and were searching for an alternative to money as a means of fair distribution, and found in Douglas’s analysis of the system a way forward.

Douglas, even in 1919, foresaw the dire consequences of pursuing eternal ‘economic growth’, and recognised that,

even then, a system which did not depend on ever-greater borrowing could easily meet everyone's basic needs and more, given fair distribution of the products of an industry aimed at meeting real needs instead of producing gew-gaws and weaponry. 'I do not regard it as being a sane system that before you can buy a cabbage it is absolutely necessary to make a machine gun.' (1933) This was fair comment even then; how much more so now we are potentially on the verge of runaway global warming!

He made the point that present productivity was far more due to the past development of the infrastructure of knowledge, skills, farms, machines, buildings, roads, etc., than to current efforts, and argued that this should entitle the present population to a 'National Dividend' (or Citizen's Income) which he argued would amount to 'Economic Democracy' (the title of one of his books), and, by freeing the population from dependence on wage-labour for their basic needs, would, in combination with monetary reform, end the 'need for growth' – and facilitate the development of a society resembling William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, with pride in workmanship, cooperative working for common aims, and largely, a 'gift economy'.

In Douglas's time, Social Crediters thought they had the answer to the problems of the economy; but so did the Georgists think they had! In fact, both have vital contributions to make, and increasingly, recently, they are both coming to realise this. Both reform of the money system and fair distribution of the value of natural resources, captured by taxes on land rent and extraction of natural resources, distributed via government spending on infrastructure and on 'National Dividends' are vital if we are to stop our race to

destruction.

Douglas insisted that the money system was man-made, and could be man-changed. He refrained from advocating one particular form of reform, but seems generally to have stuck with the idea of money being loaned into circulation, though not by private banks, for private profit. I now believe that it is important that national money should be spent into circulation by a publicly appointed body, to circulate freely, and not be lent into ephemeral circulation, as this gives the creator-lender power over the economy. Because we have suffered the misdirection of the money system for so many generations, we now have much need for reorganization and repair. Initially, society should direct newly created money into such areas.

Among other issues deriving from the money-as-debt/money-as-power system and needing reform are corporate 'personhood' and Limited Liability, off-shore tax havens, and stock market and currency-exchange gambling. However, the logic of having all national money enter circulation through government creation-and-spending is that, once the change-over is complete, no more money should be created unless there was a real need for expansion of the economy. From then on, all Government income must come from taxes or user-charges. This is where the Georgist analysis is so relevant. Realistically, we should anticipate in the longer run a reduction of economic activity, which would require a withdrawal of some of the money.

Brian Leslie - Editor of Sustainable Economics, the Green Party's Economics Policy Working Group's newsletter – www.sustecweb.co.uk

Perfect Madness:

Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety

Judith Warner

Ebury Press 2006 £9.99

ISBN: 978 00 919 07167

Judith Warner describes a society in crisis. Though the book's blurb promises a "lively and fun" read, it's hard to feel so upbeat having read it. Warner's generation of middle-class American mothers are lonely, depressed, unfulfilled, anxious and hopeless.

Why? Because, according to Warner, the cult of domesticity and total sacrificial motherhood which currently prevails in US society is impossible to live up to; it stifles the vitally important status-securing part of women's natures and masks the deeper economic and social problems that are besetting the American middle-class.

Competitive mothering is portrayed as a harrowing and exhausting activity. The ideal mother devotes herself entirely to her children, planning their activities, hobbies, parties and sporting events with military precision. Her success is measured exclusively by her children's achievements and, as Warner points out, in a winner-takes-all society, success is imperative, hence the increasing trend of monitoring and medicating children for any 'abnormalities'. It is routine for children to be assessed, diagnosed and medicated by medical professionals if they fail to thrive in the artificially competitive environment of their parents' making.

There seems no doubt that the media contributes to this frenetic situation. Warner argues convincingly that the glut of

articles extolling the virtues of maternal sacrifice and detailing the pernicious effects of nurseries not only reflect but also dictate the cultural zeitgeist. Our cultural receptors are tuned to pick up on evidence that supports, rather than that which challenges the status quo.

