FOCUS 27
‘the golden age’
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The children gathered round the old man, their eyes shining in anticipation. They had heard his tales many times before, but they were never tired of hearing them, or of looking at the pictures he showed them. It seemed to them that his stories could one day come true. They fidgeted impatiently while they waited for the old man to begin. He was gazing into the middle distance, his bright blue eyes burning bright and alive out of his seemingly ancient features, collecting his thoughts. There were a number of youths in his audience, loitering or squatting behind the young children. They too had heard the stories many times before. All through their childhood, they too had listened to the old man. They, too, had believed that the stories might somehow come true. But they were older now, and knew the truth. The hopelessness and resignation in their eyes contrasted with the pleasure in those of the children. Yet still they returned to listen to the old man’s tales.

It seemed as though he would never begin. His ruminating became too much for the children.

"Tell us about the magic cars," one burst out.
"And the magic aeroplanes," cried another excitedly.
"And the magic television," piped a little girl.
"And the magic lights and fires," shrilled another.

"Tell us about the golden age when everyone could do magic."

The clamour of the children mounted, and the old man smiled with pleasure, exposing surprisingly good teeth for one so old. Behind the children the youths appeared more morose than ever.

The old man raised his hand, and the clamour died.

"No," came the reply, "it didn’t smell any more than the sun smells."

All but the youngest children had heard of the sun, though none had ever seen it, or ever would; they knew only the varying shades of grey of the permanent cloud ceiling.

"That was wonderful magic," said a shrewd eleven year old, knowing well how the old man liked to be humoured. "I suppose that was all the magic that children could be expected to do, even in those magic times."

"What?" cried the old man, "you think they couldn’t do more magic than that in those magic times? Let me tell you that in those times, little children could perform magic that would make your eyes pop out of your head. They could walk into a cold room and fill it with heat at the touch of a button. They could fill a room with music - a full orchestra - at the touch of a button! They could see what was happening on the other side of the world - or even the moon - at a touch of the button."

"Tell us about the journeys to the moon," came a chorus.

"I won’t tell you anything if you keep on interrupting," said the old man, testily. There was instant silence. The old man’s features softened into a smile.

"They were wonderful times," he said. "People were happy then."

"Were they?" One of the youths spoke for the first time. "Yes!" said the old man fiercely. On receiving no reply, he added, "Well, perhaps what I mean is, they could have been happy, if only they had realised."

"But they were happy, weren’t they?" said a little girl pleadsingly.

"Yes," said the old man reassuringly, creasing his forehead. "Yes, they were very happy."

"All the time?" persisted the little girl.

"Yes, all the time!" said the old man, a huskiness creeping into his voice.

"Tell us about the moon travellers," said a little boy, and started to make a noise in his throat, which was the noise they had made, he had been told. He slowly raised his up-pointed hand, imitating the motion of an ascending rocket.

"Yes," said the old man. "Men used to walk about on the moon. And talk to people back here on Earth."

"By magic," prompted one of his audience.

"By magic," the old man confirmed. "And powerful magic it had to be, to talk to people a quarter of a million miles away."

"Did they have to shout loud?" a little boy asked.

"No, they just spoke in their normal voices, just as I’m speaking to you now. And the people they were talking to on Earth could hear them."

"What other magic was there?" one asked.

"Tell us about the magic cars," said another.

"Everyone had a car like this," said the old man, setting up another picture. The children gazed at the picture of the beautiful, shiny, coloured object, with its graceful lines.

"How fast did they go?"

"A mile a minute."

"What was it like to ride in one?"

"They were comfortable and clean. Warm in the winter..."
and cool in the summer. You could have your friends travelling with you, or if you were alone, you could fill it with music as you were going along. With a magic car, you had only to wish you were somewhere - a town or a beach sixty miles away and you were there in an hour."

"It sounds like a magic carpet," said a little girl.

"It was better," said the old man firmly. "You didn't get wet in the rain or cold in the winter."

"Did they have to scrub clothes in the golden age?" asked a thirteen year old girl.

"No," came the reply, "machines did all that kind of work. You put your dirty washing in a special machine, and half an hour later, you took it out clean." 

"Did you have to hang it on a line to dry?"

"No, you put the clean wet clothes in another special machine, and fifteen minutes later you took them out and they were dry."

"Didn't anyone do any work?"

"Yes, but only for a few hours a day, and only one special kind of work."

"Division of labour." It was one of the youths who spoke. "Boring, personality distorting work and hours."

"It needn't have been like that," said the old man reflectively. "The machines could have produced the essentials, and people could have lived more balanced lives."

"Even when they had achieved material security, they kept striving and struggling, as though still fighting for survival," another youth joined in, "and in the end their continued striving destroyed their achievements." 

"And our heritage," said another bitterly.

"Would we have done any better?" asked another.

"Perhaps human beings can never rid themselves of a sense of insecurity, and so are bound to strive continuously, and follow a curve first up and then down. Look at us. We are still striving."

"We have plenty of reason to feel insecure," retorted another.

"Why don't we give up?"

"The self-preservation instinct."

"But surely this is the root of the insecurity that makes us strive."

"I can't accept that. I should have thought that a self-preservation instinct would have made people take stock of their situation every now and then, and decide whether they had to continue to struggle in order to survive. Or whether their continued struggling was carrying them over the apex of the curve and down the other side. If all we are capable of doing is struggling all the time without reasoning, that isn't a self-preservation instinct."

"The Protestant Ethic," said one, "What's that?"

"A theory that religious teaching from the sixteenth century encouraged people to struggle for the purpose of proving that they were better than each other."

"But surely no-one would fall for that. Once everyone had what they wanted, they wouldn't work for more."

"Then why did they?"

"Planned obsolescence. Things were made so they lasted only a short length of time. So the people were kept fully employed, even though they were increasing their productive power with the aid of increasingly efficient machines."

"Capitalism."

"I've read Marxist theories too. But what did the capitalists get out of it? Many of them lived unhappy lives emotionally, and ruined their physical health with their striving. It might have been Protestant Ethic, but I think it's more basic than that. I think that the insecurity stemmed from the self-preservation instinct, and that people were so used to struggling that they forgot what they were struggling to escape from or to get to. Struggling became a way of life - even a conditioned reflex. If only someone had stood back from it to see the situation clearly, and said: 'Look, there's no need to struggle any more. We've won. We have the capability to survive and be happy, everything might have been different.'"

"Plenty of people did that. You can find these thoughts expressed in novels and articles and many different kinds of writings of the time."

"So why did no-one take any notice?"

"The vast majority of people had a very low standard of education, and were not capable of understanding. Those who did, didn't know they could do about it. Even the higher educated knew little about the political and economic systems. Added to this, people filled up most of their time doing useless work. They were so tired at the end of each day that they couldn't be bothered to think about the really big problems, let alone do anything about them. The initiative would have had to come from the governments of the countries, but these were made up of the stupidest people in the country. The result was that everybody was so preoccupied with struggling - as though for survival - that they did nothing to preserve the wonderful potential they had built up, and think about how to use it wisely, for the survival and long term happiness of the human race."

The children had become fidgety at first, and then began to drift away, chasing each other and playing games. They had had some stories for that day. There would be other days and other stories. The youths drew closer, and settled themselves to continue their discussion. The old man interjected now and then, but was for the most part content to listen to the young men and girls. It was Sunday, and the only day of the week they could rest from their back-breaking labours in the fields. "What was the root cause?"

"Overpopulation, pollution, planned obsolescence, lack of a sense of responsibility. Many reasons."

"There was only one reason: stupidity."

"That's true."

"How could they have been so stupid as to think they could have gone on expanding the world's population indefinitely? And why did they carry on reproducing even though they had sophisticated means of birth control. The government should have made it law."

"It's difficult to see how you could have enforced that law."

"Then surely the people could have had the dangers pointed out and been persuaded to act sensibly. Though you'd think they would have understood without having to have it explained to them."

"They did understand - or at any rate, they did and they didn't. Anyone is capable of understanding that if a population goes on expanding in relation to a finite quantity of resources, disaster will result. Yet, because the danger never seemed immediate, nobody did anything about it. Individually, people saw their own efforts, or lack of them, as being infinitesimally small and insignificant. In any case, it seemed to be one of the few inviolable rights left to them in an increasingly bureaucratic and computerised society. A way of splitting in the eye of their oppressors. Even when things began to get really bad, they carried on, hoping that something would turn up."

The old man had heard the arguments many times before, but they came out in a different order each time, making different patterns, like a kaleidoscope. There was a certain amount of consolation to be gained from dreaming about what might have been....
The Meaning of ‘The High Consumption Society’

Bernie McCabe

Politicians, industrialists and city editors talk glibly about the necessity, in a modern industrial economy, of having a level of consumption which increases at a steady rate. If this does not happen, we are told, then depression will result. Non-economists must be confused when they read that recovery from the depression in the 1930s was due in part to people beginning to buy increasingly large quantities of new electrical products: refrigerators, electric irons, radios and so on, and of course, that war production was the major factor – though unemployment didn’t entirely disappear until the war was in full swing. When the Vietnam war was "escalated", it was reported that the American economy was booming, thanks to the war; and somewhat later a commonplace remark was that were it not for the war, America would be in depression. What does it all mean? Is war a necessary evil? Must we keep on developing appetites for new varieties of consumer goods in order to avoid mass unemployment? It sounds insane. Yet, we hear it said repeatedly, and economists seem to be able to advance arguments to prove that this is the case. Nevertheless, be assured that it is the politicians, the industrialists, the city editors and the economists who are insane, not the world. War is not a necessary evil. You do not have to keep expanding your consumption of goods indefinitely. Unemployment is not necessary.

The easiest way of understanding the reasoning of the politicians and the rest, and spotting the absurdity, is by visualizing an imaginary community of 100 people. It is self-sufficient and all the members are adult and productive. The community may be imagined as producing a package of goods, which the members consume amongst themselves. (Whether or not the package is divided equally or not is immaterial. This is a non-partisan approach to the problem).

In Stage I, the package may be imagined as containing three items only: food, housing and clothing. The production of these basic essentials occupies the 100 members of the community for eight hours a day, five days a week.

Stage II is when a technological advance is made, e.g. an improved agricultural technique, which enables the Mark I package, containing only food, housing and clothing, to
be produced by 90 of the members. The 10 spare members can then use their time to produce something else, say entertainment. The Mark II package therefore contains four items—food, housing, clothing and entertainment, and the production of the package keeps all the 100 members of the community occupied for eight hours a day, five days a week.

Stage III is when another technological advance is made, e.g. power looms for clothmaking, which enables the Mark II — larger — package and its four items to be produced by only 90 of the members, which again leaves 10 members free to produce something else, say transport. The Mark III package, which is larger still, therefore contains five items—food, housing, clothing, entertainment and transport, and the production of the package keeps all the hundred members of the community occupied for eight hours a day, five days a week.

Successive technological advances will continue enlarging the package in this way, and it may come to include a complicated assortment of goods, including better schools, better roads, labour-saving appliances, more ornate furnishings, fancy clothes, ornaments and so on and so on. Eventually, with the package many times expanded, the community might decide that the package is big enough.

Imagine the next stage as being when a really dramatic technological advance is made which enables even this much-expanded package to be produced by only 50 of the members. The community might decide that it does not wish to expand the package any more. It has a simple choice to make: it can either employ 50 members in producing the package, and leave 50 unemployed, or it can employ the 100 on producing the package, but working only 20 hours a week, still enjoying the same standard of living, thus increasing leisure time for all the members of the community.

There is, in fact, a third choice. The working hours could be left unchanged and the package could be made still larger. The community could then be persuaded that the package they said they were satisfied with, did not in fact satisfy them, and be persuaded to consume a larger package. Who would persuade them? Part of the spare force of fifty, by engaging in another activity. Subsequent technological advances could then be used, not to increase leisure but to increase the size of the package, and increase the number of people occupied with the job of persuading the others to consume the expanding package. The working hours would remain the same and advances would cause unemployment, but only until new products and services were thought of to expand the size of the package, when the unemployed would be re-absorbed.

