

THE NEW SOCIETY: Planning and Workers' Control

by John Eaton



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By workers' committees I mean any collective expression of the will of workers in the base units of the economic system. Shop stewards' committees and the shop steward movement generally is a particularly important form of 'shop floor' organisation, but there are others. The subject around which I propose to focus my remarks may be described in a quite general way as the movement by workers to exercise, themselves, a greater control over their activities at work. In fact, for reasons that I shall discuss below, this movement focussed on, or originating in, industry in fact cannot separate itself from movements concerned with other, more general aspects of social and community life. But my starting point is what is generally spoken of as 'industrial democracy' — the demand by workers for democratic control in the economic sphere no less than in the social and political.

I propose to take both a practical and a theoretical approach to these questions. By 'practical' I mean looking at what is actually happening, taking my examples primarily from Britain. By 'theoretical' I mean asking some question about the economic implications of the movement that is developing. At the present time two sharply opposed, contradictory tendencies are taking place. The concentration of industry is going forward at a tremendous pace. A year or so ago *Fortune Magazine* forecast that in 25 years' time 200 multi-national firms

would completely dominate production and trade and account for more than three-quarters of the total corporate assets of the capitalist world. Already, the magazine estimated, 60 firms and perhaps 1,000 individuals controlled 'the hard financial core of capitalism'. Administratively we have in Britain a tendency towards larger and larger Ministries and in the area of Local Government the tendency is for effective powers to be assigned to ever larger administrative units. The policy of employers has been to move away from piece rates and to minimise negotiation of wages and conditions in the basic units of production, substituting agreements reached at higher organisational levels. The techniques of so-called 'management science', the shaping of overall strategies for large organisations with the aid of mathematical programming and decision theory, and the advancing technology of automation, have reinforced policies of centralised decision-taking leaving only relatively trivial matters for local determination. It is sometimes said that centralisation is the inevitable concomitant of technological progress. For example, Professor Galbraith, by appearing to accept this point of view, lends an air of pessimistic defeatism to his otherwise admirable criticisms of the 'Industrial State'. I do not accept this view myself; the dynamism towards centralisation comes from the centralisation of capital. Capital adapts the new technology to aid and abet centralisation; the centralisation expresses the laws of capital and not of technology.

The second tendency, in complete contradiction to the centralisation to which I have referred above, is that of people to assert themselves in defence of their particular conditions of life or work. There are more and more cases occurring in Britain of local movements vigorously resisting housing authorities, educational or traffic authorities and others who attempt bureaucratically to disregard the impact of their decisions on the lives of people. However, the most significant resistance to arbitrary centralised authority is taking place in industry and it is this aspect of things, undoubtedly related to parallel wider social movements, to which I wish primarily to address my remarks. This movement develops in revolt against capital's inability to develop technologies to serve the human needs of human beings.

First and foremost I would like to consider some questions concerning the relationship of the workers' committee movement or, as we tend to call it in Britain, the 'workers' control' movement to the organisation of Trade Unions. The movement for 'workers' control' in Britain takes many forms and embraces many different political philosophies. The Institute for Workers' Control, with whose work I am actively involved, attempts to embrace a wide spectrum of opinion, but the movement for workers' control and industrial

democracy is something far wider than the Institute and for a large part is an expression of a new social and political attitude that has no specific institutional or organisational expression. By some the charge is levelled against this movement that it lacks a clear political philosophy. Those who yearn to codify the aims and beliefs of this movement are overlooking one essential fact. If industrial democracy is to mean anything it must mean that workers for themselves to the greatest extent possible determine the form and content of their own activity. If there are still differences of approach to workers' control, is this not the natural reflection of the fact that there are different philosophies in the workers' control movement? The over-riding idea that unites these differences, is belief in the desirability and possibility of a classless democratic society. A class society is one in which there is a class or classes holding authority and power and other classes over whom authority and power is exercised. A classless society can only be one in which people themselves control for themselves their own destinies. A great movement evidencing this new determination is beginning now to sweep through Europe and the whole world. The political philosophy that inspired the formation of Trade Unions cannot but take sides with the aims of this movement.

