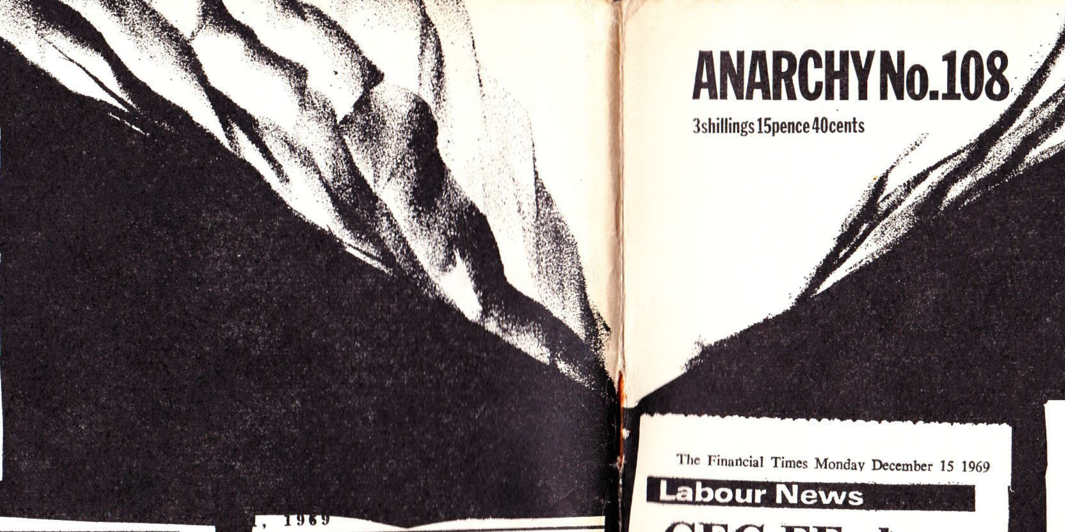

ANARCHY No.108

3shillings 15pence 40cents

BIG FLAME FLICKERING

HOME NEWS

Times 20-9-69

New strike threat looms over GEC on Merseyside

From HENRY STANHOPE

Liverpool, Sept. 19

A new threat of industrial action loomed over the three G.E.C./English Electric factories, where 3,000 workers are facing redundancy, after members of the shop stewards' action committee discussed a strike call at a meeting after a round of talks on Merseyside today. Mr. Wedgwood Benn, Minister of Technology, was involved in some negotiations.

A member of the committ...

being used perennially by successive government's since the war.

The Minister arrived here almost at first light, and spent the day touring the factories, two of them on the east Lancashire road and one in Netherton, Bootle. At Liverpool town hall he held discussions with Mr. Arnold Weinstock, G.E.C. managing director of the combine, and Sir Jack Scamp, personnel director, local members

INTERIM STATEMENT

THE GENERAL ELECTRIC AND ENGLISH ELECTRIC COMPANIES LIMITED

G.E.C. ENGLISH ELECTRIC AEI

Interim Statement

The estimated trading results for the six months ended 30th September, 1969, are as follows:

	6 months to 30th September 1969 (including English Electric) £'000	6 months to 30th September 1968 (excluding English Electric) £'000	12 months to 31st March 1969 (excluding English Electric) £'000
Sales	386,000	229,000	498,000
Trading Profit including trade investment income	29,400	18,200	42,970
Share of profits, less losses, of Associated Companies	3,200	900	2,209
Profit before interest	32,600	19,100	45,179
Interest on loan capital and other borrowings	8,500	2,500	5,281
	24,100	16,600	39,898
Interest on 7¼% Convertible Stock 1987/92	2,900	1,250	2,528
Profit before taxation	21,200	15,350	37,370

The comparative figures for the six months to 30th September, 1968, and the twelve months to 31st March, 1969, exclude those applicable to English Electric.

The results for the six months indicate that progress has been made under conditions which, on the whole, have been unfavourable. The Company's performance has been affected by industrial disputes which have interfered with output and deliveries in a number of product fields. In view of the upheaval inevitably involved in reorganisation, some such disturbance was only to be expected, but there have been other disputes, usually unofficial, concerning wage and other claims. Besides such cost increases as have come to be accepted as normal, there have been this year particular burdens, such as the soaring prices of copper and nickel, which have had an adverse effect on margins.

Apart from some sectors of the Power Engineering Group, where home orders have continued at depressed levels, order intake generally has been good, although sales of consumer products did not pick up until the autumn. Overseas and export activities are developing at an encouraging rate

The Company's drive to achieve greater efficiency is based on the better use of resources and is supplemented by the disposal of assets and interests which do not fit into a rational structure for the business. Measures already taken are now having the effect of reducing our borrowings. High interest rates and extra costs associated with bank indebtedness emphasise the importance of the Company's policy to improve its cost efficiency.

In the Chairman's statement of 31st July 1969, Lord Nelson, referring to the outcome for 1969/70, said: "It is too early to predict results with accuracy but your directors feel that in the absence of any unforeseen circumstances, the profit should not be below £65m.; on the other hand, they would think it unlikely that it would exceed £75m."

Taking into account the current and expected levels of trading and output during the remainder of the current financial year, the directors estimate that the profit for the year 1969/70, before convertible loan stock interest and taxation, will exceed £65m. This forecast compares with £40m. for GEC-AEI for the year ended 31st March 1969 and £19m. for English Electric for the fifteen months ended on that date.

The directors have declared interim dividends of 5 per cent on the Ordinary and 'B' Ordinary Shares payable on 25th March, 1970.

In 1968/69, interim dividends of 5 per cent were followed by a final dividend on the Ordinary Shares of 9 per cent. making 14 per cent for the year, and a final dividend of 10½ per cent on the 'B' Ordinary Shares making 15½ per cent. Although the latest date for conversion of the 'B' Ordinary Shares into Ordinary Shares is 31st March, 1972, it remains the intention of the directors that the rate of dividend on the Ordinary Shares should be brought progressively into line with that paid on the 'B' Ordinary Shares, and the Board will have this in mind when the final dividends are considered.

The turnover of the Groups for the six months ended 30th September, 1969, was:

	£m.
Engineering	79
Industrial	52
Telecommunications, Electronics and Automation	132
Cables, Wire and Components	59
Consumer Products	38
Overseas	75

These figures include certain inter-group sales, such as U.K. exports to overseas companies, and deliveries of ancillary equipment, cables and components to other units for incorporation into finished equipment and systems. They exclude the sales of the Special Products Group of English Electric, the Supertension Cables Division of AEI, and other activities disposed of during the current financial year, as well as the turnover of English Electric Canberra and Lightning aircraft, central research laboratories, etc.

, 1969

25-9-69 S. Telegraph

Merseyside Soviet that failed

CLOSE-UP INQUIRY

"IT'S not cancelled, just postponed," said one of the men behind last week's abortive bid to stage the first workers' factory take-over in Britain. He was standing with the picket line outside Liverpool's Town Hall, under banners proclaiming "Sack Weinstock" (head of the General Electric-English Electric combine).

Inside, Mr. Weinstock and Mr. Benn, the Minister of Technology, local M.P.s and union

The Financial Times Monday December 15 1969

Labour News

GEC-EE shop stewards fear more jobs cuts

BY MICHAEL HAND, LABOUR REPORTER

Sunday Times 14 Sept 69

Weinstock workers threaten takeover

By Eric Jacobs

ON FRIDAY morning Mr Arnold Weinstock, Sir Jack Scamp and Mr Anthony Wedgwood-Benn will file into Liverpool town hall to discuss with local councillors, trade unionists and M.P's, ways of softening the harsh impact on Merseyside of 3,000 redundancies at three G.E.C.-English Electric plants in the area.

Meanwhile, if shop stewards' plans work, the factories will be taken over by their 12,000 employees and run normally—without benefit of management. It could be the first-ever British—a number of "prominent dockers."

On the other side of the fence, the Institute for Workers' Control is lending technical advice and publishing a pamphlet that will analyse the role of G.E.C. and the Government in bringing about the threat of redundancies. To date, the Institute can claim no concrete achievement. But there are several prominent middle-rank union officials among its members, and it has attracted to its conferences speakers of the status of Hugh Scanlon, president of the engineers' union (A.E.F.). It also has wide inter... contacts. ...

try, which buys most of it, ordered in the middle-1960s according to the prescriptions of Labour's National Plan. Even the Plan's modest four per cent. growth rate for the economy turned out to be too much however, so it had to be shaved down, and the demand for generating machinery had to go down with it. Hence the loss of jobs. But isn't that just what you have to expect, they say, under the present system of unplanned, privately-owned economic relationships?

But it would be... gest...

GEC workers kill leaders' takeover plan

Guardian 18-9-69

By GEOFFREY WHITELEY

A shop stewards' plan for a workers' takeover at three GEC-English Electric plants on Merseyside appeared to collapse yesterday in the face of boos and angry scenes at a meeting of about 5,000 rank-and-file workers. The stewards' "action committee" retreated into emergency meetings of its own as a new workers' leader, opposed to the takeover, emerged.

Opponents of the plan to occupy the three factories marched in procession to the meeting, outside the biggest factory on the East Lancashire Road. They carried banners and placards with slogans including: "Action committee out," "GEC not USSR," and "Union take-off, not take-over."

The planned workers' coup has become a rout of militant solidarity not because it was tried and failed, nor because anyone was afraid to lead the British working classes into a new form of industrial action. The most probable reason—unpalatable though it may be in some quarters—why the plan for a workers' takeover was overturned yesterday is that individual self-protection proved stronger than the solidarity of labour.

Yesterday's meeting was held outside the former...

GEC-EE management has clearly won the battle for control at the only plant that really mattered. Merseyside still faces the problem of how to come to terms with the redundancies, if the rationalisation proposals are carried out.

This is the heart of the problem which remains unsolved, workers' takeover or not. The recent high unemployment figures have pushed Merseyside's percentage of jobless workers to 4.1 per cent—almost double the national average—which means that 30,000 people in the area are without work.

The effect of making 3,000 GEC-EE workers unemployed would...

TUC puts out fire

By KEITH HARPER

The TUC's newly-established fire brigade team, one of its "on-the-spot" dispute committees, has met with success at the first time of asking.

A new gambit in the industrial game

GUARDIAN

GEOFFREY WHITELEY 27.8.69

on the proposed workers' takeover

Arnold Weinstock

WHATEVER criticisms are made of the British worker's militancy—justified or otherwise—the forms of his "industrial action" are usually predictable. Seldom, if ever before in this country, has a group of workers departed from the strike or go-slow tactics to attempt what GEC-English Electric employees on Merseyside now propose.