How could the community be persuaded to consume a larger package than was required to make it happy? This would be possible if the members were taught to equate their level of happiness with their level of consumption of material goods and services. One set of values would be taken away from them and another set put in their place. For “happiness” they would understand “standard of living” — which really means level of consumption. The word “happiness” would eventually drop out of use, superseded by the phrase “standard of living”.

In the High Consumption Society, the third choice is made for us by the politicians. Education indoctrinates us with values which tell us that a constantly rising level of consumption — a constantly expanding package — is good. A package of constant size is bad. Nobody talks about the standard of happiness. The indoctrination has worked so well that if you were to go round talking in terms of business people would think you were sweet but simple, or passing through a phase, or, if you’re over twenty-five, slightly insane. If you were to talk to the average worker about increased leisure, he would shrink from the idea. His indoctrination has been such that he cannot think in terms of increased leisure. To him, the concept would be interpreted as “short time working”. His indoctrination has taught him that short time working is bad; full time working is good. There are many things that are inefficient in the High Consumption Society, but the indoctrination works superbly well.

Planned Obsolescence Raises Consumption

In order to expand the size of the package it is not always necessary to employ the spare labour in making new kinds of goods. For instance, at one time, a car commonly lasted about 30 years. The modern car lasts about 10 years. Thus an expansion of the package can be achieved merely by making things which need replacing sooner.

Explaining this in terms of the community of 100, it would work this way: imagine that 15 of the men occupy their time providing cars for the community, and that it takes these 15 men 30 years to produce the 100 cars which the community requires. If the life of the cars is 30 years, each time the cars wear out there will be 100 new ones to replace them. The 15 members then start right away to build another 100 cars, a job which will take them another 30 years and be completed just when the last batch of 100 wear out. Thus the 15 men are kept busy, 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, all the time.

Imagine a technological advance, say a mass production technique, which enables the cars to be produced with only one third of the effort. You can have three choices: (i) You can employ the same number of men producing the same number of cars, working one-third of the hours (ii) You can employ one-third the men producing the same number of cars, working the same number of hours. (iii) You can employ the same number of men producing three times the number of cars, in which case the men will continue working the same number of hours.

If you choose (iii), you must persuade the members of the community to consume three times the number of cars. You can achieve this in two ways: by persuading them that they would like to have three cars each rather than only one car each and more leisure time. Or you can build the cars in such a way that they last for only 10 years. Thus each member of the community, instead of consuming one car in thirty years, consumes three cars in this time period. So each member has trebled his consumption of cars even though he has only one car at any one time.

This “model” of the community of 100 can be used to simplify many problems of understanding the way in which the nation's or the world's economy works. The community of 100 can be imagined as a community of 100 million or 100 billion and so on. International trade makes no difference, the model of 100 can still be used, the community simply becomes a simplified representation of the world.

War as a Stimulator of the Economy

In the 1930s there was some difficulty in persuading people to consume a larger package, and a lot of spare members of the world community remained spare. When the war came along however, the community began to consume a larger package. The additional items which swelled the package were military goods and services. After the war, the package remained large, because although there was less demand for military goods and services, there was a demand for goods and services to replace the things which the military had amassed up. This is what is termed a "post war replacement boom." This kind of}
boom can be followed by a slump when all the
replacing has been done. The problem is then to persuade
the community that they want a bigger package (since the
only alternative is to give everyone more leisure). This
has been fairly successful. America has been helped by
a couple of wars - Korea and Viet Nam - which increased
the package the community consumed by a considerable
quantity of military goods and services. This is how
war makes the economy boom. It makes everybody busy.
Being busy is good. An increase in leisure for everyone
would be bad.

The Implications for Pollution and Overpopulation

The implications for pollution and overpopulation may be
briefly stated. The more we consume, the more we
pollute, so while we are being encouraged to consume
more, we are being encouraged to pollute more. Just as
long as our standard of happiness is equated with our
level of consumption (our "standard of living") there is
little chance of this trend being turned back. If pride in
having a new model car every second year were replaced
by pride in keeping the same car running efficiently for
thirty years, pollution and waste would be less and
therefore our long-term standard of happiness would be
higher. A car every two years or every thirty is merely
a matter of fashion. It is more sensible to adopt fashions
which are likely to increase our long-term standard of
happiness, than those which are ultimately going to
threaten the very existence of the human race.

The high consumption society also encourages an ever-
expanding population. More people means more demand,
which, in a society where industry is geared to ever-
expanding production, is considered good. It means
that a bigger package can be sold without persuading
present consumers to expand their appetites. Problems
are created later when the new consumers become
producers as well as consumers, but nobody plans that
far ahead. In any case, just as long as the population
is expanding, the new producers can provide for the
wants of the increasing number of young non-earners,
which at least eases the problem of absorbing the
expanding package. Of course, everyone can see that in
the long term this would lead to an unbearable degree
of over-population, but on the one hand, you have
economists who point to the terrible difficulties of a
static or declining population, and on the other hand
you have the soothsayers assuring everyone that the earth
can support many times its present population. So the
politicians bury their heads in the sand.

A Proposed Solution

The solution to the problem of reversing the trend of
rising pollution and over-population is certainly not
beyond our capabilities, nor need it be a process involving
a great deal of discomfort or disruption. The only
reason that the politicians are dragging their heels at
present is that the solution requires long-term planning
while they are geared to general elections at five-year
intervals.

There are five changes required to meet the problem.
First, there would need to be a change in education. The
second change would concern the composition of the
expanding package. The third change would be to use out
increasing productive power to meet the problems of a
shrinking population. Fourth, to use some of it to
increase overseas aid. Fifth, eventually we must think in
terms of increasing our leisure.

A change in the general level and composition of education
is clearly essential. It is obvious that many of our
present social customs and fashions undermine the
happiness and threaten the long-term survival of the
human race. High and increasing consumption is a
carefully fostered cult. Waste is encouraged, for
instance, in superfluous packaging, frequent changes of
cars, fashion clothes and so on. It would obviously be
safer to follow fashions which enhanced our prospects of
long-term survival and happiness. This could be achieved
if the population were taught to evaluate social customs
in terms of their effects on survival and happiness. This
would involved teaching everyone about values and
objectivity, if education was not to be indoctrination.

Expand Welfare Services

The size of the package of goods and services produced
by the community can continue to be increased for a
long time yet - without increasing pollution and waste
and without the necessity of an expanding population.
Consider the situation in terms of the community of 100.
We will introduce retired people into it. We may assume
that of the package produced by the 100 productive
members, a certain proportion is allocated to the
retired members, each of whom might, for instance,
consume one-third of the amount consumed by each of
the productive members. A technological advance which
enables this particular package to be produced by only 90
of the members, will therefore allow a choice to be
made between increased leisure for the working members,
or an expanded package. We will assume that the working
members are satisfied with their own consumption of
goods and services, and as far as their own needs are
concerned, they don't wish the package to be expanded.
They may however, instead of utilising this particular
advance in technology to give them more leisure time,
decide to expand the size of the package, not for their
own sakes but for the sakes of the retired members. Thus
the hundred productive members will continue to work
the same hours as before, and the ten spare members
will produce goods and services specifically for the old
people.

The next technological advance, releasing a further ten
members, could be used to improve the education of the young. Turning from the model to our own society for a
moment, this could mean, for instance, doubling the
number of teachers, and so reducing the size of classes in
secondary modern schools from about 40 to about 20.
Smaller classes would mean more attention for the
pupils and an improved standard of education. Returning
to our model of 100 again, a further advance in
technology enabling the package to be produced by 90
members, so releasing another 10 members, could be
used to encourage secondary modern pupils to stay on at
school until they were seventeen or eighteen. The ten
spare members could produce goods and services for
their benefit, knowing that the whole community would
eventually benefit by this raising of the standard of
education. In our society, this would mean education
grants for those staying on for further education.

A further ten men, set free by another advance in
technology, could be employed in building improved
housing. It should be noted that with all these
advances in technology mentioned, the size of the package
has continued to expand, but not in a way which
increases pollution or waste, but in ways which increase
the chances of the survival of the human race and which
improves the quality of life.

Declining Population

At various times in the past it has been suggested that
Britain was overcrowded and that it would be to our
advantage to reduce the size of the population. At such
times, pessimistic economists have listed a number of
ways in which such a policy would incur hardship and
even poverty on the population:

(a) The retired population would increase relatively to the
size of the working population, so that the burden of pensions would become heavier on the working members of the population.

(b) The burden of the interest payments on the National Debt would have to be borne by the smaller workforce, who would suffer a fall in their standard of living accordingly.

(c) A smaller population would be less able to take advantage of the economies of large scale production, which would further reduce the standard of living.

(d) Structural unemployment would be caused by a change in the selection of goods demanded, as a result of the changing age distribution. But if it is agreed that a reduced population would be a good thing, then the problems have to be met. It is quite absurd to admit that a constant or reduced population is essential if the quality of life is not to deteriorate, but then say it is an impossible goal, because it can't be achieved without overcoming certain problems. Sooner or later the problem will have to be faced. The longer it is delayed, the greater is the problem and the greater the hardship involved in overcoming it.

In fact, continual increases in productivity through advances in technology can make the solution a painless one: the increasing size of the retired population could be dealt with as suggested above - by some of the extra productivity being devoted to supporting them. Too, it is the same applies to the other objections. Just as a war situation has in the past proved to be a forcing house for inventiveness, so could the kind of situation we are dealing with - providing that the population as a whole were equipped by their education to understand. Structural unemployment which would involve retraining labour and adapting capital could also be met out of the increased productivity. In other words, instead of using our enormously increasing powers of productivity to manufacture goods which wear out more quickly, we can use it to begin managing human society more sensibly.

Overseas Aid

The Community of 100 will eventually reach the stage when both the size and the composition of their package of goods is satisfactory for their own happiness. When the next technological advance leaves ten men spare, there will be a choice of reducing the working hours by ten per cent, or of employing the ten men in giving assistance to underdeveloped communities. The better the standard of education of the community, the more likely they are to make the second choice.

Increased Leisure

We have been brainwashed with the idea that this would mean boredom. Around the 1840s people in factories worked six days a week, twelve hours a day. No doubt when anyone suggested at that time that the happiness of the workers would be improved by halving the hours of work, the opposing arguments would have sounded much the same as those we hear today; perhaps even some of the workers themselves might have felt that it was true, just as some of today's workers do. Yet, the hours have been halved. Is anyone seriously suggesting that people could not fill additional leisure time with such activities as, for instance, education, sports, athletics, painting, writing, drama and other creative pursuits, hand crafts, unhurried sex, socialising - in fact, adapt themselves to a more relaxed life-style?

What practical steps have to be taken to achieve the goal of a society in which our enormous technological ingenuity and productive power is put to sane and sensible uses? The controlled allocation of wealth necessary would mean higher taxation. The population would not tolerate it. The politicians would not risk it. Few people relish the thought of living in a state similar to the USSR - I certainly don't. But there is still a solution. The key to the solution is to encourage the mass of people to study Economics, British Constitution and Economic History. Everyone is involved in and affected by the economic system. They should therefore know how it works, or is supposed to work. Everyone is involved in and affected by the system of government. They should therefore know how it works or is supposed to work. The ways in which both these systems work depend largely on the attitudes and behaviour of the people affected. Therefore, if the people affected were encouraged to understand how the systems worked, or are supposed to work, the systems could be expected to work somewhat better. Should they decide that they wanted a different system, they would be equipped to examine critically the alternative systems proposed.

If they were to study Economic History they would realise that certain conditions exist now because of certain things which happened fifty, a hundred, two hundred years ago, and that therefore actions taken now would have certain consequences fifty, a hundred, two hundred years from now. They would have some idea of how quickly they could expect changes to take place. And they would discover that changes take far longer than is generally thought by the uneducated, or that is generally admitted by electioneering politicians.