Warner shows evident frustration that women are seemingly buying into the mummy mystique and paints a picture of the demise of feminism. Woman's attempt to achieve perfect motherhood and her obsession with the minutiae of domestic politics is seen by Warner as opting out of society at large. The optimism of 1970s feminism to change, run or participate in the world has disappeared. Power has taken on the narrow definition of control and control has been turned inwards; hence the increasing number of eating disorders and, of course, the destructive cult of modern motherhood.

If women feel impotent and unable to change their lot, Warner lays the blame for this situation squarely at the door of the politicians. She devotes a lot of the book to detailing the worsening economic and social situation of the middle-classes; the total lack of family-friendly policies and the appalling state of childcare available in America. She traces back the problems for her generation to the 1980s where greed and personal acquisition were lauded and the spoils of life were being divided more and more unevenly across the population. A new value system arose. The early 1990s recession saw the great paternalistic companies that took care of you and your family and expected loyalty in return give way to "corporate raiders and money managers" with the sole goal of maximising shareholder profits.

This survival-of-the-fittest mentality saw the rich get richer and the rest panic. In 1998, the 13,000 richest families in America had almost as much income as the 20 million poorest households. By 2000, while there were 590,000 American households worth \$5 million or more, middle-income families' inflation-adjusted incomes were no higher than they'd been in the 1970s. Wives were working longer and longer hours to make up the shortfall and nobody wanted to admit that things were difficult. Between 1989 and 2001, credit card debt in America almost tripled and the number of people filing for bankruptcy increased 125 per cent. Few would question why American middle income families were worrying. Few would question why they were worrying about their children's future. Creating super-successful children seems the only way to guarantee them a comfortable life in adulthood.

The way in which this political climate ties in with over-mothering is the crux of the book. Warner talks of a government that has turned its back on families. There are no national checks or attempts to standardise the qualities of nurseries; schooling standards have plummeted; there is no paternity leave and no paid maternity leave; and more than a third of all working parents in America get neither paid sick or vacation

leave. So American families are going it alone and going mad doing so.

As it is an apologetically personal book, there are times when some of Warner's assertions strike a hyperbolic note and it can be repetitive. She is also very definitely a product of the culture she finds so unpalatable. Breastfeeding for a year is, in her eyes "cruelly insensitive to mothers' needs as adult women". Long-term breastfeeding is widespread across the globe and cannot be equated with midnight cake baking as an example of mothering gone mad. Furthermore, her insistence that mothers be able to return to work to fulfil their lives' ambitions and her reluctance to believe that stay-at-home mothers could be doing that from choice make some assumptions that simply don't stack up for all women.

However, Warner is very adept at capturing the cultural mood and the sense of panic and fear is palpable throughout the book. It is a compelling, dispiriting portrait of a nation whose priorities have gone askew and a reminder of the importance of addressing domestic or family problems at the highest level.

Rachel Hyland was a Product Development Manager for LexisNexis and is now a full time mother living in Bristol.

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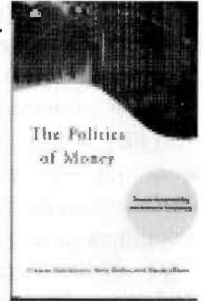
Recommended Reading

Frances Hutchinson & Brian Burkitt



The Political Economy of Social Credit and Guild Socialism
(Jon Carpenter £12.99)

Frances Hutchinson, Mary Mellor & Wendy Olsen



The Politics of Money: Towards Sustainability & Economic Democracy
(Pluto £16.99)

Frances Hutchinson
Social Credit? Some Questions Answered
(KRP £5.00)



Frances Hutchinson
What Everybody really wants to know about Money
(Jon Carpenter £12.00)



Eimar O'Duffy
Asses in Clover
(Jon Carpenter £5.00)

H J Massingham
The Tree of Life
(Jon Carpenter £13.99)



Books by C H Douglas
(available in the Social Credit Library)
Economic Democracy
Social Credit
The Monopoly of Credit
Warning Democracy
Credit Power and Democracy
The Control and Distribution of Production

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(It would be very helpful if material were submitted either by e-mail or on disk if at all possible).