Shop stewards who are leading the red-hot wave of protest over the company's intention to make 3,000 of its employees of Merseyside redundant, have announced that they will occupy and "take over" the group's three big factories in the area on September 19. On the face of it, the plan is a wildly improbable attempt to relive some of the workers' glories of Paris last May, when the Renault plant was briefly taken over; alternatively, a political pamphleteer's dream.

The Merseyside shop stewards are, however, in deadly earnest, and the seriousness of their threat can only be truly assessed against the background of deep anger and bitterness which the redundancy proposals have generated on Merseyside. They have come to the conclusion that the traditional methods of protest used by the British worker are useless in this situation. Something new has to be tried.

Strikes, overtime bans, and sit-down protests have been held, but experienced trade unionists are realistic enough to accept that such moves are unlikely to have any serious effect on the company's proposals. The stewards see their "take-over" plan as the sort of dramatic move which—even in failure—could cause acute embarrassment to the GEC-English Electric management, and in particular to Mr Arnold Weinstock, managing director of the group, who is the object of most criticisms.

The take-over is planned for September 19, shortly before the joint committee is due to meet to discuss the final plans for trimming down the group's labour force. The stewards intend to tell the management formally of their decision to take over control on September 18, giving them the option of staying at home on the following day, or of being prevented from carrying out their normal duties.

Whatever security measures GEC-English Electric intend to take at the three large factories—which employ a total of 12,000 — the stewards' announcement presents the management with a difficult problem. To stop them from entering the factory would amount to a lock-out of 12,000 employees—a move that would be guaranteed to provoke supporting strike action at the group's other factories. To evict them with police help would create exactly the sort of anti-management publicity that the workers want. But to allow the "take-over" to go ahead would be to embarrass GEC-English Electric as no British management has ever been embarrassed before.

Workers' take-overs in the past have had some measure of success. One of the best examples was the occupancy of the Ford factory in Michigan led by the American labour leader, John L. Lewis, during the depression, as an attack on Henry Ford's anti-union policy. Lewis won the day and secured recognition for the unions. Indian workers have for years specialised in a particularly violent form of take-over—known as the *gherao*—in which factories are surrounded and managements smoked out.

Legally, the workers' position in a take-over is obscure, simply because there are no known precedents. The main risks they seem likely to run are civil actions for trespass (assuming damage can be proved) and incitement to breach industrial contracts. It is thought that the police would only evict workers from occupied factories if they were satisfied that a breach of the peace was certain. Experience in university take-overs has, however, shown that police are reluctant to intervene.

Trade union leaders on Merseyside have little to say about the proposed take-over, but are privately in favour of the attempt. If it achieves nothing else, it could generate enough noise and upset to force GEC-English Electric to temper their labour cuts.

Works control plan 'futile'

GUARDIAN 11 Sept 69

BY OUR LABOUR STAFF

Mr Peter Shore, Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, said yesterday that the proposed "workers' takeover" of three GEC-English Electric factories on Merseyside would achieve nothing.

At a press conference in Liverpool at the start of ... North-west ... the ...

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February 1970

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Big flame flickering

JOHN SCHUBERT

DO YOU REMEMBER *The Big Flame*? It was a TV play, done a year ago on BBC1, written by Jim Allen, produced and directed by Tony Garnett and Kenneth Loach (they more recently made the film *Kes* discussed in ANARCHY 107). They used the "fictional documentary" technique to tell a story about a workers' takeover into a stay-in, carry on working, strike, which all the power of the state: its police, its stool-pigeons, its army and its criminal courts, are deployed to crush, so terrified is the establishment of the flame lit by these fictional Merseyside dockers.

While we were watching it, the play was utterly convincing. It was only after it was over that the viewers' doubts emerged. Could it really happen like this? Could a handful of "leaders", even such compelling personalities as were portrayed by Norman Rossington and Godfrey Quigley in the play, produce such unanimity, such solidarity, and such lack of argument as we saw? Were there no sceptics, no ideological opponents, no folk with other fish to fry, among these disputatious Liverpool dockers? And if not, would the takeover really collapse when the leaders fall into the trap (a punch-up with the police) laid for them by the authorities?

All the same, as George Melly commented at the time, what the play did do, "was to make a serious attempt to suggest a way out of a social dilemma; a plea for what was in effect anarchist-syndicalism. . . . There was at least a strong case made as to the possibility of society organising itself without the necessity for a coercive central authority. What's more, it was said with great force and some nobility."

WITHIN AN INCH OF DOING IT

Then, last September, the big flame was very nearly lit, not in a telly-drama, but on the real Merseyside, not in the docks, but in the factories of the GEC-English Electric combine. Threatened with unemployment as a result of Arnold Weinstock's successful takeover bids in the electrical engineering industry, the workers very nearly made a takeover bid of their own.

On 22 September, 1969, *The Times* remarked that, "The industrialist can sleep a little easier this week. No more need his rest be troubled by the nightmare in which he drives up to the factory

gates to find them locked against him. The workers won't be at the barricades. The managing director won't be locked in his own office. For last week saw the first big British attempt at a factory takeover end in a rout."

When Mark Twain read his own obituary in the paper, he sent a telegram to say, "The report of my death was an exaggeration." Is the obituary in *The Times* of the workers' takeover just as premature? The *Sunday Telegraph* asked on September 29, "But how much backing has the idea of workers' control got? It remained a fantasy for British workers until last week when a group of men, acting on their own got within an inch of doing it. They failed because most of the workers called on to help were at a factory where their jobs are reasonably secure, and they did not want to jeopardise them. But what might happen in a case where self-interest does not have the big battalions?" Certainly the answer depends on the proportion of the workers actually involved who are persuaded that the occupation of the factory is a strategy worth supporting. In this issue of ANARCHY we present the opinions of a member of our contemporaries on the lessons of the Liverpool factory occupation that hasn't happened—yet.

THE TAKEOVER RACE

When the wave of takeover bids among the controllers of British industry began in the 1950s, it was largely because shrewd readers of balance sheets realised that many firms had grossly undervalued their capital assets: in particular, in view of the boom in the property market, their freehold property. Hence the takeover fever in the chain stores in those days. The second wave of takeover bids occurred whether because it was the classical way of eliminating competitors, or because it was simpler to acquire some other firm's plant than invest in additional plant oneself. The most recent and largest flood of takeovers has been Government-supported, and sometimes Government-inspired. (Simpletons like ourselves, for example, puzzled at how on earth Leylands could have acquired the financial resources to take over the giant British Motor Holdings, failed to notice the millions of pounds of Government money lent them by the Industrial Reorganisation Commission to enable them to do so.) The financial scale of takeovers and mergers has increased enormously in the last few years. In 1965 it was £121m., in 1966 £535m., in 1967 £1,000m., and in 1968, over £3,000m.

BALANCE OF POWER

The theory of trade union law and trade union practice in this country rests on the notion that the combination of workers enables an employee to contract on equal terms with his employer. This was, of course, the basis of the original trade union legislation, like the Trade Union Act of 1871 and the Trade Disputes Act of 1906. It was also the basis of the argument of Hugh Clegg's influential book *A New Approach to Industrial Democracy* (discussed at length by Geoffrey Ostergaard in the second issue of ANARCHY). Even if the

Both sides in the argument have an impeccable case, if you accept their premises. Mr. Weinstock, as chairman of the giant combine he put together himself out of GEC, AEI and English Electric, is faced with a heterogeneous collection of diesel engine and heavy electrical plant at a time when a demand for some of their products is falling. The only question for him is where to apply the misery. Should it be at the Manchester, Rugby or Stafford complexes which are already underused? Or should it be Larne in Northern Ireland, where unemployment is more than 8 per cent—double that of Merseyside?

The Institute for Workers' Control's version is a sophisticated brand of anti-capitalism. Why, it asks, is demand for heavy electrical equipment falling? Because the British electricity supply industry, which buys most of it, ordered in the middle-1960s according to the prescriptions of Labour's National Plan. Even the Plan's modest four per cent growth rate for the economy turned out to be too much however, so it had to be shaved down, and the demand for generating machinery had to go down with it. Hence the loss of jobs. But isn't that just what you have to expect, they say, under the present system of unplanned, privately-owned economic relationships?

—*Sunday Times*, 14 September, 1969

But GEC-EE is expecting a turnover of £1,000m. in the current year, which was really the starting point of the factory takeover attempt. The militants' argument was that GEC-EE were doing all right and the only "rationalisation" needed locally was a bigger drive for export orders combined with a more efficient running of the plants.

One of the Action Committee members said: "We could have gone in there for three or four days and run it ourselves, without all the overheads of administration and all that. I believe we could have run the works, fixed up our own sources of raw materials and got our own export orders."

—*Sunday Telegraph*, 29 September, 1969

The defeat of a particular strategy does not affect the general implications of the case: widespread redundancies on Merseyside are a threat to an already depressed area, and it is socially unjustifiable that valuable skills should be jettisoned when the developing countries have prodigious shortages of equipment (such as generators) which those skills could overcome. The Institute's survey of the demands for electrical generating equipment in developing countries is now well advanced, and will be presented to the shop stewards as soon as possible.

K. FLEET, Secretary IWC,
in a letter to the *Guardian*, 20 September, 1969

kind of argument used by Clegg was valid when he wrote his book, the gigantic growth of big corporations has certainly changed the situation today. As Alasdair Clayre put it in an article in *The Times* (19 September, 1969) there has been a change "in the nature of the corporations that working people must confront, into larger combines, sometimes international, able to shift their production to low wage areas or away from countries where union opposition—or even Government welfare legislation—have been specially effective. The balance of power which Hugh Clegg saw as the guarantee of industrial democracy has tilted against unions and even against potentially radical Governments. . . ."

By 1968 there were more companies than countries with incomes greater than the Gross National Product of Ireland. "In a few years, 200 to 300 giant multi-national enterprises will dominate Western production, and they will be extensively interlocked at the management level and integrated through numerous joint ventures," commented Charles Levinson writing about the "Giants out of control" in the *Guardian* (8 December, 1969).

GOVERNMENT BEHIND TAKEOVERS

Graham Turner, in his new book *Business in Britain* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969) remarks that it was precisely because members of the Government "believed that it was meaningless to speak of the permanent independence of British industry and that the best hope was to fatten up British companies so that they might wield effective influence in the international mergers of the future" that the Industrial Reorganisation Commission was set up in 1966 with £150m. of public money at its disposal, to encourage mergers and takeovers. Not surprisingly, the IRC has found itself taking the opposite point of view to that of the Monopolies Commission: "There is little doubt that the IRC helped prevent certain very large mergers (that, for example, between GEC and English Electric) from being referred to the Commission for scrutiny. The IRC, indeed, has even found itself in the slightly curious position of promoting a merger between the trawling interests of Associated Fisheries and the Ross Group when the Commission had previously turned down a complete merger between the two companies. (See ANARCHY 86: *Fishermen and Workers' Control.*) In deciding (under the extremely vague terms of the 1965 Monopolies and Mergers Act) whether a particular alliance constituted a *prima facie* danger to the public interest, the Board of Trade has very frequently preferred amalgamation to investigation."