The emphasis should be placed on adult education. Adults know what it is to be involved in and affected by the economic and political systems. Questions concerning these things are constantly being raised in their minds. They are in a far more receptive state than teenagers with no experience of the world outside of school, college and university. Evening classes and correspondence courses in these subjects should be free for everyone. They should be publicised widely on radio and TV, and the minds of the public constantly stimulated to ask questions and to want to study the subjects in order to equip themselves to be able to work out the answers.

The practical effects of this would be numerous. For instance, if the government were to decide to wage war on planned obsolescence, or to send efficiency teams into industry to increase productivity, the mass of population would be far more likely to co-operate, since they would understand the reasons and the long-term benefits.

(Redundant workers could continue to receive full pay during retraining for other jobs, since the package of goods produced by the community would not have diminished in size.) Both of these projects would increase the real welfare of the community by enabling productive power and materials to be put to useful purposes, instead of creating waste. The level of taxation could thus be raised without a lowering of the present level of consumption, i.e. standard of living. Another effect would be that politicians wouldn't try to introduce stupid policies as they do now, since they would know that such policies would be recognised by the public for what they were. This in itself would promote many material and other benefits. How long would such an educational programme take? Bearing in mind the number of graduates equipped to teach these subjects, the number of people who would be able to work unaided through correspondence courses, and the possibilities of tuition through TV and radio, I should say that six years could see a dramatic change - with the right kind of promotion.

The next practical step towards Utopia, therefore, is for a reforming politician to effect this change in the education of the population. And anyone of us, with sufficient determination, can become a politician.
From the first time I heard it, the idea that "competitive advertising is the great waste of the capitalist system," and that if it were abolished the population would be better off by X-hundred million pounds, struck me as being too good to be true. I just don't believe in Father Christmas. I did not therefore believe that there was an easy way of the population making an extra X-hundred million pounds for itself. The simple idea is that included in the price of all goods we buy there is a proportion - a few pence or pounds - to pay for the advertising of the article. Therefore, the argument runs, if competitive advertising were abolished, all goods would be cheaper by that amount. It sounds reasonable enough, but I just couldn't swallow it, and eventually I realised consolidated fund which is not controlled by the government; third, we have elections at regular and not unduly long intervals; fourth, an opposition is allowed to sit in Parliament and freely criticize the government; fifth, we have a Press, radio and television which are a allowed to express opinions freely. But it is that part of the media which does not depend on the government in any way which is the lynch pin of the whole thing. For instance, without independent mass media, who would make a fuss if schools, colleges and universities began to politically indoctrinate pupils and students? Or if the payment and appointment of our judges was taken over by the politicians? Or if general elections were suspended and the life of the government in power extended? Or if

**Advertising and our Political Freedom**

J. Weir

what we were getting for our money - political freedom. My argument is as follows: newspapers make most of their money out of advertising; they are therefore cheap; they therefore have a wide circulation. Because their income is independent of the government, the government cannot dictate to them what they print, and among the things they print are criticisms of governments - individual M.Rs, and the functioning of the system as a whole.

'A' Level British Constitution teaches that there are a number of safeguards of our political freedom. First, students are not politically indoctrinated; second, we have an independent judiciary - the judges are paid out of a it was decided that the opposition in Parliament was dropped? A State-run Press - with a variety of newspapers with all the old familiar names - could give good reasons, dreamed up by a propaganda department, for all those moves. For instance, they would not say that students were being politically indoctrinated, they would say that they were studying comparative political systems - the discovery that ours was the best would not be unpalatable to most people. They could remain silent on the subject of the payment and appointment of judges, few people are aware of the process of appointment anyway, or consider the importance of this for political freedom; or they could mention it, and point to other democratic countries where judges are appointed
complex problems and devise complex solutions. To take an analogy with the manufacture of precision tools, the first stage is grabbing the ore out of the ground, then comes the smelting, followed by the various stages of refining the metal. The final stage is the making of the precision tools. At each stage the mental and physical skills and the equipment required become more complicated and sophisticated. The muscle, sweat and brute force required to get the ore out of the ground is not of much use when trying to make the needle of a hypodermic syringe.

Those who think that the problems of society are to be solved by a socialist revolution, are really looking back wistfully to the days when brute force and conspicuous courage was all that was required to solve the immediate problems of society. This kind of action carried certain societies forward to a further intermediate stage. Our bloody revolution was in the 17th century; that of the USSR in the 20th century. The problems we now face cannot be solved by crude means. The time has come for the precision work.

However, in the case of the problem of how to get rid of competitive advertising, which is undesirable since it distorts our conscious and unconscious perception of the independent media, and therefore our political freedom, is relatively simple. The money which now flows to newspapers from competitive advertising, could flow to them in the form of government subsidies. If these subsidies were paid out of a consolidated fund, beyond the jurisdiction of the politicians, the subsidies would not give politicians any power over the Press. The size of the fund would be a constant proportion of the national income, the proportion could be calculated on an average figure over a period of time, say 1961-1970. The size of the subsidy going to each newspaper could be regulated by the size of its circulation and any other relevant variables there might be deemed to be.

So I am happy to see advertising stay for the time being. It's an imperfect safeguard because newspapers are so doubt influenced by the views of their advertisers. But they are a safeguard nevertheless, and they indirectly strengthen the arm of the BBC and thus make the safeguard of political freedom more effective. My argument is that a better arrangement would be for the advertising revenue of newspapers to be replaced by a subsidy from central funds, out of reach of the politicians. This would involve higher taxation. But a taxation on commodities equivalent to the advertising levy at present would leave prices unchanged. But before the policies necessary to do this could be implemented, a radical change in general education is necessary, so that people are able to understand what is being done and why.

Postscript:
One of the defences of advertising is that advertisements brighten our lives, and provide an outlet for people with artistic talent. I wouldn't disagree with either view. I would like to see advertising agencies maintain their present level of activity. Their output could consist of a commercial side to produce informative advertising, and a non-commercial side consisting simply of photographs and paintings produced simply for the purpose of increasing pleasure. Copy writers could be employed producing "adverts" giving information and advice: for instance, suggestions about hobbies or other ways of occupying leisure time; information about the rights of individuals and ways of playing an active part in the community and so on. The object would be to increase the sum of happiness. This would be saner than using talents to persuade people to increase their output of waste by buying a new model of something and getting rid of the old.
The hypothesis that Britain would be better off in the Common Market than out of it is a simple one. It is based on "A" level textbook economics. First there are the advantages of large scale production - the greater the quantity you produce of something, the cheaper it is per unit and the more of it people will be able to enjoy. Then there are the advantages of regional division of labour; all the production of a particular commodity should take place in the region where it is produced most efficiently, if this is done, then the more of the commodity people will be able to enjoy. Then there are the advantages of geographical mobility of labour - if labour is free to move about unhindered by immigration and emigration formalities, then there need be no unemployment black spots, since the unemployed simply move to an area where employment is to be found. For empirical evidence, the economists and politicians favouring entry point to the U.S.A. The advantages of large scale production are provided by a free trade area with a population of two hundred million. Regional division of labour is in evidence in such industries as cars - Detroit; steel - Pittsburgh; the cattle slaughtering and meat canning industry - Chicago; the film industry - Hollywood, and so on. Labour mobility is also more accepted in the U.S.A. - a town grew up round the Space industry in a very short time, and California has been growing at a phenomenal rate for years, swelled by the influx of immigrants from other states. And the U.S.A. is phenomenally prosperous. Therefore, if the European countries form themselves into a United States of Europe, they will have the economics of large scale production - with a

industries suddenly emigrate to Europe. (We are told that all these industries are more effective in some parts of Europe, I sometimes wonder what we would be left with.) If they all did desert our shores it would be by a process of running down. Investment capital would go to expand and develop European Industries instead of British. The process would probably be slowed down for political reasons - to avoid having too many thrown out of work at one time. (Our dedicated M.P.s would no doubt raise questions in the House if the unemployment levels were to rise above five million.) The policy of emigration of industries would probably be one of "stop-go". One factor slowing down the process would be people's reluctance to uproot and transplant themselves. They tend to dislike moving away from relatives and friends, and familiar surroundings. But perhaps the idea of being geographically mobile would become the norm - if it was explained to people that this was a necessary condition of living in a modern industrial society geared to high and continually rising levels of consumption. As well as edifying explanations, other devices could aid the change in attitudes, for instance assistance with travelling expenses and the cutting off of social benefits in unemployment black spots. It is not so far-fetched. Who would protest? A conscience strike in middle class? The trade Unions - at their weakest in times of high unemployment? The ordinary workers? When did we last see highly paid artisans losing pay to demonstrate on behalf of the unemployed? After all, it would be in the name of a more prosperous future. And if these changes did not take place, what would have been the point of going into the Common

Market?

A.W. Head

population of three hundred million; the advantages of regional division of labour will soon accrue as industries redistribute themselves, so that each is concentrated in the region where production of that particular commodity is most efficient; and there will be no obstacles to the geographical mobility of labour - all the inhabitants of the U.S.E. will be free to emigrate to any area they like in the U.S.E. for as long or short a stay as they like, which should cure unemployment black spots.

Then there is the negative argument: Can we afford not to go in? Britain is a small country, the argument runs. Its factories just aren't large enough to compete with giant American producers - for instance in computers and aircraft. If we go into Europe, there can be giant U.S.E. corporations (like General Motors, perhaps, Oh joy!) to rival in size and efficiency those of the U.S.A. If we stay out, our products might be so high cost relative to the American and European products that we might find ourselves having to buy from our giant neighbours, whose products will be cheaper. However, before I am bulldozed into Europe, there are a few questions I would like to ask. First, is the U.S.E. really likely to develop along the same lines as the U.S.A.? Second, even if it is likely to, is it what we want? Third, if this is not what we want, then what do we want?

To deal with the first question, I don't really see the U.S.E. being transformed into something resembling the U.S.A. without a very long and socially disruptive transitional period. We would obviously not see the British steel, car, chemical, machine tool and shipping
planned - and can yet plan - for ourselves? This is not a plea for the simple life. I am a town dweller. I like cars, colour television, central heating and wide and continuous social contact. But I also like walks in the woods and countryside and to be able to spend a day on the beach without too much trouble. I don't want to live in a flat surrounded by miles of commurbations; or in centres of population so vast that they demoralize the inhabitants and make them aggressive, anti social and neurotic.

This is the way life is going in the British Common Market of England, Wales and Scotland, and it seems reasonable to suppose that this is the way life will go in the Common Market of Europe. Britain will probably face a constant drain of its investment capital and therefore its youth and talent, and the European population will collect in a few vast centres. Getting out of these areas into open countryside or the uncrowded parts of the coast will involve sitting for hours in traffic jams on congested roads out of the seething industrial areas, and the prospect of repeating the performance on the return journey later the same day. The alternative of swift trains to carry you out of these anthills is not very comforting - to me at any rate. It has too much of the stink of regimentation about it, or of exercise in the prison yard - along with all the other prisoners. It is not the way in which I want to live - and I believe that I am typical. If I am typical, then it is happening against our collective will. If it is against our collective will, then why is it happening? It is happening because we, the higher educated, are allowing the politicians to make it happen without so much as a murmur. Politicians do not think in terms of the long term survival and happiness of the human race. They think in terms of winning the next election. The fault lies in the type of person who goes into politics. The M.P. should not be an extremist with a hankering after the limelight, or a politician careerist bent on retaining his seat or gaining promotion within the party. The ideal M.P. should take on the job only reluctantly and out of a sense of duty. He or she should be motivated by concern for the way society is going; by concern for the way in which people's aspirations are misrepresented; by an honest conviction that they have something to contribute to the happiness and survival of the population of the country and of the whole human race.

Listening to M.P's speak on radio and television and reading their propaganda, one gets the impression that they are mere public relations men who are prepared to swallow, regurgitate and defend - in the smallest possible way - the party line without the slightest qualm of conscience, intellectual effort or soul searching of any kind. One gets the impression that they are all the tame poodles of their constituency associations and the Party Line.