When one comes, however, to organisational practicalities differences easily arise. In Britain it would not be true to say that all trade unionists support the workers' control movement. There are many examples of support from the mass of the workers expressing itself in new forms of mass struggle, to which I shall make further reference. Some indication is also given by the responses to the activities of the Institute for Workers' Control. Very naturally the most active interest comes from shop stewards from a wide variety of industries. Commitment of the organised trade union movement as a whole does not go as far as that of the Belgian F.G.T.B. whose Congress in 1971 endorsed a Workers' Control Programme. However, many of the leading figures in two of the largest British unions are constant propagandists for workers' control and give active support to the Institute for Workers' Control. For example, Jack Jones the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union is an Honorary Vice-President of the Institute together with Ernie Roberts the Assistant General Secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers. Bill Jones, until recently a member of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and for long prominent in the leadership of the Transport and General Workers' Union, is Chairman of the Council of the Institute. Hugh Scanlon, President of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, has written a number of pamphlets for the Institute for Workers' Control and at the conference prior to the formation of the Institute in 1968 made a statement of considerable interest and importance to which I would

like to make some reference. "Trade Union membership", he said, "has doubled since the 1930's and the increased confidence of workers has reflected itself in the development of strong shop floor organisations, which have been able not only to bargain very effectively for increased earnings at a local level, but also question the 'prerogative of management' ". He defined workers' control as "effective control by organised workers over the arbitrary powers of management". He went on to say that here were "the seeds of the new society inside the old". These remarks draw attention to the 'two sidedness' of the movement for workers' control. On one side it is a struggle by workers to remove power from management 'right across the board', on any issues whatsoever and not merely on questions of wages, hour of work, etc. But despite the extension of struggle to issues well beyond those that have traditionally been the concern of the trade unions, this 'control' still remains very limited in its scope since the workers are constrained by the socio-economic structure of capitalist society. The processes of production, the law of property, training and tradition all determine a specific productive system, buying from a market and selling to a market, governed by laws and processes that extend far beyond the walls of one particular factory. So in one sense workers' control does no more than 'restrain capital', modify the power of capital without being able to put workers' power in the place of capital's power. In this sense workers' control is 'within the system' but in another sense it constantly looks beyond the system, it manifests itself as the embryo of 'a new society within the old'.

Scanlon on this same occasion pointed out that the new forms of struggle for control by the workers must create serious problems for the trade union organisation. "One problem", he said, "is of course the perpetual dilemma of trade unions in discussing the question of workers' self-management, in that trade unions cannot easily double the part of protective agencies democratically responsible to their members and required to carry out their memberships' wishes, on the one hand, and joint policy makers and managers of industry, responsible to the public at large for efficiency and increased production, on the other". There are many other forms in which the dilemma of 'workers' control' find their expression. Indeed the key to the evaluation of the workers' control movement from the standpoint of political theory is the recognition of its two-sided character, its significance as part of a process of social transition, a struggle within and therefore, to some extent, as an incorporated part of an existing social structure, looking forward to new forms of social structure, indeed forming the embryos of such structure.

The organised trade union movement in Belgium has, as I have suggested above, gone farther than most in relation to workers' control

policy. "The F.G.T.B. had", writes Ken Coates in his introduction to the English translation of the Belgian Programme (*A Trade Union Strategy in the Common Market*, Spokesman Books 1971) "reached a programmatic solution to an age old problem for socialists everywhere, to wit, how to link their immediate demands with their dreams of the new society". Further on Ken Coates writes "The programme remains a reform programme, whilst continuing the spirit of contestation and struggle. . . . Naturally, all who see the struggle for economic democracy as an unremitting process, based upon the developing understanding of wider and wider sections of the working populace, confront the same dilemmas which are faced by the Belgian unions. It is always possible for groups, even large organisations, of work people to bargain for greater powers and then discover themselves wielding responsibilities which are larger than those powers warrant. 'Incorporation' is a constant snare. Yet advance cannot be made without running risks, and these risks can only be minimised if the unions remain open to correction by their members and sensitive to the complex problems involved in retaining the capacity for autonomous action. In a word, workers must control their unions before they can wrest even minimal advances in control over their work. But: as the Belgium strategy makes plain, the unions need to operate on the level of the economy as well as that of the factory, and therefore require an effective political arm. So workers must control their parties before they can advance to control their economics. None of this is easy".