THE RISE OF ARNOLD WEINSTOCK

Arnold Weinstock, armed with a degree in statistics from the London School of Economics, and experience in property development, married the daughter of Michael Sobell, of Radio and Allied Holdings, became a director of the firm, and when it was taken over by GEC, became first a director of GEC and, in 1963, Managing Director. He then set about a wholesale reorganisation of the firm. Between 1961 and 1967 profits rose from £10m. to nearly £24m.

In the spring of 1967, says Turner, "Ronald Grierson, the IRC's first managing director, told Weinstock that he wanted to take a look at the electrical industry with a view to rationalisation. Weinstock replied that, so far as he could see, AEI was the stumbling block." (Associated Electrical Industries was itself an industrial giant, its two largest components being Metropolitan Vickers at Manchester and British Thomson Houston at Rugby.) "Grierson agreed and took from his pocket a scheme which involved a merger between the two. Weinstock, however, declined the proposition. 'We gave him the piece of paper right back,' he said, 'but it did bring the question into the forefront of our minds.' " Soon afterwards GEC made its takeover bid, and "after a bitter battle" the firm was taken over. "Rationalisation now went swiftly ahead. GEC had already broken down AEI's business into thirty rough product groups and these were swiftly brought together with the comparable businesses in GEC." In the first year after the takeover, the labour force of the new joint company fell by 18,000 of which about 10,000 were actual redundancies.

Weinstock had by this time already begun talking to the other large electrical company, English Electric, about a possible rationalisation of some parts of the heavy end of his newly acquired business: there was speculation that he might be willing to sell off some of GEC-AEI's activities to Lord Nelson. At one stage in the talks, Weinstock suggested the possibility of a full merger, but got no response from Nelson. He also mentioned the thought to the IRC, but was told to wait. Then on August 21, 1968, Plessey made a bid for English Electric and, in doing so, helped drive the company into Weinstock's waiting arms." On 6 September the shares of GEC and EE leapt in value as their merger was announced, and on 11 September the Government endorsed their merger. Lord Nelson was rewarded by being appointed Chairman of the new joint company.

The growth of the Weinstock empire has probably not yet ceased. The 1968/69 Report of the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation notes that the combine now controls 40 per cent of the "entire UK electrical/electronics industry", and it goes on to say that "there remain many opportunities for further reorganisation".

WHAT'S IN IT FOR WEINSTOCK?

"Some of us here," Weinstock told Graham Turner, "have the feeling that we are involved in a crusade." Turner notes that "he belongs to no committees, goes to few official dinners, makes no speeches. By his abstinence, he may even increase his unpopularity: not only does he not say the right things or do the right things, he does not even want the right things. In his own words, he minds the business. This concentration of effort has proved not unprofitable. He has acquired a 12,000-acre estate in Wiltshire, a flat in Grosvenor Square, and a third share in a string of racehorses (which he owns jointly with Michael Sobell) and which, apart from his family, is his main interest outside the business."

He also holds 4,600,000 ordinary 5s. shares in GEC, worth

about £6m. His pay from GEC-EE in 1968/69 was £23,000.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE SHAREHOLDERS?

Labour Research made a calculation of the effect of the takeover and the merger on the shareholders of the three companies, as follows:

"Apart from the increased rate of profit resulting from the mergers (sales up in the 3 years by 22 per cent, whilst trading profit has risen by 36 per cent) and the increase in dividends paid out by 25 per cent (plus the interest on cash and stock), the shareholders have made large capital gains. Below we trace the varying fortunes of shareholders in the three companies since 1960.

GENERAL ELECTRIC CO. 100 GEC £1 shares bought in 1960 would have cost about £214. In 1960 they would have brought in an income of £10, in 1965 £21, and in 1968/69 almost £34. The shareholders would now have 968 5s. GE-EEC shares worth £1,280 (26s. 6d. on 4 September) i.e. for every £100 invested in GEC in 1960 a shareholder's income would have risen from £4 14s. in 1960 to £15 16s. in 1968/69 and his shares would now be worth £570.

ASSOCIATED ELECTRICAL INDUSTRIES. 100 AEI £1 shares purchased in 1960 would have cost £295. In 1960 they would have brought in an income of £15, in 1965 £13, and in 1968/69 £9 10s. (but the AEI shareholder would have also received in cash from GEC £125, worth £8 15s. a year at 7 per cent). The shareholder would now have £125 cash plus 248 5s. GE-EEC 'B' shares worth £328, i.e. for every £100 invested in AEI in 1960 a shareholder's income would have risen from £5 2s. in 1960 to £6 4s. in 1968/69, and his £100 would now be worth £154 in shares and cash.

ENGLISH ELECTRIC CO. 100 EE £1 shares purchased in 1960 would have cost £239. In 1960 they would have brought in an income of £10, in 1965 £13, and in 1968/69 £11 8s. (but the EE shareholder would also have received stock worth £83, worth £5 16s. a year at 7 per cent). The shareholder would now have 200 GE-EEC 5s. shares worth £286 plus stock worth £83, i.e. for every £100 invested in EE in 1960 a shareholder's income would have risen from £4 4s. in 1960 to £7 6s. in 1968/69 and his £100 would now be worth £145 in shares and stock.

"The General Electric shareholder has easily done the best over the last 10 years with his income rising by 236 per cent, and the value of his assets by 500 per cent. It is not surprising that the AEI and EE shareholders decided to throw their lot in with Arnold Weinstock and GEC."

Since then, an Interim Statement issued on 17 December, 1969, based on trading results for the six months ended 30 September, forecasts profits for the year 1969/70 in excess of £65m. before convertible loan stock interest and taxation. This forecast compares with £40m. for GEC-AEI for the year ended 31 March, 1969, and £19m. for English Electric for the fifteen months ended on that date.

In a book published last autumn (*Take-Over*, Iliffe, 30s.), Sir Joseph Latham, who as chief executive of Associated Electrical Industries, strenuously resisted the GEC takeover of his firm, describes shareholders as often confused, ignorant, greedy and short-sighted, and deplores the fact that they should have the over-riding—indeed virtually the only voice—in matters of this magnitude.

He does not, however, suggest that AEI's *workers* should have had any say in their own future.

The fiasco was basically due to the failure of the Shop Stewards' Committee to carry the workers with them. This in turn was due to a real lack of basic information among the rank and file as to the actual aims, objectives and methods of the planned occupation. There was widespread confusion as to whether it was to be a symbolic affair, lasting at most three days, or something more serious and permanent. There were substantial and realistic misgivings about the viability of actually running a factory in isolation within the present system—even for three days. And there were suspicions that the Action Committee was trying to sell them a pig in a poke. Much of the workers' opposition was due to a lack of information and to justified doubts rather than to any lack of militancy. The company and its pawns were able to capitalise on these mistakes and drive a wedge between the mass of the men and the Action Committee.

But much more than just *information* was needed by the rank and file at GEC. What was needed was mass *involvement*. The workers should not just have been presented with a plan. The whole campaign should have been preceded by shop meetings, discussing the pros and cons, especially in the weaker shops and factories. There should have been many more leaflets, many more mass meetings, which should have been regarded as part of the process of planning. But most important, workers should not only have dominated the planning and decision-taking but should also have directly controlled the application of any decisions taken. This should have been made absolutely clear. If this had been done, the spectacle of a small group of company men breaking up and taking over a mass meeting could never have happened. . . .

It is ironic that a movement with the aim of "workers' control" should suffer a set-back because of a failure to achieve mass working class participation. This fact reveals dangerous ambiguities in the movement for "workers' control" which should be exposed now rather than be allowed to distort the movement. Everything was "laid on" for the occupation and running of the plants, down to the smallest detail (even printed passes had been prepared), but the workers were kept in the dark. This appalling state of affairs shows the depth of the prevailing confusion within the movement.

—SOLIDARITY (North London) Vol. 6, No. 2

THE PUBLIC FUNDS INVOLVED

In 1960 the Government put pressure on the aircraft firms to merge in the British Aircraft Corporation. English Electric was given a 40 per cent holding in the new company. When the IRC was set up it arranged the takeover by English Electric of Elliott-Automation, giving the firm a £15 million loan (interest free until August 1969 and thereafter at 8 per cent). In 1967 and 1968 the IRC gave strong support to the GEC takeovers of AEI and EE respectively. Apart from the £10m. still outstanding on the IRC loan to EE, the different ramifications of the companies have drawn enormously on Government funds. The IRC has subscribed £260,000 to British Nuclear Design and Construction in which GEC-EE have 25 per cent. It made £4m. available for the Reyrolle Parsons/Bruce Peebles merger, and £2.5m. available to facilitate the BICC takeover of part of AEI's cable interests. *Labour Research* (October 1969) reports that:

"The Ministry of Technology will put up something like £17m. over 4 years to achieve the establishment of International Computer (Holdings). In 1961 English Electric received a £4m. loan from the Board of Trade under the 1960 Local Employment Act at 5½ per cent (the current rate being nearer 8 per cent) of which £2m. is still outstanding. Also under the 1960 Local Employment Act, Elliott-Automation received a loan of which £1.2m. is still outstanding. The companies have benefited in full from all Government grants to Development Areas and from Investment Grants. In 1967/68 the three companies received from the Government a total of about £6m. in investment grants."

It would be nice to know what the public (apart from shareholders) has got in exchange for this vast investment of public funds.

The Industrial Reorganisation Corporation, in supporting the takeover (with the result that Sir Charles Wheeler of AEI resigned from the IRC, while the IRC Director-General, Ronald Grierson, left the IRC in 1968 to become Vice-Chairman of GEC!), made as a condition the companies' promise "to confer with the appropriate Trade Unions and Government Departments about any matters arising from the merger which would significantly affect the workpeople, and with appropriate Government Departments about other action having an important bearing on the Government's regional policies." (13 September, 1968.) It would be interesting again to know the extent to which this kind of consultation was in the slightest degree affected by Mr. Weinstock's plans for rationalisation. When the AEI closures were announced, Frank Chapple, as general secretary of the electricians' and plumbers' union, declared that there was little that could be done, and that the company had argued its case logically. And when, after the announcement of the Liverpool redundancies, Mr. Peter Shore, Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, toured the district, he again declared that the electrical engineering industry had over-expanded, and that Government regional policy did not mean there could be no closures in development areas. (*Guardian*, 11 September, 1969.)