What are the motives behind the desires of the politician to go into Europe? The following quotations are taken from the pamphlet, put out by the government for the general public in mid-1971, entitled "Britain and Europe", which was a short version of the Government's White Paper.

Q. "Will our security be better served by joining the European Community than by not doing so?"

A. "No government in these islands has been able to ignore for more than a short time or without disastrous consequences, the course of events on the continent of Europe. Whatever the future holds, our security and that of Western Europe will remain interlocked."

In the first place, the answer given to the question is a non-answer - it does not say "yes", "no" or even "probably". In the second place, it is obvious that treaties do not unite or divided countries in war situations - self interest does. There is abundant evidence in history to support this, for instance the treaty between the Nazis and the U.S.S.R. in the early years of World War II. So the question of security as an argument in favour of Britain joining the Common Market is irrelevant; merely a bit of politicians padding in an attempt to bulk up a pathetically thin case.

"Prosperity."

Q. "Will we be able to manufacture and trade more favourably if we join the Economic Community than if we do not?"

A. "The strength and prosperity of Britain depend partly on our efforts as a people and partly on economic conditions in the world outside. The conditions under which we manufacture and trade are of vital national interest to us."

Again, we are given a blatant non-answer! They don't say "yes", "no" or even "we think so". Politicians seem to imagine that if they spout a few words, they have answered a question. Unfortunately, we let them get away with it.

Q. What would happen "if we say 'No'?"

A. "A decision not to join would be a reversal of the whole direction of British policy under successive governments, Conservative and Labour."

So what? Is this supposed to be a reason? It is, unsurprisingly, yet another non-answer. It would be comic if it were not horrifying. This is the government of major industrial country addressing itself to its population. And all it can do is to repeatedly give empty non-answers to the questions it addresses to itself.

Later in the pamphlet we are treated to some non-information:

"For industry better opportunities once we are inside the community will enable Britain to sell more and produce more. As a result, we would increase our national wealth and so be able to improve our standard of living as well as meet the cost of entry. Given a minimum increase, by the end of five years our national income could be some £1100 million a year higher."

What the pamphlet does not mention is that £1100 million represents less than 2½% of the national income. This means that we will increase our standards of living by a half of 1% a year - since the £1100 million will be achieved only after five years. Is this the glittering prize which the politicians find so irresistible? We've had 3½ norm for pay increases, it looks as though in the Common Market the unions will be asked to accept a 3½ norm - 3p in the £ per year.

Later the pamphlet gives some non-information about "The Community's farming policy," which "..... will raise the cost of our food imports. The extent of this increase in costs will depend on the difference between community and world prices which has been narrowing considerably in the last year or two. But if the present price gap were to continue the additional cost to our balance of payments on account of food imports is still likely to be more than £5 million in the first year and £50 million a year by the end of five years."

In the first place, mentioning amounts of money is largely meaningless. What we want to know is what
the percentage increase in the price of foodstuffs will be. However, £50 million a year sounds an insignificant amount compared with what our food bill must be. If we spend a fifth of our income on food, this is about £10,000 million. If half of that is imported, that part of the bill is £5,000 million. £50 million is 1% of £5,000 million. So are we being told that prices of imported food are likely to go up only by 1%? If so, why don’t the government say so plainly? But when the pamphlet continues, it becomes apparent that I misunderstood something:

"Effect on food prices."

"On the same assumption about Community and world prices, it is expected that as a result of adopting the common agricultural policy the average rise in the housewife’s food bill over the first five years will be about 2½p in the £ a year."

Now according to my calculations, an accumulated rise in the food bill of 2½p in the £ over five years would mean an increase in the food bill of slightly more than 12½p in the £. But I am wrong again, according to the pamphlet, which continues:

"This means the cost of living would increase by about ½p in the £ per year."

The pamphlet is prefaced by "A message from the Prime Minister," in which he says that before the decision whether of not to join the European Community is taken,

"...there should be, throughout the nation, the widest possible discussion and understanding of what is involved."

The pamphlet which he put out did not help my understanding at all. It only increased my suspicions. The stridently confident note on which the pamphlet finishes is in dramatic contrast to the hesitant non-answers with which it started;

"If we do as the Six members of the Community have done, then we shall get a substantial increase in our trade and a stimulus to growth and investment. We shall also get a greater rise in real wages and standards of living than we have known for years" (½% a year?) "or would be possible if we remained outside. The contrast between the experience of the Six in recent years and ours outside the Community shows that they chose the right road," (just like Scotland chose the right road in 1707?).

Perhaps if my non understanding if the pamphlet had made me have doubts about my intelligence, I might have been prepared to acquiesce to the exhortation implied in it. But I have no doubts about my own intelligence, and I have plenty of doubts about the intelligence - and the motivations - of politicians.

Their reasoning is crude in the extreme.

"The Government believes that membership of the European Economic Community will enable Britain to achieve a higher standard of living. The Six have been able to do it themselves." Hardly an analytical approach. "No firm estimates of the long term industrial benefits can sensibly be made, but the Government is confident from the experience of the Six, that the effects of entry will be positive and substantial."

Their rule of thumb thinking is simple: Britain wants economic growth. Britain has not got economic growth. The Six have economic growth. Therefore, if Britain joins the Six, Britain will have economic growth.

To sum up, the economic arguments for a U.S.E. are: the economies of large scale production; specialisation of production by regions; geographical mobility of labour. My argument is that the first two would not be achieved on the hoped for scale for a very long time - two or three generations - owing to political wrangling about what country is to produce what, and the massive unemployment which a too rapid change would cause; on the third "advantage," even if the geographical mobility of labour were induced on a large scale, this
would cause social disruption and would surely diminish happiness. Also, from the example of the British Common Market of England, Wales and Scotland, where specialisation of production by regions has resulted in the two latter countries becoming the poor relations, it seems likely that Britain might well become one of the poor relations in the U.S.E. And just as Wales and Scotland have suffered a continuous drain of their youth, talent and investment capital to England, so Britain will almost certainly find that as a member of the U.S.E. it will suffer a continuous drain of its youth, talent and investment funds to Europe. Also, just as regional specialisation within England has led to the population being centred on a few overcrowded areas, so regional specialisation in the U.S.E. seems likely to lead, in the long term, to the three hundred million inhabitants of the U.S.E. being centred on a few overcrowded areas in Europe. I visualize intensely crowded supercities of 30 - 40 million within two hundred years.

The pamphlet tries to make up for the flimsiness of its argument for going in, by uttering vague blustering threats about what will happen to us if we stay out:

"In a single generation we should have rejected an Imperial past and a European future, and we should have found nothing to put in their place."

Why don't we ask ourselves what we would like to see in place of our imperial past? I know what I would like to see. I would like to see Britain become an island of sanity in an insane world. I would like to see the practice of planned obsolescence cease, and the productive power thus released used to cure the numerous ills which are persisting in our society - long after we have advanced to a state where they could have been eliminated. This is what I would like to see in place of our imperial past. We have the capability: I suspect that we have the will; the missing ingredient is the right kind of people in the government - and that deficiency must be made up by us, those members of the higher educated who prove their normality by being reluctant to become involved in politics, who are appalled at the mess that politicians make of everything, and who are convinced that all that is required to do the job properly is a high standard of education backed up by common sense; people like you and me.

All it would take to turn Britain into an island of sanity would be a Parliament populated with men and women who know how to understand how the government and the economy worked, and who know something about economic history, so they understood the steps by which we had arrived at our present stage of development, and who had a clear idea of the steps by which our development would advance in the future. I am convinced that a Parliament made up of such men and women would bring out the best in the population, and that the vast majority of people would cease to think only of their own immediate satisfaction, and would consider the happiness of future generations and of needy populations at the present time, and would be prepared to make sacrifices for them. I would like to see a Britain which would be an example to the world. I would like to see the sanity of such a sane Britain spread throughout the world.
How do you decide what a fair rent is? Are homeless squatters justified in taking over buildings which have been standing empty for - how long? What is the cause of the housing shortage, rocketing prices and slums? What is the solution?

The cause of all these problems is the weakness, stupidity and spinelessness of politicians. The solution: normal, intelligent people of normal courage and integrity must take on the task of going into politics. Here’s the story of how the housing mess got started, and the story of how the mess is to be ended. Rent control was introduced during World War I. In a major war, shifts in population are likely to occur in the process of adjusting the economy from peace time production to producing goods for the war effort. War industries will expand, whilst industries not essential to the war effort will contract. This will tend to produce shifts in population from the non-war-production areas to the areas where industries are producing for the war effort of the war. It was a generally popular move, therefore, to control rents and prevent the landlords from profiteering from the war.

On the face of it, this seems equitable, though there are two flaws which may raise doubts in some minds. In the first place, one wonders what happened to the landlords in the areas which lost workers. Presumably rents in these areas fell. Were the landlords compensated for the loss which was inflicted on them through no fault of their own? Investment always involves risk, and if an entrepreneur is to be prevented from profiting from a fortuitous swing of circumstances in his favour, then isn’t it only justice that he should be cushioned against loss occasioned by a fortuitous swing against him? Secondly, war workers frequently received inflated wages, so they were receiving surplus profit for their services. Progressive income tax would diminish this to some extent, but the same would apply to the surpluses of the landlords.

Fair Rents

O.G. Berrill

effort. The influx of war workers to these areas will result in a shortage of housing. In classical economic theory, when there is a shortage of anything, its price will rise by a process of bidding up, (diamonds are highly priced because they are in short supply). If prices are high, profits will be high and businessmen will be encouraged to increase the supply of the desired commodity. In time, therefore, the shortage will disappear and the price will be brought down - by a process of competing producers undercutting one another’s prices in order to capture a larger share of the customers. In the case of the World War I housing shortage, however, high prices and high profits could not have the effect of increasing the supply of houses. This was because building materials and labour were in short supply due to the war. Thus landlords in the favoured areas would have enjoyed high profits, not only for a short period, but for the

stock market during the war. If, when the war was over, the controls had been abolished, a steep rise in rents would have resulted. The surplus profit would have encouraged businessmen to expand, and the shortage would have disappeared. Such shock treatment would have cause considerable hardship, but a wise government could have phased the lifting of the controls, and provided protection against gerrymandering and similar dangers. However, any such move in this direction would have been unpopular - particularly with troops returning from battle and having been promised “homes fit for heroes”. In any case, tenants are more numerous than landlords. The politicians decided that it was better to offend the smaller group rather than the larger one. It would cost less in votes. As usual, the politicians did not consider what the long-term consequences would be, so the rent controls remained.
As time passed, the long-term effects of rent control manifested themselves. Properties fell into disrepair as landlords found themselves unable to afford to maintain them normally. Prices in general were rising, but rents remained frozen. By 1959, a third of rented property was controlled at rents 20% to 30% below uncontrolled accommodation. One effect of this was that property tended to change hands and go to the type of landlord who was prepared to let his property deteriorate. This fitted in with the "wicked landlord" image, and made contourts seem even more justifiable. Another effect was that the stock of houses for rent remained virtually static.

This was because people were unwilling to put their money into this type of investment. There was always the danger that the government would extend control to new building—which it did in World War II. Apart from rented property, there were three other sources of supply of accommodation: furnished flats and houses for rent; private houses for purchase; and local authority housing. The shortage of housing resulted in considerable pressure on local authorities to provide accommodation at a “reasonable rent.” The criterion for a reasonable rent was influenced by the rents of uncontrollable property—which was unrealistic. Nevertheless, council housing was provided at below market price, and had to be subsidized. A family’s occupation of council housing was not subject to periodic means testing, neither was the occupancy of rent-controlled dwellings. So one set of occupants was being subsidized by tax and rate payers, while the other group was being subsidized by the landlords. Those among the population living in their own or uncontrollable rented dwellings, were not being subsidized by anyone. Workers receiving equal pay and having similar domestic commitments, were distributed among controlled, uncontrollable, council and privately-owned property, and paying very different rates. Landlords were paying such a high rate of tax—what is rent control amounted to—because they were landlords, not because of their earnings or their domestic commitments. The politicians had taken the short view—the importance of winning the next election, and as a result chaos reigned. In World War II and for more than two decades following it, they opted for the same formula of political expediency and electioneering policies. The chaos is still with us.