He also threw in his opinion that the proposed workers' takeover "would achieve nothing".

SO WHAT DID THE WORKERS GET?

In its October issue, *Labour Research* attempted to tot up the redundancy list to date. It found that,

In the gigantic electrical scramble there have been many casualties, but no casualties among shareholders, or reductions in shareholders' profits. To date GEC-EE have announced four major redundancies involving 16,220 employees.

1968, FEBRUARY	
AEI Telecommunications factory at Woolwich	5,500
AEI Telecommunications factory at Sydenham	400
Research Labs at Blackheath and Harlow	200
1968, MAY 9	
Engineering and Light Industrial Group	
Witton, Birmingham	1,650
Wythenshawe, Manchester	300
Aldridge	430
1969, FEBRUARY 4	
Heavy Engineering	
Willesden, London	1,100
Witton, Birmingham	1,100
Newton-le-Willows	1,100
Rugby	140
1969, AUGUST 5	
Power Engineering	
Richard Whiffen, Ashton-under-Lyne	140
Whetstone (Laboratories) London	230
Walthamstow (Empire Works) London	810
Netherton, Liverpool	1,400
Accrington	285
Stafford	305
Thornbury, Bradford	50
Fazakerley, Liverpool	305
Mosley Road, Manchester	930
Trafford Park, Manchester	810

"To the above redundancies can be added those indirectly resulting from the GEC-EE reorganisation. The Erith, Kent, C. A. Parsons & Co. factory is to be closed following AEI first selling its Erith factory to C. A. Parsons & Co., then GEC after the merger with AEI, selling its shares in C. A. Parsons, and C. A. Parsons' eventual merger with A. Reyrolle & Co. and Bruce Peebles. Similarly the sale of some of the AEI cable interests to BICC raises the spectre of redundancy."

REDUNDANCY AT HARLOW

At Harlow New Town in Essex, the firm Sunvic Controls was taken over by AEI in the early 1960s, and by the time of the GEC-AEI takeover in 1967 there were three AEI factories in the town. On December 22, 1967, just as the workers were knocking off for Christmas, it was announced without any prior consultation, that the process control factory was to close, and that its work would be transferred to Leicester. Mass meetings, public criticism and an overtime ban resulted in a certain amount of reconsideration by the

management, for, on 31 December, the *Observer* reported that, "The new management is at pains to reassure unions about the scale of redundancies these changes will mean. It was stressed last week that no final decision has been made about the future of the AEI process control plant at Harlow which is one of the first factories to feel the draught. It is now clear that the new GEC/AEI managing director, Mr. Arnold Weinstock, has not made up his mind about the new arrangements for the plant's workers. This emerged after a week of confusion and dismay among Harlow employees after it had been announced that the company was to be run from Leicester."

Finally it was announced that work was to be transferred to Harlow for most production workers, though the research laboratory (employing 120) was to close. But by this time the closing of the much larger AEI plant at Woolwich had been announced. Stan Newens, Harlow MP, reported that, "Unfortunately, since the news of the reprieve at Harlow, morale at the factory has sagged. Despite the promises, lack of work has persuaded many employees voluntarily to seek new jobs. Stories that products formerly manufactured at Harlow under licence are now being imported from the USA have gained currency and produced a feeling of resignation and apathy about the future of GEC in the town." (*Trade Union Register*, 1969.)

AND AT WOOLWICH

On 1 February, 1968, GEC-AEI announced their plans for closing the Woolwich factory, making 5,500 men redundant. The Woolwich workers did not accept the sackings quietly, *Solidarity* (West London) reported, "on the contrary they reacted furiously but not furiously enough. They went through the usual safe channels of contained protest, i.e. a mass walk-out to a meeting at a local cinema. This was followed by a coffin-carrying procession through the streets. They also voted for an overtime ban. This is of course completely ineffective when a factory is being closed down. The most useful thing they did was to black all work transferred to other factories. This eventually led to 300 men being laid off at Woolwich. 1,000 others then came out on strike and a few days later the men were reinstated. At this stage the idea of a workers' takeover was born and received some support, but it died an early death. The result of all their actions was to ensure that management, trade union officials and Government worked full time to effect a smooth phasing of the sackings and the gradual closure of the factory until now only about 1,000 are left. A lot of the men were forced into lower-paid jobs and about 200 are still unemployed. So much for redeployment."*

> The New Opportunities Association is run by Ronald Wright, an ex-appointments consultant, with a vocation for placing unemployed executives. His association was set up in January, provoked into being by the merger casualties. A charitable organisation, it is supported by eight companies, including GEC. . . . Each firm pays an annual subscription of £500. In addition, Wright gets his finance from charging the sacking employer. ("They have a moral duty to give their man a fresh start," he says.)
>
> —*New Society*, 17 April, 1969

THE LIVERPOOL SCENE

On 13 August, about 11,000 workers from the three Merseyside factories of GEC-EE staged a one-day strike in protest against the 3,000 redundancies proposed for the three plants. A meeting of between two and three thousand of them held that day at Liverpool stadium agreed on a programme of action including a series of sit-in strikes, a ban on overtime, a demand that the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions should call for a one-day nation-wide strike throughout the factories of the combine, a demand that any work transferred to other factories as a result of the Merseyside redundancies should be declared black, a demand that the industry be brought under public ownership with workers' control, *and* the proposal for the takeover of the factories, production to be maintained. On this point, the interesting article on the events published in *Solidarity* (West London) No. 1, remarks that, "It was during this meeting that Frank Johnston, District Secretary of the AEF, suggested in a speech the taking over of the factories. To many people's surprise this was endorsed almost unanimously by those present. Unfortunately, out of about 10,000 that came out on strike that day only about 2,000-3,000 were present at the stadium."

On 21 August there were sit-in strikes at two of the factories, and meanwhile the Action Committee went ahead with preparations for the occupation of the three factories, intended to begin on 19 September, the date fixed for the meeting at Liverpool Town Hall of Arnold Weinstock, Jack Scamp, Anthony Wedgwood-Benn, local MPs, councillors and trade unionists, to discuss not how to avoid the redundancies, but how to soften their blow.

On 16 September, the management issued a leaflet to employees declaring that the proposed occupation "is irresponsible, unconstitutional and, if implemented, could be prejudicial to the employment prospects in those Liverpool businesses which are unaffected by the Company's reorganisation plans. . . . Employees will qualify for payment in the normal way except in the event of unofficial action occurring which prevents management from carrying out its legitimate functions. In those circumstances the Company could not hold itself responsible for payment to any employees occupying its factories, or any part of its factories, so long as management is not in complete control."

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*This, and subsequent quotations from *Solidarity* (West London) come from that group's issue No. 1, obtainable for 6d. plus postage from W. Duncan, 15 Taylor's Green, London, W.3.

TAKEOVER PLANS ABANDONED

On 17 September a meeting was held outside the factory in East Lancs Road. This was the meeting copiously reported on television and in the papers. The account in *Solidarity* (West London) describes it as follows:

"The meeting had just assembled and was fairly well behaved. There had been some shouts directed against the platform and there was one banner proclaiming THE CLERICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE WORKERS UNION WANTS A VOTE. Anyway a couple of minutes after they were assembled, around the corner from Fusegear came Bill Bewley and his merry men. Now this particular factory is not to suffer any cutback in labour; there are even plans for its expansion. They were well armed with banners stating FUSEGEAR SAY NO SIT-IN, ACTION COMMITTEE OUT, LET THE VOICE OF THE WORKERS COUNT, which were prepared inside the factory with the help of the management, and at least half of the 300 or so were actually administrative workers. Add this to Bill Bewley's new loudhailer and what do you get? A put up job by management! The mob pushed their way to the front where they proceeded to break up the meeting. Every time somebody tried to speak they were shouted down. Sadly a lot of the other workers seized on Bewley's mob as a platform to show their distrust of the Action Committee. The result of all this was that Bewley was pushed onto the platform by his mates. He shoved through three resolutions: 1. Occupation off. 2. Overtime ban lifted. 3. Vote of no confidence in the Action Committee."

This account goes on: "I don't honestly think that the majority could hear what he had to say and certainly the majority didn't vote at all. This opinion is strengthened by the fact that when they went back to work there was no question of the overtime ban being lifted and though the Action Committee as such had undoubtedly been rejected by the workers, all the stewards received a vote of confidence from their members. . . . By way of contrast, the following morning Netherton had a meeting which was quiet and democratic. The voting was 60% against the occupation, 40% for. It ended with a unanimous vote of confidence in their shop stewards. After the weeks of mass media and management attacks, coupled with the disastrous meeting of the day before, Netherton deserve some praise for their militancy. It is unfortunate they did not go ahead on their own as a great number of people would have rallied behind them."

So there was no takeover on 19 September, and the meeting at the Town Hall between Arnold Weinstock and Anthony Wedgwood Benn, Minister of Technology, resulted in no modification of the redundancy proposals. Mr. Benn toured the three factories and, according to *The Times* (20 September), "repeated that some 24,000 new jobs were in train for Merseyside over the next four or five years, 11,000 of them in the engineering industry. But he admitted that the calculation was not new, and cynical observers of the Mersey scene recall the same figure being used perennially by successive governments since the war."

> Some studies show that workers see themselves as the *owners* of their jobs. The occupation, rather than any other technique, would express for the worker where he feels ownership of his job ought to belong.
>
> The law, apart from the very limited provisions of the Contracts of Employment Act, the Redundancy Payments Act and the earnings-related supplements, gives no recognition to notions of job property. Indeed, an occupation is unlawful. The GEC workers will be in serious breach of their employment contracts and thereby liable to summary dismissal—i.e. their jobs could disappear overnight. GEC might also seek damages and injunctions against the ringleaders for torts (civil wrongs) such as trespass and conspiracy. Non-compliance with injunction terms could lead to committal proceedings for contempt of court. Finally, the company might want to get the police to evict the employees. However, on the LSE analogy, the police will not evict trespassers or even enter the premises unless a breach of the peace occurs or is likely, or unless some crime is committed.
>
> Next week will reveal whether Arnold Weinstock has helped launch an innovation perhaps as interesting as a better profits-earnings ration for GEC.
>
> —*New Society*, 11 September, 1969

THE REASONS WHY

A number of inquests have been made in the left wing journals on the failure of the occupation plans, most of them seeing the secrecy with which the Action Committee worked as the reason why the meetings on the days just before the occupation was due to begin as the reason why it was so easy to swing the majority vote against it. The most detailed discussion of this point comes from the report already quoted from *Solidarity* (West London):

"The Action Committee thought that this (the vote at the stadium meeting on 13 August) was sufficient backing and neglected to consult properly with the rest of the workers. By failing to do this they were on a sticky wicket from the start. Nevertheless, Netherton, one of the factories to be completely closed down, was at that time solidly behind the occupation. The reason the Action Committee gave for not consulting with the workers was that the management would have got to hear of their plans. The obvious answer to that is, whatever advantage they would have gained would have been more than wiped out by the workers having full control over what was going on. The obvious time to discuss the takeover would have been at the two sit-ins which took place. A sit-in as such presents no

threat to management, especially when a factory is due for a complete shut-down, but it is useful insofar as it provides a suitable forum in which to discuss a takeover once the workers are actually inside the factory. Then it can be discussed in practical terms with attention to the detailed running of the factory by the workers, e.g. the organisation of raw materials; catering; the formation of security groups; contacting of workers in the service industries, market distribution, etc. The discussions themselves would be the means for breaking down the enforced artificial barriers between the shopfloor and white-collar workers. Proper discussion also ensures COMPLETE INVOLVEMENT of the men with the idea of workers taking over a factory and running it. Even if they did not get any further at that particular time the discussions would still have been worth all the action committees put together. Yet given these valid criticisms of the Action Committee, there is no doubt they worked hard and were

Contrary to most Leftist reaction, I found the action of the "counter-revolutionaries" very encouraging. Their reaction to the somewhat secretive union leaders is anarchism personified! The poor old *Morning Star* wept at the workers' refusal to go along with the takeover, but in effect this action has made it very clear to any CP outfit who had dreams of taking over Merseyside that it will never come about. I am not, of course, suggesting that the plan was inspired by a political faction, it was just inevitable that the Action Committee laid themselves open to comparison with political sectarian strategy through a combination of inexperience and mistaken insistence on a degree of secrecy.

It now remains to pick up the remains of a brilliant tactic, talk to workers in factories where the vast majority will be affected by closure or redundancy, and hammer out every single item, possible consequence and occupational strategy until every single man there has a full picture of what is going to happen, and what part he is expected to play in it.

In a workers' industry there are only democratic committees, not dictatorial leaders. If any elite arises who see themselves as the all-powerful, they should be thrown out along with their authoritarian pretensions.

—IAN DOUGALL in *Peace News*,
26 September, 1969

The planned workers' coup has become a rout of militant solidarity not because it was tried and failed, nor because anyone was afrai to lead the British working classes into a new form of industrial action. The most probable reason—unpalatable though it may be in some quarters—why the plan for a workers' takeover was overturned yesterday is that individual self-protection proved stronger than any solidarity of labour.

—GEOFFREY WHITELEY in the *Guardian*,
18 September, 1969

sincere in their efforts to bring about the occupation. They set up sub-committees to deal with some of the points mentioned, and also called a meeting of all Merseyside shop stewards which was an unqualified success. There is no doubt that support would have been forthcoming from all over the country."

This article goes on to mention the failure of the Action Committee to issue a reply to the leaflet distributed by the employers on 16 September, and the failure to inform them of the legal consequences of the proposed occupation. "The legal aspect is one point on which the Action Committee remained insensitive to the obvious fears of the workers. Before the howls go up from all the hardened revolutionaries, nobody we talked to looked on the occupation as something which could go on forever but as a means of fighting the sack. Nobody would deny the possibilities arising from such an act but the answer to that lies in the future. What a lot of people were worried about was what would happen when it was all over, i.e. what were the legal implications of taking over? Would it, if unsuccessful, affect their redundancy pay, etc.? Nobody knew and it looked like nobody cared. The Action Committee was actually offered free legal facilities, with no strings attached, by some sympathisers two weeks before the 19th. The attitude of some members of the Action Committee was that 'all was in hand' and they felt that anyway legal niceties ultimately wouldn't matter. They were right but for the wrong reasons. If the workers, as said earlier, had been thoroughly involved and really wanted to occupy, the legal or any other threats wouldn't have mattered. They would have the strength and determination to overcome them by standing together. But in the situation of a totally new form of struggle, the men had obvious fears. In fact an occupation would have been initially a civil wrong of trespass not a criminal offence. In other words the management could have sued, say, 12,000 workers. Even at a cost of only £20 each this would have cost Weinstock about a quarter of a million pounds. Assuming he won his cases, if he lived long enough, and received the usual nominal damages of a penny or so this is not the kind of profit Weinstock is accustomed to. Also it is extremely unlikely that the redundancy payments would have been affected as this too would have cost far more than it was worth. A simple leaflet would have removed these fears. Instead it was left to the management to play on the workers' ignorance of the legal situation. The effect of a stream of propaganda would have been to constantly remind everybody involved that this heightened form of struggle was the only possible action now available, the only possible alternative to complete acceptance of the Management's unilateral decision on the fate of the men. The workers had never been consulted about the sackings. When the board of GEC had come to their decision 4,300 workers were told they would be getting the chop. So why should the workers be obliged to consult Weinstock?"

The crowd who shouted "GEC not USSR" at Mr. Frank Johnston must have been a difficult opposition if by chance he was in favour of neither's system but of a world where these were not allowed to become the two exclusive alternatives.

Suppose such arrangements at work were ever politically feasible in England. What would they mean economically? They might involve a less effective acceleration of productivity, the expenditure of time in debating and voting, the suppression of measures unpopular in the short run though necessary for long-term expansion; they could mean a failure to deal severely with offenders against rules, or with latecomers, and they could lead to much personal conflict. Would people really want such a system, even supposing it could be created?

But similar objections can be made to political democracy. It takes time and involves conflict: it is inefficient, it may lead to the postponement of measures now deemed necessary by those in power. Yet almost everyone who has had the choice has preferred it to its alternatives.

Furthermore, in places that have become "affluent"—not Britain yet, in this sense, but California for example—the main problems facing people are not the maximising of productivity and sales and the centralisation of power in order to promote these ends more efficiently, but of how to decentralise, to let more meaning seep back into individual working lives, even to slow down a runaway economy so that people can enjoy what they are making a little more.

To speak of slowing down the economies of the West would be frivolous, if they were at this moment gearing their production to meet the needs of the starving in the underdeveloped world. But this is not generally so, and without sentimentalising the elected organisations of working people it is possible to believe they are more likely to distribute a perhaps smaller surplus in accordance with human need than present-day managements responsible either to shareholders or to a doctrine of maximum centralised power.

—ALASDAIR CLAYRE in *The Times*,
19 September, 1969

The crudeness of the GEC sackings, and the disastrous effect on the company's morale, will, I'd bet, be seen later to cancel out the purely economic advantages of Weinstock's pruning.

—JEREMY BUGLER in *New Society*,
17 April, 1969

THE AFTERMATH

A two-day conference of GEC-EE shop stewards was held in Birmingham to express determination to resist further redundancies, and a further two-day conference of stewards from all over the country was held in Sheffield on 13-14 December, reflecting the widespread anticipation of more sackings. The unofficial shop stewards committee complained that the union representatives on the company's national joint consultative committee had done little more than rubber stamp the management's redundancy proposals.

"They have been allowed to call the tune in every detail," said one delegate. "If we had gone ahead with the takeover in September it would have changed the whole future of industrial negotiation in this country."

Management can only function with the consent of the workpeople to be managed.

—ARNOLD WEINSTOCK (*Liverpool Daily Echo*,
18 September, 1969)

OBSERVATIONS ON ANARCHY 104: AN ANARCHIST UTOPIA

IT IS A PITY that Lyman Tower Sargent (*An Anarchist Utopia*, ANARCHY 104) should have spoilt a good article by the superficiality of his last-but-one paragraph. Sorrier still that one of the rare references to the actual possibility of anarchistic revolution in ANARCHY should have been this. To start with, Sargent neither defined evolution nor revolution, and did not give any real distinction: unless he equated revolution with insurrection. If—as it does for most people—evolution means the gradual process of development, then there is not the slightest evidence that this is an anarchistic direction at the

moment, or is likely—without some basic change in direction—to move in this direction. Indeed the whole movement of modern society is to ever greater centralisation of power, greater development of the means of coercion, externally and internally, controlled by the state, and greater development of propaganda-conditioning means, and means to detect deviants from the orthodox. As Kingsley Widmer so admirably illustrates in his article in the same issue, the factors governing the evolution of society must be changed. But for society to evolve in anarchistic directions suggests a fundamental break here and now in the direction in which that society is developing. Such a fundamental and decisive break would take on a revolutionary character.

If evolution is used as it is used in nature: as a description of a general process of development, then it is characterised by a number of cataclysmic (fundamental) breaks in development, and no higher species of animal would have evolved if it had not been for such cataclysms, such revolutionary developments. If revolution merely means an insurrection then, of course, every little petty *coup d'etat* is a revolution and is of little interest to a libertarian; but if the word is used in an anarchist context it means a social change which abolishes one-class rule, and allows the emergence of a freer order of society; there is no reason to suppose that this would of necessity be instantaneous.

Kropotkin believed in gradualist revolution, a series of libertarian and popular anti-state activities releasing power for workers and others to form communities, co-operatives and other non-exploitative groupings, and at the same time further undermine the state and the old class order, making possible the final stage of the dispossession and displacement of capitalists and state by a federation of libertarian organisations.

Syndicalism, primarily in the industrial field, applies just this principle, believing in the creation through a number of strikes and other struggles, of an industrial unionist movement capable of displacing the old order with the social general strike. (The debate in the IWW with Daniel De Leon, hinged in part on the evolutionary-gradualist aspects of syndicalism which De Leon branded as reformist; just as the SPGB calls syndicalism reformism by blows; instead of doing damn all.)

L. T. Sargent refers to the French events of 1968 as an example of almost spontaneous rising. In what sense was it spontaneous? Were there no libertarians or other revolutionaries in France prior to May, acting against the state and trying to promulgate revolutionary ideals? Cohn-Bendit, in his book, uses the term, but specifically denies that he means unprepared, instantaneous, causeless or even unexpected—which one might have supposed is what theorists of spontaneous revolution meant—but uses the term in the strict sense of voluntary, unofficial, lacking imprimatur from vanguard revolutionary elites—in other words libertarian: which is not I suggest what L.T.S. means. In the sense of sudden and unheralded, the revolutionary movement certainly had a sudden influx of far greater numbers. This was the result, though, of the centralising and repressive industrial policies the French government had brought in as part and parcel of the managerialist rationalisation of Common Market industry, and a journal with which Cohn-Bendit was associated — *Information-Correspondence Ouvrieres* — had frequently predicted that the resistance this was engendering among workers would have revolutionary implications. It happened that this resistance coincided with an upsurge of student radical activities, and the interaction of the two not only produced the May rising last year, but has also transformed the French Left, leaving it far better prepared to cope with a future upsurge, and furthermore has forced the French government to intensify the very policies which led to the initial one.