Now to try to answer the questions. How do you decide what a fair rent is? You could leave it to the forces of demand and supply, though the danger of combines keeping the supply short and prices artificially high, must be guarded against. Housing could be nationalized and rent fixed as a percentage of income, modified by domestic commitments. The drawbacks with this is that the level of rents would then become a political pawn. Low rents would have to be paid for by increased taxation. Increased taxation would cause inflation. Also, there is a danger that such a policy would result in uniform council estates and tower blocks, and many people would find this unattractive. There is no simple solution. A mix of free enterprise and government-sponsored dwellings is probably the answer. Means-testing for subsidized dwellings should be instituted. Rents of private property should not be controlled. For the next few years, the government should divert some resources to rectify the present chaos and shortage. Are squatters justified in taking over empty buildings? The classical economic argument would be that when a man invests his money, he takes the risk, and he should be left to manage his own affairs. If the government were to give permission for houses to be taken over by squatters if they were left standing empty for more than six months, or a year, the long-term consequences could be surprising. Since builders cannot be certain that they will be able to sell in the stipulated time, it could lead to a virtual cessation of private building since it would have become too risky, or building only when a contract had been signed by the purchaser. And since mortgages are granted only after a satisfactory surveyor’s report on the property, this would create a “catch 22 situation”. From one point of view, therefore, it seems not unreasonable that a man who invests his own money should be allowed freedom of manoeuvre—both from the point of view of personal freedom and also because otherwise he might take his funds elsewhere—perhaps abroad. On the other hand, the city Centrepoint situation, where inflation is increasing the capital value at a rate of 20% a year, that it pays to keep a building empty because the rent it would bring in would only be equivalent to 10% of the capital outlay (rent agreements are usually made for periods not less than seven years, so rents cannot be continuously adjusted to allow for inflation). Is this an example of the wicked landlord? It is not. It is a case of stupid politicians not controlling inflation. If the landlord lets his property under these circumstances, he is throwing money away! At this point some people may be tempted to say “let’s have communisation”. But personally, I’d rather work out the faults in our own system than go for the dead controlled, frustrating life which imagine one has to put up with under a totalitarian regime. Legalized squatting would not provide an answer to the problem of the homeless; on the contrary, it would only make the problem infinitely worse. The short-term solution is for the government to provide more housing. The solution to the problem of buildings remaining empty because landlords find this the most profitable course, is for the government to control inflation. The long term solution to the problem of the chronic housing shortage and sky high prices is the control of population at a reasonable level, and the sensible distribution of industry—and therefore population—about the country, instead of allowing it to collect in a few highly concentrated centres, where local scarcity sends property prices zooming upwards.

An essential prerequisite to a solution of these problems, as to so many others, is to improve the standard of education of the entire population. Give everyone a grounding in Economics, Economic History and British Constitutional, so that they are able to understand the policies which politicians propose. Politicians would then be afraid of proposing rubbish policies as they do now. Better people would begin going into politics, and things would begin to show a real improvement.


STOP PRESS. TORY "FAIR RENTS" ACT.

I haven’t studied this act but would guess that it is not a move towards "fair" rents but towards "market" rents, and since the market has been distorted by the bungling malpractices of politicians, market rents are not fair rents. The act would seem to be a typical example of politicians covering up the results of bad policies with legislation which is just as bad, but which can be made to appear reasonable to those who don’t know how the mess got started and don’t understand enough about the economic system to know how it could be put right. If the population at large had a knowledge of Economics, Economic History and British Constituition, no politician would dare to try to put such legislation on the public.
The Real Cause and Cure of Inflation

E.M. Collins

The real cause of inflation is bad management in industry. This leads to a variety of counter-productive attitudes and inefficiencies. I’ll relate three stories to illustrate what I mean.

The first is a personal experience. It is a small incident, but one which has enormously important implications. In a factory where I worked, I overheard the following conversation between the Works Manager and his assistant:

"Those two new men have been here three months now," said the Assistant Works Manager. "When they came we said we’d increase their rate after they’d been here three months. Shall we give it to them?"

"Have they asked for it?"

"No."

"Well, don’t be bleedin’ silly. Don’t give it to them unless they ask for it."

It’s this sort of nastiness which builds up the wall of distrust which you find between workers and management in a factory. Managers are generally too stupid to realise that if they behaved honestly with their workers, they would gain their trust, and the employees would work with a will. The rewards of honesty and fairness would be enormously greater than the rewards of ripping off the workers at every opportunity.

When I changed from being a shipping clerk to a bank clerk, the bank’s salary scale for my age group was £180 above what I was then earning. The bank knew this, and that they could have had my services for an extra £75 a year. But they gave me an extra £100 right away, and the other £80 a year on top six months later. After that my scale rises came through on time each year. I probably wouldn’t have had the courage to ask for rises, yet they gave me regular rises and bonuses anyway. I felt more than fairly treated and worked with a will as a result. And I don’t think I am different from any factory floor worker in the way I reacted.

The second story concerns a works study engineer I spoke to:

"Our job was to find the most efficient method of performing a particular process," he said. "When we’d worked out the method, a piece rate would be fixed which would give the operatives about £18 or £20 a week. Sometimes one of them would find a quicker method of doing the job. We’d know because his wage would shoot up to £30 or £35 a week. Then we’d have to find out how he was doing it. Sometimes it would take two or three weeks, because whenever he saw us coming, he’d do it the slow way. But eventually we’d find out. Then we’d
put everyone to doing it that way, and lower the piece rate."

It is not difficult to imagine the sort of resentment that this breeds. A sensible method of running things would have been to give the man a bonus, equivalent to the margin in earnings for six months, as a reward for finding a cost-reducing method, and then to reduce the rate. The benefits to the workers should not stop there. As a rule of thumb, wages should be a more or less fixed percentage of the firm's revenue, after the cost of raw materials and overheads has been allowed for. A cost-reducing method would therefore increase the amount earmarked for wages. After the man had been rewarded for his discovery therefore, everybody's pay would benefit from the improved method. This would prevent resentment from workers whose jobs or natural gifts did not enable them to earn windfall gains, it would encourage workers to increase efficiency, and it would greatly improve the atmosphere of trust in the factory.

The third story concerns a factory in the Brighton area, and was a news feature on regional TV. The factory had decided on an efficiency drive, and asked the workers to co-operate. They did. The efficiency drive was successful. Costs were reduced. The following conversation took place between the TV reporter and one of the factory executives:

"Will you be reducing the price of your product?" asked the reporter.

"No", replied the executive, "but it does mean that we won't be raising our prices, which might have been necessary had it not been for the efficiency drive."

"I suppose the men will be receiving some kind of financial reward for their part in this?"

"Well...no," replied the executive.

"But you said they played a vital part in the efficiency drive, surely they deserve some reward?"

"Well, they will be rewarded," said the executive, caught off balance and picking his words carefully, "in the respect that since we are not raising our prices, the demand for our product is not in any danger of falling, and so the men's jobs are more secure. Their reward is greater job security," he finished with flourish.

The wall of distrust between management and shop floor workers had been breached. It has probably been built up since the early days of the Industrial Revolution, and passed on from father to son, and from the older workers to the young apprentices. But the above stories illustrate, I think, which side is in the wrong. One can hardly be surprised that there is, on the factory floor, what amounts to a movement of passive resistance. The mind boggles at the thought of what this must do to productivity. I am convinced that an enormous increase in productivity - and human happiness - could be achieved by improved management/shop floor relations.

What has this to do with inflation? This: if we are to have wage rises which are not inflationary, we must match them to increases in productivity. We are not going to get rises in productivity as long as we have had management. If a factory boss were to say to his men, "Lads, you can have a rise if you increase productivity," the workers would know that the boss would keep as much of the increase in productivity as he could, for himself. This gives precious little incentive for them to do their best. On the contrary, they can work off some of their resentment by trying to outsmart the boss or by doing him down in various ways - and who would blame them? As for a rise in wages, their attitude is: "Never mind about increases in productivity, mate, we'll force you to give us more money." And so inflation goes on.

The answer to inflation therefore, is not loans from the I.M.F., or deflation, or devaluation, or a floating pound, or even a prices and incomes policy. The answer is inflation is improved management. The government could do something to improve management, for instance by sending out government-employed efficiency teams to vet firms; by publicising the results as a goal and an incentive to other firms to do the same, and as an instruction to other firms as to how efficiency can be improved. The task of the government itself doing this to the whole of British Industry would be out of the question, but if the government got British industry on its side, many would undertake their own efficiency drives voluntarily. But fair and honest treatment of workers by management would be an essential prerequisite to the success of any such scheme.

In case anyone imagines that a prices and incomes policy is a short cut to a solution, let me kill the idea once and for all by outlining a few of the difficulties. (Most of the following is from Speight's "Economics"). Raising wages at the same rate as increases in output sounds like a sensible solution, but the drawback is that it is unfair to large sections of the economy who can't increase output, such as doctors, nurses, police, soldiers, teachers, social workers and so on. An alternative solution would be to divide the national increase in output equally between all workers. That has been the principle in the past - hence the Wilson 3 1/3% norm. But there are a number of drawbacks to this. Many workers might think it not worth striving for a 3% increase if they'll get 3 1/3% without striving. If everyone thinks this way, and its quite plausible, there won't be any increase in output at all, and the whole of the 3 1/3% will be inflationary. In any case, workers are unwilling to consider rises as low as 3%. 10% seems to be their lower limit. And with bosses they can't trust, they can hardly be blamed.

Another drawback with a national norm is that it freezes the present wage structure, which assumes that the present wage structure is equitable. In fact some low-paid workers may have fallen seriously behind and be suffering real hardship. An exception has to be made in such cases. But, as Wilson found, there are so many groups claiming to be special cases that there are not enough people to vet the claims. Rules of thumb have to be resorted to, many claims are conceded, this increases the number of claims, and the situation soon gets out of hand. Another drawback with the national shareout is that wage rises in industries where there have been no increases in output would have to be met by a rise in prices. Therefore, if the price index is to be kept steady, prices in the more efficient firms have to be reduced:

Another reason for the Trades Unions objecting to an incomes policy which limits wage rises to increases in production, is that it would imply their acceptance that the present shareout between wages and profits is fair, which they do not. It should also be borne in mind that the TUC and CBI are not arms of the government. They themselves are critical of government norms, and in any case, they cannot dictate to their members. The real cause of inflation therefore is bad management. My own experience has convinced me that it goes far beyond the wrong treatment of workers and extends to all manner of managerial inefficiencies and ignorance. I think that the cult of the gentleman amateur is in no small way to blame. The government should therefore be tackling inflation, not with a package of monetary and fiscal gimmicks, or by union bashing, but by concentrating on the task of making management more efficient, and encouraging them to have a sensible, trusting relationship with their employees. An additional element, which is basic to so many of the solutions to our problems, would be the raising of the abysmal general level of education, so that employees can understand what is happening and what is required of them for their own good, in the long term.
Our society is burdened down with problems. For instance, a chronic housing shortage; old age pensioners dying of cold in the winter; many workers e.g. railwaymen, having to work overtime and rest days for a living wage; the abysmal general standard of education; inadequate facilities for retraining redundant workers; grossly underpaid hospital staffs; economically precarious welfare services; the desperate plight of underdeveloped countries; waste of resources through planned obsolescence, and many, many more.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the enormity of it all, and escape into one's own selfish little life. It is also tempting to escape into the dream that there is a single magic formula which will make it all come right. To some the magic formula is socialism. If the government were in control of everything, they could ensure that there were sufficient houses for everyone; that old age pensioners were properly cared for; that all workers had a guaranteed minimum wage, so there was no need for them to work overtime and rest days; that everybody was given a better standard of education; that redundant workers were retrained at full pay in government centres; that social services were properly financed and workers in them properly paid; that realistic aid was provided for underdeveloped countries; that planned obsolescence was abandoned and so on. All this would be achieved some believe, by the wise use of what is currently private profit. This idea being worked out in the USSR of course, and it isn't news to anyone that this system also has its drawbacks. Critics are fond of anecdotes about the difficulty of maintaining efficiency in the absence of the profit motive. There is the one about the Soviet nail factory when the appropriate government department said that the stipulated output was to be measured by weight, the factory manager saw to it that the nails produced were thick and heavy in order that his production figures were as favourable as possible. When the department changed the measure of output to the number of nails produced, the nails became lighter and more numerous in order to enhance the production figures. The story is supposed to illustrate that there is no incentive to ensure a certain standard of quality, as there is in a competitive system. The story about the roofing factory is similar; thick roofing when output is measured by weight; thin roofing when measured by area. Transport output is measured by miles, and the story is that the transport managers are delighted to fly machine spares across the USSR since this boosts their production figures, even though it is a stupid squandering of resources which should be used for the benefit of the population, and which would not occur if actions were regulated by the profit motive. The stories have a certain plausibility and perhaps there is an element of truth in them. However, the extent of the waste in the system is obviously not known to us, and such stories should be treated with some scepticism. Particularly as they seem based on the assumption that managers are unscrupulous rogues.

A more balanced picture of the drawbacks of a state run industry can be gleaned by an examination of our own. Some of the problems which arise are: How can the sovereignty of the consumer be ensured, i.e. by what means can the consumer encourage the producers to alter the variety of their products in accordance with changes in tastes and fashions? How and when shall wage

Socialism or Capitalism?

K.Wright
Itself to provide for peoples long term happiness. There are many others. For instance entrepreneurs are supposed to try to ascertain what the public wants and then produce it - putting their capital at risk in the process. But they have found ways of circumventing these risks. One way in which they attempt to do this is to saturate the public with advertising in order to persuade them that they want the manufactured article - though evidence as to the effectiveness of advertising is inconclusive. A surer way of keeping demand high is planned obsolescence. If any article is deliberately manufactured to have only a short life, demand and profits are increased. Politicians allow this squandering of resources to continue unhindered. People demand - want - sensational news, which leads to distorted reporting in the newspapers. Munitions manufacture is profitable, and an incentive is present to bribe or even assassinate politicians as a means of escalating minor military involvements into major ones in order to sell more munitions to make more profit - there is a clear case for munitions manufacture to be nationalised in all countries.

Is a communist system bound to become oppressive and restrictive to individual freedom? It seems to me that it is. If the inhabitants of the USSR were free to emigrate, many of them would no doubt do so, since the university educated would be able to earn more in countries where the inequalities of income are greater. One can argue quite cogently that it is unfair that a person should acquire a degree financed by the taxpayers and then take it out of the country from motives of greed. In the USSR, people are not free to emigrate. Need freedom of speech be forfeit? If people are not allowed to emigrate, they will be more content if they don't hear about people in other countries who are enjoying a better standard of living, so the news is censored, and people who say too much are shut up. It can be justified on the ground that the present sacrifice is for the long term happiness of the people. Need a communist country be aggressive to the outside world? If the leaders discover, as they have in the USSR, that even after two generations of isolation and indoctrination people still respond to incentives, they must realise that the moment they remove their restrictions on emigration, a drain on their best talent will begin. Their reaction to this situation is not to admit that their theories are wrong, but to see the solution in turning the whole world communist so that no one has anywhere to escape to. In a completely communist world they feel, the inconvenient characteristic of people to respond to incentives, will be crushed at last - which shows how little they understand about human nature. However, as long as they hold this belief they must believe in the spread of communism. I am quite sure that we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the nuclear bomb for the prevention of World War III. It must surely be clear to anyone with a modicum of intelligence that a satisfactory system can only be devised from a mixture of socialism and capitalism. The real problem therefore is to find the right mix. In this country at present, the mix clearly errs on the side of the inadequate and unintelligent government involvement. We shouldn't fall into the error of thinking that there is a particular mix which will be right for all time. The right mix for one period will probably not be the right mix for another. It will probably be a lifes work for each generation to keep the mix right.

Benham's Economics
J. Harvey & L. Bather "The British Constitution."
The Protestant Ethic

T.J. Short
Is there anyone who is not familiar with the Protestant Ethic hypothesis? Briefly the idea is that in the sixteenth century a new religious doctrine arose. This new doctrine held that not everyone had eternal life; only a few were to enjoy that privilege. They were the chosen. The hypothesis is that everyone would want to think that he was one of the chosen. The outward sign that someone was one of the chosen was that he enjoyed material success. Therefore, according to this hypothesis, everyone strove for material success in order to prove to himself and to others that he was one of the chosen.

This hypothesis immediately struck me as being ludicrous. Up to the time I first heard of the Protestant Ethic I had never questioned the competitive spirit; I had always assumed it to be a natural instinct not requiring any explanations. In any case it seemed to me that such a doctrine would be likely to make people apathetic rather than competitive. After all, if there were only a few who were "God's" chosen, I should have thought that most people would have assumed that it was not them, and not even bothered trying to prove that they were. What's the big deal about eternal life anyway? But we are told that the Protestant Ethic worked, and made everyone, right down to the humblest, begin to compete like anything, whereas before they had been content to live in harmony and co-operation - more or less.

I stuck to my natural instinct idea, and on the strength of my O-level Economic History, put forward an alternative hypothesis. I said that before the fourteenth century, people had lived in small, nearly self sufficient communities. In such circumstances people would be constrained to stay on good terms with one another - are allowed to the members of the community, simply because they had to live in close proximity with them. Had they started allowing their competitive spirit to show through, they would have been ostracised, which would have made life unbearable, since the village was virtually all the world they had. So, my hypothesis goes, they suppressed their "natural" competitive spirit. However, from the fourteenth century, overseas trade in English cloth began to grow. The capitalist "clothiers" - who collected cloth from the village cottage industries and sold it for export - did not live among the villagers and so had nothing to fear from their social ostracism. With this constraint removed, they allowed their "natural" competitive spirit to develop - without the aid of the Protestant Ethic. My tutor brushed aside my alternative hypothesis, saying that he didn't think I would get far with it.

Before the end of the course I had refined my hypothesis somewhat. Couldn't this natural instinct, I suggested, simply be the self preservation instinct? Couldn't the accumulation of more and more material wealth simply be - unconsciously - widening the margin between ourselves and our possible destruction? In primitive conditions, most living creatures will fight and kill each other in order to survive. Competition is surely only a modified form of the fight for survival, and not a reflex induced by the Protestant Ethic. My tutor was unmoved. He wouldn't even dignify my alternative hypothesis by arguing against it. He merely dismissed it, implying that the Protestant Ethic was it.

I, on the other hand, was - and am - unmoved by his refusal to argue the case. I think that the self preservation instinct is it, and that the Protestant Ethic is a load of old rubarb.

For instance - for the empirically minded - let me cite the case of the Nya Kusa, an African tribe. They used to live in communities based on an extended family type of organisation. When a father died, his land passed on to his brothers. The sons, when they wanted to set up homes and families of their own, used to go and cultivate new ground. This system worked well, and there were plenty of cohesive forces in the community. However, the time came when the growth in the population of the tribe began to create pressure on the available land. When land became harder to come by, sons began to resent seeing their fathers land pass to his brothers.

So the extended family idea broke down, and the organisation changed to the nuclear family - and community cohesion took a knock. The next step was jealousy over land between brothers in the same family, and before the community knew where it was, cohesion, harmony and co-operation were gone, and the members of the tribe found themselves living in a competitive community - without any help at all from the Protestant Ethic.

Why is it important whether it is the Protestant Ethic which motivates us, or the self preservation instinct? It is important if you want to reduce the destructiveness caused by the worst excesses of the competitive urge. I am not opposed to competition, or to inequality. People have different appetites, and some will be prepared to work harder for more material possessions, while others will prefer leisure. I believe that people should be free to satisfy their natural appetites. But the competition which provides so much of our motivation now does not, I believe, arise from natural appetites which we wish to satisfy, but from the self preservation instinct. We feel we have to compete to survive. The Trade Unionist striking to restore differentials does so, not because his appetites are inherently greater than the lower grade worker's, but because when he sees the differentials narrowing, he feels threatened. He feels that if he doesn't regain his advantage, then those below him will gain the advantage over him. He unconsciously fears slipping down into poverty and death.

The same applies to everyone. They feel insecure. They strive to make themselves secure, but paradoxically, in striving against one another they endanger the whole race including themselves, because competition has now reached a stage where it tends to be more destructive than constructive. In their struggle, supposedly for survival, businessmen and politicians encourage us to consume more and more. This is a waste of the world's resources - and of course, pollution. Frantic and continuous competition also decimates human happiness.

If people are told: "You only compete because of Protestant Ethic. So stop it," when in fact the drive comes from the self preservation instinct, then they won't stop competing frantically, because they won't be able to. They might try for a while, but the anxiety will build up, and most will return to the "rat race."

If, on the other hand, they are told: "You compete because of the self preservation instinct. You are striving to make yourself secure. You seek any gain by your neighbour as a threat to your security, and that is why you strive to get one up," and if they are then told: "You are secure. Man's struggling has put him in a position where security is his for the asking. We must stop the mindless, instinctive struggling, look around, and start to use our powers sensibly to create a secure and happy world," then this will make sense, and there will be no knowing anxiety as a result of not competing frantically. Competition and variations in the amount of work and leisure will then be motivated, not by a blind clawing for survival, but by differences in natural appetites.
At present, Union General Meetings on this campus are ignored by upwards of 90% of students. The reason is that most people find them stupid and boring. Yet there are at least two vital functions which the Union could and should fulfil. Firstly, it should motivate students to take on the role of a force for change in society — principally now they leave university; and secondly, it should tell them how they can fulfil this role.

We, the higher educated, are the only hope that society has got. Change isn't going to come from the politicians. They only think ahead to the next election. It isn't going to come from the working class. They are poorly educated, badly treated, and accustomed to using their power only for short-term gains. So it is up to us. There are several ways in which we can fulfil this role as a force for change in society. While we are at university, we can begin to be an influence simply by being heard by the outside world to talk sense. At present, it is only the voices of the extremists and trendy lefties which are heard, and they aren't representative, they don't talk sense, and they don't influence anybody. But if the Union were to start organising regular, orderly debates on current problems of the outside world (starting at 6.00 p.m. and with cheap snacks laid on), and coming up with sensible solutions, having reports and

constituency associations — making it absolutely clear that we have no intention of being tame poodles of the party line. Again, with all students similarly motivated, you wouldn't find yourself alone. You could influence other members of the constituency association, get on to the selection committee, and be a powerful influence for change.

And finally, you can stand for Parliament yourself. Things are getting into such a mess that people of intelligence and integrity are going to have to start taking on the distasteful task of going into government. At present, MPs are mainly smoothies with nice smiles and no backbones. They are screwing things up for us. Their idea of achievement is to put an extra pound into everyone's pay packet; they do nothing about the long-term interests of society.

A third important function of the Union is to provide for the social needs of students. A little common sense would work wonders. At present, clubs and societies advertise every lunchtime on ITV5. Very few people know this because at lunchtime most of them are having lunch — in the scramble or in the snack bar. A simple solution to the problem would be to move TV monitors into the scramble and the snack bar, so that people would see the adverts. That in itself should stimulate social life quite a bit. A

resolutions published first in local newspapers, and from there go on to the national papers and media, then before long, the University would become a voice to be listened to, and we would become a force in society even while we were still students.

After university there are a number of ways in which we could be a force for change in society. For instance, we will all occupy managerial or executive positions, and if we are motivated by other than purely selfish considerations, there will clearly be many ways in which we will be able to be an influence. And if all students are similarly motivated, while at university, you won't find yourself alone in your firm or on your board of directors; there will be others also who think of factors apart from the level of next year's profits.