While he is correct in saying that the failure of the revolution has meant harsher suppression, L.T.S. has however, not noticed the fact that it has not sanctioned such harsh suppression, as for instance one finds in Stalinist or fascist countries, as to be able to stamp out for a whole period further resistance. May 1968 was only a stage in a development, an evolution if L.T.S. likes, of a new French revolutionary movement.

As for the danger that the success of a revolution would only mean a new authoritarianism, this is again to take the revolutionary uprise totally out of context. Certainly if some astounding piece of political stupidity on the part of the twin Whitehall parties, led to a Jacquerie, an outburst of mass violent, unco-ordinated and undirected discontent, the only people at the moment capable of transforming such an uprise to their own benefit would be the Trotskyists, and of these probably only the SLL; but it is really absurd to think of them in any likely event materially advancing a revolutionary situation, and a revolutionary movement in Britain could only come about as the result of a far greater dissemination of libertarian ideas, for instance in such movements as the squatters, and in applying squatting techniques in an industrial field. When this happens it will mean that the revolutionary masses already have the consciousness that would prevent a seizure of power on the part of any authoritarian faction. The policies of the Labour government represent a similar growth of managerial state capitalism — see for instance how Wilson's new ministries ape the state capitalism of Russia — coupled with the fact that he has tricked the Tories both into appearing to be doctrinaire supporters of an outdated form of capitalism, and, while he activates Part II, to bleet about his failure to do the same thing in other ways. In due time these policies will produce a comparable resistance, and in these circumstances the various neo-Stalinists, as advocates of more centralised rationalisation, will be on the conservative side.

Thornton Heath LAURENS OTTER

Remembering Martin Small

MARTIN SMALL, a frequent contributor to this journal, died on December 15 after a six-month illness. He was 28. I first met him when he was 19 or 20, a first-year history student at Oxford, a vivid and attractive personality with a shock of black hair, enthusing over the most abstruse and difficult of authors. In the years since then, he seemed to me to change little, remaining very much the perpetual student in two senses. Firstly that he went on living the kind of life in which the accumulation of consumer goods and home comforts meant nothing, while philosophical arguments far into the night meant much. Secondly that he remained a scholar—his particular field of interest being William Godwin and his contemporaries and disciples, particularly in the radical movements of the nineteenth century. But whereas most historical scholars get their scholarship subsidised by holding jobs in universities, Martin had to go it alone.

He was always looking for some basic and humble but undeniably useful job which would earn him a living while giving him enough free time to follow his researches. The nearest he got to this was when he worked as a chef in the Pizza Express in Bloomsbury, where the hours and the proximity to the British Museum enabled him to pursue his reading there. Then he was lent a cottage on a remote Welsh hillside where he drafted from his 300 thousand words of notes a book on Godwin, writing to a publisher, "What I will be trying to communicate in my book is the joy and the value of the experience of reading Godwin: which is the experience of the growth and movement of a strikingly individual political consciousness which made up for in clarity and strength and resolute thoroughness whatever it lacked in subtlety (and I may include a footnote somewhere to the effect that a certain sort of subtlety of political consciousness may be not merely inappropriate but positively unpleasant . . .)." But the publisher rejected the idea of the book.

Then the sudden death of a teacher led him to take a job teaching history at Elliott School, Putney in September 1968. The children in his classes were very different from the gifted and articulate people amongst whom he had been brought up, and he threw himself into the task of making the past comprehensible to his lower-stream pupils. (In ANARCHY 17 he had reviewed Jackson and Marsden's *Education and the Working Class*, and in ANARCHY 92 he reviewed Leila Berg's book about Risinghill School.) I used to meet him in the public library painstakingly copying historical illustrations to duplicate for his classes. He persuaded the Reference Department to purchase Benedict Nicolson's beautifully illustrated but shockingly expensive monograph on the painter Joseph Wright of Derby, and then

managed to get the librarian to lend it to him to pass around his class. For his CSE form, finding nothing suitable on the subject, he wrote and duplicated a 12,000 word history of the Chinese Revolution. I think it possible that he may have found teaching to be the *métier* he was looking for, had he not fallen victim, as his father put it, to "a disease which was certain to be fatal from the moment it declared itself".

There was something unworldly about Martin in the sense that he retained a kind of innocent directness in coping with the world that most of us have either lost or never had. When I lived in Fulham and he in Marylebone, he would stay talking long after the last bus or train had gone, and then change into running shorts and singlet, strap his clothes and half a dozen books in a pack on his back and run home through the deserted streets. When this caused amusement he asked if anyone could suggest a better way of travelling by night. Similarly, realising that his unheralded late-night visits might leave his hosts with nothing to eat, he would take the precaution of baking and bringing a loaf of wholemeal bread.

As a writer he was both modest and complex. Modest, in that he never once complained about the way in which his articles were hacked about for publication. (The editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, faced with his review of Burton R. Pollin's *Godwin Criticism*, simply printed the first three pages of his sixteen-page typescript.) Complex, in that he found it difficult to write about a particular subject without a whole flow of speculations taking him further and further into the subject, or further and further from it, so that the article became a general statement about fundamental issues. When he *was* given space to develop his theme, for example, in ANARCHY 65, the whole of which is devoted to his essay on "De-revolutionisation", all his insights and intensive reading in 19th century labour history were brought into play. Often Martin would ask what the topic was for a forthcoming issue, and would go away and produce his contribution on that theme. This is how his article "Athenian Democracy" in No. 45, "Beelzebub Rides Again" in No. 48, and "The Principle of Creative Vandalism" in No. 61 came to be written.

We reprint in this issue two characteristic articles of his from our sister journal FREEDOM, both of them reports of particular occasions. The first is his account of the addresses by Paul Goodman and Herbert Marcuse to the Dialectics of Liberation congress at the Roundhouse, Chalk Farm in July 1967. (The actual text of these addresses has since been published in the Penguin book *Dialectics of Liberation*.) The second is a report of a very different affair: a confrontation between the present writer and a barrister at Joan Littlewoods's Fun Fair in July 1968. Martin loyally turned up to give me his support in the debate, and stayed to draw from the Fun Fair as a whole, a statement of his own personal faith.

C.W.

Two occasions reported

MARTIN SMALL

1. Round House

I AT LEAST got the impression that hearers of the previous speakers at the International Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation (advertised as "a unique gathering to demystify human violence in all its forms, the social systems from which it emanates, and to explore new forms of action") were relieved by a balance and moderation in Paul Goodman's speech on Tuesday morning (July 25) which contrasted with the tone of some earlier contributions. His whole message—which he delivered through his whole presence and not simply through words—was one of determined optimism, clear-eyed with regard to our present desperate condition, but not tragic, much less apocalyptical. His theme was political immodesty, and the need to give up such a dangerous addiction. The experimental part of the social sciences is political action, and political action involves getting a lot of people to do things together; the archetypal politically immodest man is the predatory Ruler* who sets out to produce this communal action by imposing himself and his ideas of what ought to be done on other people. But the same attitude often persists among those who profess to dissent from the Ruler's politics and wish to change it: they call their vision of change commonsense, and all other suggestions are so much nonsense not requiring serious discussion.

DESTRUCTIVE POTENTIAL

The present world situation is an increasing destructive potential in the hands of men and an increasing likelihood that the world will be destroyed. But this situation does help to clarify the fundamental division between the people of the world and the power structure. The only real revolution is humanity and peace. National liberation is fine as the means whereby the individual seeks and begins to achieve an identity; but if it is not informed by—if it does not issue out into—a vision of the humanity of all men, it becomes a stultifying—and aggressive—self-obsession; this was the hidden meaning of national independence which Gandhi endeavoured to point out in India, and Buber in Israel, and which the so-called political realists, Nehru and Ben-Gurion, ignored. The other obvious aspect of the world situation is a gross and wild urbanisation which has become more and more an international phenomenon and which will do us in if the nuclear bomb

doesn't first; the abusive technology of this urbanisation is making the mass of mankind not relatively but absolutely poorer—and yet this mass lusts for the whole package of this abusive technology; of the emergent nations only Tanzania and perhaps now Cuba realise that this technology will be the doom of human beings; in other countries the people just see and feel that they are starving. It is in this situation that the community planner must realise that he is not merely a technician who applies an already given programme, but one who implements and therefore is called upon to make ethical decisions.

Goodman described himself as an old Jeffersonian way-out-of-date. He thinks people are much too politically ambitious. They hope to achieve some great human good by some political arrangement; when all that can be expected is the establishment of some minimum level of decency in which some human good may occur. Societies in which such a level does exist are Tanzania, Cuba and Ireland—where the average per capita income is a quarter that in the USA, and where the average per capita technological power is probably one-seventh or one-eighth: Ireland is of course not a paradise, but it is not bad when compared with the USA. The problem of the society of the USA is no longer one of the exploitation of the mass of the people, but their exclusion; a brief look at the history of the world shows an increasing sophistication and completeness in the ways in which one set of men have dominated over another: from the simple exaction of tribute to this last and completest form. Every Puerto Rican family in New York receives 10,000 dollars every year from the government of the United States, in the form of welfare services—that is, in a form which it is unable to use, which is useless to the family. The object of domination today is, not to make use of the labour of other men—with increasing automation this is becoming unnecessary: its object is, to keep them quiet, to keep quiet the people for whom there is no place in the lovely high technology of the city of conspicuous consumption:§ why don't they go away? Why don't they simply cease to exist? In the United States the excluded groups are: the Negroes and the Spanish Americans, 12% of the population; the farmers, 5%; old people; the so-called insane and the delinquent who amount to many millions and are simply all those who cannot manage this sort of society;† and of course youth as a whole is an excluded group. Education in the United States is an instrument of exclusion, an organized attempt to break the spirit of the young. The policeman knows far better than the White Liberal the threat to the society he is paid to protect which is in the hippy movement: however insubstantially and transiently, this represents real, existential revolt, while mere industrial unrest can be bought off.

The questions for the would-be revolutionary and for the free society to ask are: what forms of automation liberate, and what enslave, the human spirit? What items of the present system of upbringing should be retained? How can technological developments be adapted to the local needs of community and culture? Spread across the world we see an authority relationship which is too much

accepted, and what is needed is its loosening up; power and social control must be decentralised as much as possible, so that people know what is happening, so that they are making the decisions for their own society. To make decisions concerning technology professional knowledge is required; most professionals are finks, not true professors of a science, but the personnel of a management hierarchy; but we must learn to separate knowledge from the abuse of it; as revolutionaries we must learn and profit from the possibility of a real professional knowledge. The only revolutionary situation is when the people from below demand a better way of life and employ professionals to help them build it. Today an International of abusive technology and management is opposed by an International of the young—I only wish, said Goodman, concluding his talk, that this revolutionary youth would learn the need and the use of the true professional.