More directly, we can get involved in pressure group activities — either organising a pressure group or helping others organise — taking on such projects as getting laws changed, getting improved conditions for certain sections of society, and so on, by putting pressure on Ministers and MPs. Again, if all students are similarly motivated, you can be sure that if you do organise a pressure group, you will soon have plenty of other ex-university men and women coming forward to help you.

We can get involved in party politics with our local

Another idea would be to extend the scheme of cheap snacks in the evenings, which would help persuade people to stay on campus and come along to the societies. At the moment, the quality and price of food in the refectory seems to be a deterrent. The sabbatical officers could also influence the social atmosphere more directly. At election time, the candidates for sabbatical posts are frequently seen in the common rooms, accessible and eager to please. After the election you see them only at UGMs — if you can take that punishment, and few can. Sabbatical officers should regard it as a duty to spend their lunch hours in the common rooms, so that they can contact students who don't go to UGMs or involve themselves in societies. They could then hear complaints, comments and suggestions, and keep their ideas flowing on how to improve the social atmosphere — which could stand improvement. Another welcome move would be to rectify the conspicuous lack of a decent-sized hall available for dances, debates and UGMs. This could be achieved with a bit of imagination. The only decent-sized hall on campus is the new refectory. This should be used as the Union hall. The refectory should be moved down to where the bookshop now is, and the bookshop should be moved down to Falmer House, which is useless as a Union building anyway. The new refectory

OUR UNION: WHAT ROLE?

J.T. Frayne

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building should be completely taken over by the Union as the social centre for the campus. At present it hasn't got one. That's why at night it dies like a New Town. Regarding the subject matter of UGM debates, people are bored by interminable discussions on the ideological implications of domestic matters which could be dealt with quickly and quietly with a small amount of common sense. I am more familiar with the USTA (University of Sussex Tenants' Association) activities than with the UGM's, but the principle is the same. Two instances come to my mind. In one instance, students living on campus were asked to come and discuss whether the new Housing Manager should rather be called a Residential Services Officer. Whether he should be answerable for the interests of the tenants through the Community Services Committee, or whether he should be answerable through a general meeting of the residents. The USTA Chairman seemed to have failed completely to grasp the simple fact that, when people elect a representative, they expect him to exercise his common sense and not waste their time calling for mandates for this and that, and for discussions on things that don't need discussing. Someone who went to this particular meeting, reported that it turned out to be as boring as it promised to be. The common sense solution, in order to keep people in the picture without wasting their time, would be referenda. The form should set out the essential details of the matter, briefly state the majority view of the USTA committee, and have a number of boxes which the tenant could tick. In this case the boxes would have said:

(i) The Housing Manager should work in the best interests of the tenants and be answerable in the first instance through the Community Services Committee.
(ii) In the case of an impasse, he should take part in a full debate at an USTA general meeting.
(iii) We do not think either of these suggestions is adequate, and want an USTA general meeting to be convened for a full debate on the matter.

In another instance, the sporadically vociferous USTA Chairman agreed to a rent increase without consulting anyone. A referendum in this case could have been along the following lines:

"The USTA Committee feels that since student grants have not been increased, and since the inflationary price rises are already eroding students' standards of living, a rent increase is unjustifiable and cannot be agreed to. If the University is faced with rising costs, it should pressure the Government, and not the students, for more funds. To attempt to meet rising costs due to inflation by passing them on to students on fixed incomes shows a total abdication of a sense of responsibility and a sense of justice on the part of the Vice-Chancellor."

(i) We do not agree to a rise in rents, and if such a rise is imposed, we will support a rent strike.
(ii) We think that a rise in rents is justified, and do not object.
(iii) We do not want a general debate on this topic.
(iv) We do want a general debate on this topic before any decision is taken."

What chance is there of the Union taking on the role of motivating students to change society and improving social life on campus? The Union at present is caught in a vicious circle. Bad presidents have led to boring, stupid UGMs. Boring, stupid UGMs have led to the Union being ignored by all but those who appreciate boring, stupid UGMs. This has meant that when election time has come round, only boring, stupid people have stood for election. The circle must be broken.

I made a half-hearted attempt at it last year. I failed because I lacked confidence, and didn't throw myself into a full-blooded campaign. I canvassed for only three evenings, speaking to 55 people, but got 182 votes. The successful candidates had only 510 votes on the first count, after a long, well-organised campaign. My experience indicates that a normally intelligent idealist could succeed easily if he had the courage to conduct a reasonably determined campaign. The normal poll in the presidential election is about 35%. Many of that 35% vote merely for a name, without knowing what the man stands for - because they feel that they ought to use their vote. They would be easily won over by a reasonable candidate. Picking up votes from the other 65% is like walking into an orchard and picking apples off the trees. The number you collect depends almost entirely on the amount of time you spend on it - assuming that you have a sensible platform.

I pass this information on in the hope that it will encourage some sensible person to see the vital role which can be played by the Union, and to release the University from the vicious circle, and to start motivating students to take on the role as a force for change in society. Men and women should leave university with their ideals intact, and with a clear idea of how they are going to put them to work.

University should make all students with a feeling of fraternity with one another which should last for life. At present this doesn't happen. It should. It can. It must.
EXAMS

As nearly as possible these should test the student in the way he is likely to be tested in his job. (I am an economics major.) Some problems can be solved very largely by reference to a set of principles, e.g. monetary economics (Economics II, 1972.) A student may reasonably be expected to have studied, understood and retained these principles, and it seems to me that this part of the course can usefully be tested by means of a three hour paper. But where there is no clear cut set of principles, as in the question: "What is a fair rent?" (Economics I, 1972.) It is a nonsense to set a three hour paper. Confronted with such a

be written during the final week of each term and the first two weeks of the vacation. Expanded versions of two of them to be written in the final term would demonstrate the student's ability to develop ideas. The notion that three years of university should culminate in an ecstatic intellectual orgasm may have a certain emotional appeal, and may have been feasible fifty years ago. At that time, degrees were probably somewhere around today's A-level standard. But knowledge has expanded enormously and the pressure of work accordingly. The termly ejaculation makes rather more sense.

Miscellany

W.G. Landbridge

question in the outside world, you would not sit at your desk scratching your head trying to produce an answer in 45 minutes. You would research it. It seems to me that there are relatively few topics which can be tested satisfactorily by a three hour paper. When doing A-levels, one's knowledge is limited, and is still a novelty to the proud student. His 45 minute answers give him satisfaction. The same is not true of the undergraduate at the end of his three years. Few answers arrived at in 45 minutes by a process of dredging one's memory are worth much, and they are intensely frustrating to the student. A more sensible way of assessing a student's ability would be to set a dissertation on each subject, to

TROOPING THE COLOUR

I found it rather sad and amusing, watching this on television. It conjured up visions of the British Square in desert actions. Human beings have an enormous capacity for heroism, courage and discipline; of subordination of self. It implies an enormous idealism. These qualities want to find a means of expression. That is why it became possible to have army discipline. It is now apparent that this was a misapplication of human qualities. But the qualities which made it possible still remain. Before, we were groping blindly to give them expression. We opted for anything which seemed to make sense. Empire seemed to make sense. We
now see Empire conflicting with our sense of justice. We need a new direction. If we find one which makes sense, people will be willing to subject themselves to discipline in order to achieve the objective. Surely the new objective must be the survival and long term happiness of the human race. Surely this must be the objective of the human race.

PROGRESS
Change seems to be accepted as progress. There seems to be a superstitious fear of the static state. But isn't something like the static state something to be aimed for? As technology advances, the curve of political system, so they can know and exercise their rights, see the strengths and weaknesses in our system and those of other countries, and be less easily fooled by their own politicians and by would-be revolutionaries offering specious alternatives. They also need a grounding in Economic History, to make them aware of the way in which material prosperity has increased since the Middle Ages, and to enable them to form their own opinions as to the costs and benefits of the change. It will also enable them to appreciate that policies implemented now will shape life in the future, and draw their attention to something like the full significance of present actions. A well educated

satisfaction rises, peaks and then declines. We should aim for the static state at the peak of the curve.

EDUCATION
If order is to be maintained and happiness is to be achieved as society becomes increasingly sophisticated and complex, the general level of education has got to be raised in order that ordinary people can understand what is going on. They clearly need to be given a reasonable grounding in Economics, since they are being affected by the Government's economic policies every day; and their own actions affect the working of the Government's economic policies. They clearly need a grounding in the workings of the British population is also essential if a party of reform is to survive for long in government.
A few of the outward manifestations of the frustrations caused by an education which fails utterly to explain to people where they fit into our increasingly complex society are "fiddling", rising crime rates, industrial unrest. Many people vent their feelings on the system, which must seem bent on ripping them off in any way it can. For a proportion of the others it seems likely that the stress, generated by the unrewarding task of complying blindly with rules, leads to nervous disorders and even breakdowns. It seems to me that the returns from such an improvement in education in terms of human happiness would be enormous.
ORIGINAl THOUGHT

Right from the start I discovered that tutors were not interested in a student's capacity to think. They are interested only in maintaining their own pseudo position viz-a-viz the student. It is obvious that one has to study the work which other people have done before attempting to become a think tank. But I would like to see tutors slightly less impervious to ideas which are not out of books, even if they do knock some sacred cows, like the Protestant Ethic, and persuasive advertising as an unmitigated social evil.

THE LIE

The traditional lie among students is that they do hardly any work. If this were true, the social life at Sussex would be incredible - which it is not. The truth is that only a minority of students beaver away for much less than about thirty five hours a week - a normal working stint in any occupation. A fair proportion probably do more. So why the lie? It originated in Public Schools during the nineteenth century. If the middle class could appear to be "naturally clever", it would make their position viz-a-viz the working class easier to maintain. The lower orders would not feel cheated at not having the opportunity for an education; they would be kept in their place by a sense of their own intellectual inferiority. By acquiring knowledge and mental skills, apparently without the effort it cost erudite members of the working class they would appear as demi gods. So they beavered away in secret, stuck to the lie, and maintained the illusion. Why is the lie still largely maintained? One-upmanship; an ego thing; to try and impress people they really are superior. Its a harmful tradition. Some people believe the lie, try to achieve good results without work, and inevitably fail. Others beaver away in secret, thinking it is necessary only because they really are inferior. The lie is probably responsible for a lot of hang-ups in a lot of people. Its a tradition which ought to go.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

It is about time that freedom of speech was restored to the campus. It was removed by a tiny group of left wing extremists a couple of years ago. Tony M.Ba Wall and Amery were prevented from speaking on the campus. One had his meeting broken up, the other was forced to hold his meeting in town. Our spineless university authorities did nothing. Perhaps they are confused about the concept of freedom. In order to maintain freedom of speech on campus, they would have had to curtail the freedom of the extremist group. They were apparently unable to resolve the dilemma, and took action by doing nothing - action which has been immeasurably harmful to an intake of students. There is no such thing as complete freedom, of course. Only a choice between freedoms, and the cost of opting for one set of freedoms is the other set which is foregone in the process. In this case, most students would prefer freedom of speech on campus to the freedom to prevent freedom of speech, just as most people prefer freedom from the fear of being murdered, to the freedom of being able to commit murder freely themselves. Freedom of speech should be protected on campus, even if it means mass rustickations. (Only about a dozen extremists were involved in breaking up Amery's meeting.) University is supposed to be a place where ideas are freely explored and exchanged. It is monstrous that any university authorities should allow a supression of this principle.

TIME TO GROW UP

Because the progress of the human race up to now seems to have cyclical - civilisations rising to a peak and then declining, to be replaced by others following the same path - many people seem to imagine that it will continue in this pattern. Such a view shows a singular lack of observation. The development of the human race is obviously following the same pattern as the development of an individual human being - passing from infancy to childhood, to adolescence, maturity, old age and finally, death. At present we are obviously going through adolescence. We are discovering our enormous powers. We are squandering them on ridiculous, useless displays, breaking out for the sheer joy of it. The human race can use its powers to make a long and happy life, or it can cripple, or even kill itself. If you look back at some of the things we were doing in history, you see the human race indulging in stupidity and cruelty, like a cruel little boy treading on insects, stirring up ant hills, and tying tin cans to cats' tails; you can see knowledge, sense and order developing through history, just as it does in a developing human being. It is now time for the human race to grow up.

Why should we? Why not live our own lives out, and not worry about future generations? You could bring that down still further and ask; why don't we individually just squander our youth on pleasure? Sex orgies and the like, and group suicides on our twenty fifth birthdays. The answer can only be that it is against the self preservation instinct. But why should we have self preservation instinct? I am agnostic, yet I do have a quasi-religious belief, which is likely to keep me on the dedication kick for life. I believe that there is a life spirit. I believe that we are it. I believe that if everyone in the world but one man were to die, the life spirit would be concentrated in him. If he died, the spirit would be set free. Free to be suspended in timelessness and space to be tormented with unbelievable boredom, loneliness and a feeling of the pointlessness of existence, but utterly unable to escape, and having to endure the terrifying prospect of eternity. I believe that life spirit has experimented with many life forms in order to escape such a fate, perhaps as many experiments as there are that each one has failed to survive for long. Human life is the latest experiment of the life spirit. It is an ingenious formula. Dividing itself among millions of beings, the problem of loneliness is solved. Faults are built in to ensure that problems are endless, so the problem of boredom is solved. Each being is incomplete without a member of the opposite sex. A life span of seventy years ensures that in a world containing only a finite number of possible experiences, no being can go through all of them in his lifetime, and so is always conscious of a host of untried experiences. The final fillip is provided by genuine uncertainty. This particular life form could destroy itself. The spirit could find itself bored and lonely again, with yet another failure behind it. It would be faced yet again with the task of finding a life form which would cure its torments, hopefully for eternity.

I believe that it is this fear which is the self preservation instinct. I believe that this fear will make man try to create new planets and to populate them, to perpetuate our particular life form, so that this world will propagate other worlds, just as human beings propagate other human beings. It also follows from this belief that it makes sense to make a better world for future generations, since we are the future generations. If we leave a mess, then we are going to land right back in it. If we create a paradise, we are going to enjoy it.
These articles urge radical change, but are opposed to revolution. The underlying belief in all of them is that the basic shape which has emerged as a result of our evolution is the right one, and that even though the machinery does not work efficiently, it can be made to. Community living and the need for the means to fulfill all our desires, talents and appetites, raises enormous problems. I am prepared to accept that the kind of life which we wish to live entails the development of enormously complex machinery; so complex that no one person is going to be capable of understanding the intricacies of every part and how each part interacts with all the other parts. Each one of us can study and become expert at one small part. This implies that the cement needed to keep the thing as an integrated whole is trust and confidence that everyone else is playing his or her part in making the system produce the desired rewards for everyone. Unfortunately many people take advantage of the complexities and of their own specialist knowledge to obtain a bigger share of the rewards than is their due. This is not meant as a condemnation of differential rewards. These are justified for differential effort and skill. But they are not justified by an ability to cheat the other members of the community. The article on the Protestant Ethic suggests an alternative to the Protestant Ethic hypothesis as an explanation for this kind of selfish behaviour. It suggests that selfish behaviour is motivated by the self preservation instinct. Therefore if people can be convinced that selfish behaviour is endangering their preservation of self, and that their best prospect of preserving self will come from unselfish behaviour, the drive for self preservation will motivate people to behave unselfishly. In other words, the root cause of our behaviour is something intrinsic and permanent, not something artificial. The aim should not therefore be to extirpate it, but to set it working in a sensible way. This alternative hypothesis therefore, unlike the Protestant Ethic, holds out a real hope of a general change in peoples' attitudes.

Consideration of the self preservation instinct can also help to put the appalling practice of planned obsolescence into perspective. Planned obsolescence is not an example of wicked capitalists going to any lengths in order to amass even greater profits. It is sheer self preservation. If one firm stopped the practice, there is a danger that its sales would fall viz-a-viz its competitors, who would then devour it. The only way that this wasteful form of competition can be curbed is by sensible government intervention. Don't blame the capitalists; blame the politicians; or better still take on the politicians' job yourself, you would almost certainly do it far better. The human race has always had a tendency to rely on a few simple rules in order that it can ignore the complexity, yet still be confident that things will run smoothly. Laissez Faire and Communism are two extreme examples of sets of rules (Laissez Faire implying that "natural" laws are sufficient.) Most people would agree that good government can only be achieved by a mix of the two. But even then, rules can never be foolproof. Furthermore, our way has been to make rules conducive to survival and happiness, and then do our damndest to bend them and circumvent them. Many people try to use rules the way a boxer uses the ropes in a boxing ring. But in life there are no ropes. And there is no ring unless we acknowledge that there is one, and agree to remain within it. No system will work properly unless we begin to pay far more attention to the spirit and objectives of the laws, and stop looking for weaknesses in them to exploit. We must, nevertheless, avoid the excesses of a kind of Puritan morality, which can lead to just as much unhappiness. I doubt that anyone wants a perfect system where you feel a crushing sense of guilt if you bend the rules now and then. Most people would be content with having a clear idea of the objectives of the rules, and of making a special effort now and then, when the achievement of the objectives is in danger. That is not what happens now. What does happen is that we concentrate on our own personal objectives, ignoring any general aim and direction of the race as a whole. We concentrate on securing our jobs, the firm's objectives, a house, a certain standard of living, bringing up a family, and hope that somehow everything will turn out alright. The trouble is that the handful of people who should be co-ordinating the activities within particular segments of the world community, the men and women in the various national governments, think in exactly the same way. They concentrate on securing their jobs by doing things that will enable them to win the next election, on buying a house, on achieving a certain standard of living, bringing up a family, and hope that somehow everything overall will turn out alright. We are like a lot of pigs at the farmyard trough, heads down, concentrating on guzzling swill and ignoring all else. We all ought to raise our heads now and then and take a look around the farmyard to make sure that no danger is threatening. If it is agreed that our objectives should be the long term survival and happiness of the human race, then it will probably also be agreed that the present time is a time for reminding ourselves that these are our objectives; a time for examining the rules to see if by following them we are likely to achieve these objectives; a time for making a special effort. It is hoped that these articles will give some idea of the way in which some of the elements in our society interact, and provide a few examples of its complexities. None of the articles is a vague exhortation to "do better" or "pull together chaps!". Each one attempts to provide a specific solution. We must all attempt to provide solutions. Any fool can criticize and disparage the attempts of others. But it doesn't help. We must expend our energies on solving the problems, not on
putting each other down.

The suggestion in most of these articles is that the provision of a grounding in Economics, British Constitution and Economic History is the key to a period of radical and constructive change. We are all involved in the economic system. Economic policies affect us; our actions affect the success or failure of the policies. If everyone were able to understand the aims of the policies and how the policies could achieve the aims, we could help them succeed. If politicians knew that the people could understand their policies, they would stop formulating stupid policies. If everyone understood the way in which the various tiers and departments of the government worked and the principles which governed them, there would be an enormous increase in co-operation and efficiency, an enormous reduction in frustration and wasted effort, for instance the wasted effort of one set of lawyers, using their expensive educations to try and find loopholes in and means of bending the law, and another set of lawyers trying to stop them. If everyone had a grounding in Economic History, they would have a sense of perspective in time. If they were enabled to understand that certain conditions in society now were the result of events and developments a hundred, two hundred years ago, they would understand the future results which could be expected to develop from actions taken now, and they would have some idea of the time span involved. They would have some idea of what it was possible to achieve within a given time period. People would become more patient and tolerant. They would also expect politicians to be planning two hundred and more years ahead, as well as planning for the immediate future.

One of the points made in these articles is that any party of reform must introduce such a change in education if it is to stand a chance of achieving its aims. Enormous strides along the road of remedying - in the specific way suggested - the gross deficiencies in education which currently exist, could be made in a relatively short time - say five or six years. The extra year for secondary moderns could be devoted to these three subjects. Evening classes in these subjects could be free and correspondence courses in them paid for out of the national budget, thus encouraging adults to round out their education. A party of reform could buy advertising time on commercial television and ask for time on BBC television for one minute "Commercialists" to stimulate interest in these subjects and give information about the courses available. Anyone intending to go into politics with the idea of effecting a reform should first concentrate on introducing a bill to reform education in this way. I intend to do so if no-one beats me to it.

Another of the main ideas in these articles is that the human race must now grow up if it is to survive, just as individual human beings must grow up and sober up in order to survive. All of us are at university as a result of a plan for a satisfactory life for us - a plan formulated either by ourselves or by our parents. The plan involves accepting certain restrictions and disciplines. But we sacrifice some present satisfaction in order to enjoy greater satisfaction later on, and because as well as enjoying greater satisfaction later, we will enjoy it for a longer period. The same applies to the human race as a whole. If we want long term survival and happiness, we must accept certain restrictions and disciplines. If we all go on doing our own thing with no sense of responsibility, as though we were independent entities, however we do, we will soon find that we are not. Future generations will suffer, and will hate us for our selfishness and stupidity, particularly as an earthly paradise is easily within our grasp at this time. But it could easily slip out of reach for all time.

Everyone has their own idea of what such an earthly paradise would be like, and with the knowledge, mental and physical skills, ingenuity and the enormous productive power which the human race has acquired, we have only to wish to make almost anything come true within a fairly short time. I see the adult human race as happy, secure and responsible. Probably anyone who wants to will be able to have a university education; about sixty per cent will take advantage of this; grants will be as generous as one could wish; it will be quite usual for people to return to various forms of education throughout their lives. There will be voluntary national service, studying the mechanical slaves such as automated factories, computers and so on, which will provide for many of our needs, so that there will be no danger of the machines breaking down and an indolent population being unable to repair them. An alternative form of national service will be teaching and government. There will be voluntary world service, assisting the underdeveloped countries. Occupations will be largely a matter of personal choice. Automated factories will provide a high minimum standard of living, and people will be able to choose such occupations as farming - which will also be by ranging from medieval to modern - making furniture, clothes, ornaments and so on, by hand. Birth control will be accepted as a matter of common sense. The population of Britain, for instance, will have been reduced by voluntary limitation of family size to one child, to twenty million. After the reduction has been achieved, the government will announce periodically the recommended size of family required to keep the population level constant. People will comply voluntarily. They will regard the people who lived in the later stages of the population explosion period of history as being unbelievably stupid. The smaller populations will make it possible for everyone to enjoy a very high standard of living, with their own private transport, without the fear of congestion or of choking and poisoning the world to death with pollution. Life will be more leisurely, more friendly; boat travel will replace air travel.

To sum up, the themes that it is hoped come through clearly in these articles are: a distrust of and disgust with our present breed of politicians; dissatisfaction with our political system which, although it may be relatively good, contains glaring and destructive anomalies which must be put right as a matter of urgency; a mild contempt for those refuges of the intellectually lazy, the easy "solutions" of communism and anarchism - by whatever names they are called; the urgent need for the specific change in general education mentioned above; a conviction that the Common Market gimmick is yet another blunder on the part of unintelligent and incompetent politicians, even more gigantic and horrific than their usual mindless bungling; and above all, the need for us, you and me, the higher educated, the non-politically minded, the shy, the lazy and the selfish, to begin to take an active part in putting things right. At university this can be by debates - full scale debates conducted on formal lines, not introverted little discussion groups over coffee in the kitchen - from whichensible solutions can be formulated, then publicising those solutions as widely as possible, thus making the university voice a voice to be listened to throughout the country. It can also be by taking part in sensible pressure group activities. After university, it can be by action in our jobs, in pressure groups, in constituency associations and by standing for Parliament. Whether the human race goes on to a long and happy adulthood or becomes or becomes crippled and stunted is up to us. We are the crucial generation.