QUESTION TIME

When the discussion moved out into the audience various people got up and were given a microphone and made statements or asked questions or did something of both, and Goodman commented. Laing asked for more specific leads on how to break the authority-obedience system and on how to distinguish between true professionals and finks; Goodman suggested that if the school of humanities at Harvard University were a truly and conscientiously professional body, its professors would come out with continual denunciations of the television, the thing, which is debauching the public and making their job of teaching the humanities impossible: even they would begin to build an international organisation to speak and to demonstrate in this way. Another questioner cited Jacques Ellul's demonstration of the way in which technological development is making impossible the sort of decentralisation of power envisaged by anarchists;‡ to which Goodman replied that Ellul is mistaken in thinking that technology is a dominating force: it depends upon the application of moral philosophy, and thus is under the control of human prudence: it is not an autonomous absolute, as is science, or romantic love, or social justice. An American negro defended the political necessity of SNCC's decision to exclude white students, and Goodman conceded the right of the American negro to seek to establish his identity and autonomy, while pointing out that this constituted a dilemma. He (Goodman) declared himself, not a politician but a populist, against any theory of revolution by conspiracy, in favour of all disintegrations and decentralisations of power, including both student power and black power and Stokeley Carmichael. Afterwards John Mackay, who occasionally writes for FREEDOM, suggested to me that Goodman is a bit soft on Carmichael, partly through a sense of guilt and partly perhaps at sheer envy at someone who perhaps looks more revolutionary that he does: which is perhaps at least food for thought, and possibly ties in with a carefully written and read but nonetheless enigmatical statement from a German (in English) which seemed to be to the effect that Goodman's talk was welcomed by the Roundhouse audience

because its intelligence and coherence assuaged the guilt complex of the liberal bourgeois intelligentsia thankful to have their social usefulness reaffirmed.

In conclusion to the morning's proceedings a Christian with a wavering apocalyptical voice asked for a society in which men would be able to accept and to come to terms with the agony and the tragedy of human life; in reply Goodman agreed with a lot of the statement but expressed suspicion of any attempt to build any theory of the tragedy and agony of human life into a political scheme; he for one would make his own tragedy for himself—only he would prefer to make it in a society where it would be more interesting than it can be today. That was the end of Wednesday morning's proceedings, the moral of which seems to have been that political immodesty is the great enemy of revolution, and that humility, amounting even to sheer pragmatism, is indispensable.

The only other session of the Congress that I attended was on Friday morning, July 28, when Herbert Marcuse was introduced, to a much larger audience than had heard Goodman, as "one of the greatest thinkers of our age". Marcuse said that he was glad to see so many people wearing flowers; but flowers have no power in themselves, and their beauty has to be defended by men against aggression. What he had to say was in the tradition of philosophical Marxism and interestingly contrasted with what Goodman had said—indeed the latter was often specifically mentioned by Marcuse. We must discuss, not merely an intellectual liberation, but a liberation of the whole existence of man: to be brought about by the application of forces within the already existing social system, forces generated by the contradictions within that system; liberation is a biological necessity, "a socialist society is required by the very nature of human life" (Marx). Today we are seeking liberation from a rich and relatively well functioning society: not a disintegrating or even particularly terroristic society: a society which "delivers the goods" more and more; thus liberation is deprived of its mass economic base, while the techniques of manipulation ever more subtly incorporate the voices of criticism and opposition into the establishment. We have been too modest: we have not said that a socialist society will be the complete negation of the present society, that it is an utopian scheme, a total rupture, a leap into something entirely new: what it is, what that will be, is suggested or dimly outlined in the shooting at the old church clocks which Walter Benjamin reported taking place in Paris at the time of the Commune in 1871.

The new society will be lived in by men who have entirely different needs from those felt by men living contentedly in the present society, and it cannot give men those needs, it will have to be constructed by men already possessing these new needs: thus Marx was right in describing the proletariat as the revolutionary class, because, in his words, "it is free from the aggressive and competitive needs of the bourgeoisie". There is a difference between the demand for more things, and the demand for a better way of life: the one may be satisfied by reform, the other only by revolution; but the desire for quantitative

change may be transformed into the desire for qualitative change, and it is this transformation which we must now set about achieving.

PRIMARY AGGRESSIVENESS

The characteristic of capitalist society is the mobilisation of primary aggressiveness and its almost complete monopolisation of the field of human motivation; in face of the enormous possibility of human freedom today, capitalism is still involved in the myth—and the reality—of the struggle for existence, still requiring the consciousness of an enemy as a stimulus to action; thus, the subjects of capital are engaged in defending their own servitude and its perpetuation. Liberation requires the opening up and the activation of a human dimension underneath—not above—the sheerly material with which alone capitalism has concerned itself. What is required today is an unashamedly political and liberating psychology. Industrial society has provided the conditions of liberation; but to achieve it a new anthropology is necessary: the theory and the practice of a new man who rejects the performance principle of capitalist society, who has rid himself of its brutality and competitiveness, who is biologically incapable of waging war or of causing pain. The technology of the liberated man will be a technology guided by the creative imagination and not simply by the narrowly rationalised performance principle: it will play with the hitherto blocked potential of man. His sociology will be at once revolutionary and aesthetic: it will see society as a work of art: it will plan the restoration of nature, the creation of internal and external space necessary to the development of individual privacy, autonomy and tranquillity: it will plan for a life without fear, without brutality, without stupidity. The hippies are partly mere masquerade and clownery; but they also exemplify a revolutionary sensitivity which rejects and scorns a performance principle which has become an insane obsession, and despises the whole puritanical (in the worst sense of the word only, of course) monomania for work-and-cleanliness.

Disappointingly, the questions had to be written down and read out by the chairman, Marcuse being too tired to take diatribes as Goodman had done: here again was contrast, between the frail professor refugee from East Europe, and the robust unashamedly indigenous populist. One speaker suggested that from Marcuse's picture of the new man it would seem that he would not find Huxley's picture of Brave New World too unsympathetic; and Marcuse agreed that—apart from the helot epsilons—there was much to be said for it: in the free society there will have to be indoctrination in freedom (Marcuse's very words) as there is now indoctrination in authoritarianism, and we will have to come to terms with the educational dictatorship. Unfortunately, this last subject was referred to the afternoon seminar for discussion, and I did not attend. The morning ended with another interesting contraposition of attitudes when a somewhat absurd question from, I think, Peter Cadogan asking Marcuse whether we should not incite mutiny in the American army in Vietnam elicited a charming statement of the natural law theory of the right of resistance to unjust power and the suggestion that one should not recommend civil disobedience to others

unless one is prepared to act similarly in one's own situation. This brought out a voice from the crowd which demanded why Marcuse himself did not similarly civilly disobey in his own situation, why he did not pull out of the whole system and give up his academic job. Marcuse replied that he thought he was doing as much good as he was capable of where he was; and that indeed, anyway, he was too unprepared for the poverty which giving up his job would bring upon him. Talking it over with a friend afterwards, we concluded that this exchange fairly clearly pointed up the dilemma of the intellectual revolutionary, who sees the need for vast areas of public instruction in the meaning and the necessity of revolution but is not quite clear what form of action this is to take in his own life beyond some subtle "conversio morae" or change of disposition which is difficult either to describe or even to experience exactly.

(*from* FREEDOM, 26 *August*, 1967)

*"Of all birds the eagle has seemed to wise men the type of royalty: not beautiful, not musical, not fit to eat; but carnivorous, greedy, hateful to all; and, with its great power of doing harm, exceeding all others in its desire of doing it." (Erasmus.)

§vid. Goodman's extended paradigmatic description of the city of conspicuous consumption in his *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life* (New York, Vintage Books).

†vid. the special issue of *Peace News* on Sanity, Insanity, Madness, Violence, May, 1967, which includes a chapter from David Cooper's *Psychiatry and Anti-Psychiatry* (Tavistock Publications).

‡vid. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*.

2. Fun Fair

THURSDAY, JULY 18, JOAN LITTLEWOOD'S Fun Palace Trust Inc. put on, amidst its giant plastic balloons—and next door to the Punch and Judy show appropriately enough (for surely it was the LAW which eventually gets Punch, the prince among creatively vandalistic men—not the crocodile as shown on this occasion)—in a bare concrete shopfloor in the new Tower Hill shopping precinct which she hired or borrowed for her summer fun fair (July 8-July 20): a debate between Colin Ward and A Barrister—the disclosure of whose name the ethics of his profession forbade, but readers of FREEDOM's Contact Column will already have found out that his name is Stephen Sedley. And a very nice obliging man too: at the end of the meeting he even good-naturedly bought a copy of ANARCHY 89, The May Days in France.

The opening of the debate, the theme of which was that "the law is an insult to free men", was somewhat meagre both in the audience and in the words addressed to them. Colin, speaking for the proposition, began I thought rather nervously with a string of unrelated and unargued aphorisms after humorously commenting that anarchists usually confront the law (in the person of Mr. Sedley) in less gentlemanly and less congenial surroundings. Gradually he cooled his pace and an audience began to gather meditatively out of the giant plastic balloons.

The law is an instrument which takes away responsibility for his actions from the individual: responsibility cannot be given to the individual, or organised for him by someone else: it is something which he must recognise, accept and develop for himself: it involves the perceptions—and the decisions and choices made upon the basis of such perceptions—by the individual. The law exists to make superfluous this power of choice: it destroys the natural aetiology of human decision and action—even when it commands something which the individual would choose anyway. Colin did not quote John Milton's *Areopagitica* but this 300-year-old tract contains what is still one of the most powerful statements of this part of the anarchist case. "A man may be a heretic in the truth; if he believes any thing, merely because his pastor, or parliament, or the assembly (an assembly of divines and parliament men sitting at the time to try to organize a system of church government for England after the disestablishment of the episcopacy) tells him it is so, then even if that thing be true, the very truth he holds becomes his heresy." Colin made it quite clear that he was talking in this disparaging way specifically about institutional law.

There is natural law: the law of equity, balance and symmetry which one sees in every natural form—but the law of the land has nothing to do with this. In fact the law of the land, when it does not seek merely to supersede the uncorrupted sense of this natural law, with a violence which is perhaps only equally offensive but is more obvious, endeavours to suppress the sense of equity. The object of the law of the land is not the recognition of the equal right of every man to the satisfaction of his needs: it is the protection of property—i.e. the protection of the privileged position of the few and the enforcement of the deprivation and dispossession of the many.

IF THE LAW WERE ABOLISHED . . .

Mr. Sedley admitted the truth that the object of the law is the protection of property and that in the pursuit of this object it can show a nasty face: he told us we can still go and see the simple brutality of the law in the county magistrates' courts where apoplectic faces would still willingly, if they could, transport or hang those miscreants found guilty of trespass in pursuit of game (poaching, that is). But law is not in itself a gratuitous imposition upon an individual: it is simply one of the many trammels upon his freedom of action with which he has to put up in order that social living may go on. Mr. Sedley seemed to misconceive the proposition for he seemed to think that the argument he had to refute was that if laws were abolished we would all immediately become free: whereas all anarchists well trained in the dialectical movement of revolution and counter-revolution are very aware that, whereas the efficacy of the Law as law (i.e. as productive of unconsidered obedience rather than of unprejudiced cognition and decision by the individual of what he is to do) is in inverse proportion to the consciousness of freedom; merely to remove the material constraint of the law is not to create an adequate consciousness of freedom and responsible action.

Not only was his negative case (that to abolish the law would not make men free) irrelevant: his positive counter-proposition—that the law does "to a certain extent" (this was the qualifying phrase he himself used) protect the weak against the strong—he admitted to be of very limited validity: it does nothing to restore the balance of power between those who are economically and socially weak and those who are strong in these things.

THE LAW VERSUS RESPONSIBILITY

Of course, to abolish the law would not make us free, Colin replied. But even such a crude demolition would have some value in thrusting us back on the real meaning—the responsibility to society and to ourselves—of our actions. Institutionalised law enables us to avoid the sense of responsibility: Colin cited the case of the woman who was murdered in New York within sight and hearing of the inhabitants of a block of flats who did nothing—*as an example of the way in which a legal structure inhibits our sense of social responsibility.*

Social responsibility becomes a specialised process under the law, controlled, organised and only understood by a small group of paid experts—plus a small group, criminals and anarchists and suchlike, who have particular reasons for knowing how the process works. The law is betwixt and between: at one moment denouncing people for not taking responsibility for their actions—the next taking steps to prevent them taking any such responsibility. But the fact is that while to abolish law is not to create responsible action, there can be no truly responsible action within the shadow of the law and without the shadow of the law people have shown themselves to be perfectly capable of responsible action: when people take their destiny into their own hands the result is not chaos: and, moreover, it is only when people take their destiny into their own hands that things begin to get done: the law has never made it its object to protect the weak against the strong—it is only when the weak have banded together to make some effective protest and action that the law has come in on the scene to rubber stamp the process.

From the floor the main argument of the anarchist contingent seemed to be that—however it might be true that the legal system was necessary as a crutch to a society that had forgotten how to walk on its own two feet, and that to throw away the crutch would not be to create the ability to walk—this was irrelevant to the anarchist case: that the process of the law is an humiliating interference in the proper organisation of men living with their fellows: it is an insult to the free man in that, even when he resorts to it for some material benefit, he will feel such a recourse to be an index of some failure in his social living, in his communication with his fellow men.

From the lawyers—whom I at least thought to be distinctly apologetic and on the defensive—there came some merely nibbling objections: that anarchists seem to concentrate on the purely repressive action of criminal law whereas law is concerned with the regulation of a much wider spectrum of human relationships—the protection of the consumer against the fraudulent manufacturer was instanced as part of its positive, beneficent, even socially responsible action: but this, Colin suggested, was far better done by such an organisation

as the Consumers' Association—demanding standards of production enforced by simple refusal to consume—than by the legal imposition of sanctions which can be argued about and avoided.

Someone else argued that, while the law did concern itself mainly with the protection of property, with the wider distribution of property this had become a much more democratic activity: Colin pointed out that property still remained mostly in the hands of a privileged minority: no one actually got onto the intriguing metaphysical proposition that the possession of property (as distinct from the use of things) is an insult to the free man. And an earnest late questioner asked whether something was not needed to protect people, not only against others, but against themselves. Perhaps, an anarchist might have replied, what is needed is something to protect a man against his own desire for protection—his desire for a walled up space, rather than the expanding universe of human society, in which to live—and the only thing that will "protect" a man against his own legalistic constipation is constant anarchy: the psychological disembowling that effective human relationships produce. And when the law raises its ugly head as the most obvious agent and accomplice of our imprisonment within our fears and antagonisms, it is well to remember that to denounce simply the law is to make a scapegoat for a psychological condition of which legalism is merely one aspect: as Mr. Sedley said —although it was hardly an argument against the proposition—the nature of the legal system merely reflects the nature of the society: it does not create the competitive and predatory habits which its abolition alone will not remedy.

REVOLUTIONARY PUBLIC LIVING

The confrontation was what I went to Joan Littlewood's Festival to hear. She said afterwards that it was an experiment in public communication she hoped to follow up. The rest of the Festival was quite fun to wander round through: and I found the new square tall concrete structures of the new Tower Hill Property Co. Ltd. as impressive—as comfortable—and perhaps even more satisfying—than the big plastic balloon-like structures set up for people to have fun in. It was nice to see the kids throwing themselves about on heaps of foam rubber (ironically, when I first visited the festival—on Sunday, the 14th—this anarchic free-for-all was disturbed by an organised display of gymnastics by some boy scouts or wolf-cubs or whatever . . .); and it was nice to see one's friends among the concrete blocks and tuberculous plastic, and Punch was there; and it was a magnificent bonus to have, as well, the Tower Place Art Exhibition organised by the Created Image Design Group (for further enquiries they have a telephone number 01-674 0811) and "sponsored directly by the Tower Hill Property Co. Ltd. who provided the opportunity to use these empty shops as a splendid exhibition space".

The programme sheet goes on: "It is hoped that City Companies will find this exhibition a stimulus to begin a new wave of art patronage; especially in their new spacious offices and in their new pedestrian precincts". Is there perhaps even a possibility here that in this way the great excrescence of office building will become an organic part of a new revolutionary public living? It is a wild thought, but perhaps anarchists and revolutionaries ought to consider more seriously the possibility of the creative use of the truly city-like city by the free and essentially decentralised society: we should perhaps not contract out absolutely of such things as the plans for Piccadilly Tomorrow, but engage in them and see what is in them for the primarily decentralised and private—but neither remote nor withdrawn—individual who is the anarchist ideal.

The slightly whimsical model of the "city of conspicuous consumption" of Paul Goodman's *Communitas*—as well as others of the book's many valuable suggestions—provide good starting points for the consideration of the role of the city. That an alternation between a jammed-up and spread-out way of living is what people need and enjoy was first suggested by Thomas More whose *Utopia* (1519) describes a society organised so that its members spent half the year in the country and half the year in the city. What our society wants is obviously no rigid enforcement of such a regulation; but something on these lines would provide the real social mobility which people and things require in order to break down the strangling mystique of absolute and inalienable possession from which both people and things suffer at the moment.

THE NEW ART

The Exhibition—of which there would not be much point now to make a detailed critique even if I had bothered to make notes on individual works—was an excellent display of shape and colour and material and also of the imitation of material: I do remember being particularly struck by the use of a big stretch of hessian right at the entrance to the exhibition, and beside it a beautiful evocation in black and white of wooden lattice work; but in general I was very gratified by the control and the absence of pretentiousness of the whole and found strangely what I hardly think was intended—the appropriateness of the works of art to the smell of the new brick against which they were set.

One of the contributors (Andrew Brighton) is quoted on the programme note as saying that, "One interpretation of the radical change in art since 1900 is that no longer does the sculptor or painter investigate 'nature' but rather investigates the nature of sculpture or painting itself." If this is true—and I find it confirmed by what marginal acquaintance I have both with the creative arts as such and with the critical disciplines which exist in symbiotic relationship with them—then perhaps the experimental consciousness of man really is taking shape in the modern world: the ugly and stultifying forms of modern life are but the chrysalis and the bud of the new life germinating—it is no accidental beauty which we see in our bright young things and their sweet-harsh sounds—a raucus harmony is coming through from underneath.

The old and tired platitude that criticism is parasitic upon art is still with us, but such remarks as that of Andrew Brighton I have

just quoted suggest it is not reigning as unchallenged as it used to do: the real and creative concern for the total human experience and response to the world displayed in, for instance, I. A. Richards' *Practical Criticism*, F. R. Leavis' *The Common Pursuit* and (most recently) William Empson's *Milton's God* (to select a few from the field with which I am most familiar, the field of literary criticism)—suggests that the distinctive and valuable contribution to man's evolving humanity which our age is making is the reconsideration and re-interpretation—the creative criticism—of the ways in which men have experienced and interpreted their nature in earlier ages. Such experiences and interpretations were not, obviously, less in value because they were cruder: and on the other hand the life of modern man is not necessarily desensitized because he cannot directly but only vicariously recapture the more "unmediated" experience of an earlier age (obviously all experience is in one sense equally mediated, even if one may dispute the purity or naturalness of the media involved: but I use the adjective "unmediated" as a not unsympathetic concession to the feeling that some avenues of consciousness have been overlaid by perhaps safer and stronger but not necessarily more humanly rewarding highways)—the artistic work of modern primitives (a nice conjunction) shows that this activity of recapturing can be exciting and creative in its own way.

The inheritance of Marx, Freud and Einstein is an influence which is continually expanding in people's lives: even the most uncritical newspaper-pulp magazine reader—the most passive tele-, film- or sport-spectator—is to some extent made aware in our highly self-conscious culture of the place of myth, symbol and archetype in his and everyone's way of living, thinking, feeling: even the paranoiac ordinariness of the good citizen of the great benign power is an inverted awareness of the relativity of his existence—"contingency" was the word that the mediaeval theologians used and it is as good a concept as any to describe that sheer insubstantiality of the substance of being to which Einstein gave scientific expression.

A STATEMENT OF FAITH

The scientific demolition of absolute man—who was also paradoxically rigidly limited by his absolute completeness—has made the way clear for the reinstatement of the one absolute that can really be insisted upon—for that statement of faith which to continue to live is to make: the absoluteness of the unlimitedness of the capacity of human beings to move and to change and to meet the ever new challenge of the things and other beings among whom they live—the capacity and the desire for fearless living which absolute man fears to trust or to try and which anarchic man knows to be the tool of the universe: the capacity to discover and to recreate in each moment, not an old and rigid paralysis, but an immediate homeostatic ordering. And this is the fun and stuff of life which the experimental and critical conciousness of the modern age is beginning to discover.

(*from* FREEDOM, *August* 31, 1968)