The F.G.T.B. Programme is a practically designed document serving as a sort of agenda for workers considering how to take action to assert control over the conditions of work. Always a struggle for democracy goes hand in hand with a struggle against bureaucratic secrecy. "In the present situation", writes the F.G.T.B. Programme, "an important step towards workers' control is the delivery of full information to workers' representatives on the factory councils, on all economic and human problems concerned with the life of the business". This demand has also begun to be raised in the British Labour Movement. The British Labour Party in its statement "Industrial Democracy" (June 1967) raises the question of social accountability and information about company affairs. The Institute for Workers' Control goes somewhat farther in its campaign to 'Open the Books'. (For detailed proposals on information to be made available see *Opening the Books* by Michael Barratt Brown, I.W.C. pamphlet no. 4).

"The problem of employment implicitly raises all the other problems of life: that of future income, of careers, of the destiny of towns and regions". So says the F.G.T.B. Programme. As the movement for workers' control has been growing in Britain it has begun increas-

ingly to turn its attention to the problem of redundancies. "The recent spate of big mergers and their methods of 'rationalisation'," said Hugh Scanlon speaking to the Workers' Control Conference in 1968, "place the most elementary needs of job security in danger. The example of the A.E.I. closure at Woolwich shows the futility of a blind faith that these giant monopolies will acknowledge pressures for social accountability". The movement to stop the closure of A.E.I. Woolwich failed but it served notice that the workers regarded the closing down of productive plants as their business. The demand began to be raised that capital be held socially accountable for its actions. When G.E.C.—English Electric announced massive redundancies at its factories on the Merseyside in the interest of 'efficiency' and 'rationalisation' the shop stewards began to lay plans for a workers' takeover. This vigorous response, threatening action of an altogether new kind, became overnight national news. In retrospect it is easy to see that there were many mistakes in the tactics adopted. Management took advantage of these mistakes and forestalled the shop stewards. A great deal of publicity was given to the failure of these new tactics. A more careful analysis, however, reveals that, unsuccessful though this first attempt was, it was the beginning of something new in the British Labour Movement. New ideas were firing the workers' imagination and they were looking for ways of acting against declarations of redundancy. Mersey was an area of unemployment and capital had been offered financial assistance to move into this area. The plant that was being closed down was technically advanced and capable of producing electrical equipment sorely needed by many nations of the world. The workers did not obtain their objectives but if their immediate defeat received publicity, so also did the fact sink in for many that what is efficient for capital is not efficient for human society and that capital appeared to be able to receive social funds to attract it to areas of social need without being socially accountable when, at a later stage, it decided to withdraw.

When in June of 1971 the Government decided not to make funds available to the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders and to allow the whole business to be put into the hands of a liquidator, they found themselves confronted with a determined body of workers skilfully led by shop stewards who were able to find a strategy of counter-attack that has been successful now for over six months. The tactics of struggle have taken account of the peculiar financial circumstances, the attitude of the workers, the feelings of the surrounding community and the impact of the media. In this case the workers decided on a 'work-in'. In a physical sense there would have been no difficulty for them to run the whole shipyard themselves. The technical staff were in the main with them. There were no problems about the efficient and

effective organisation of the work. Additionally, there were workers in many parts of Scotland and of Britain as a whole ready to produce materials and components required for continuing production. What rendered a complete and immediate takeover impossible was, of course, the network of contractual and property relations by which this one firm is woven into the texture of British capitalism and the British economy as a whole. What has actually been 'taken over' has been quite limited. Control of the gates — who comes in and goes out of the yards — is in the workers' hands; also work and pay are being controlled to the extent that declarations of redundancy are not accepted. Workers declared redundant continue to work and receive pay out of funds' collected from workers who are still receiving pay from the liquidator and from funds collected by appeals to the country at large. To ensure the smooth and fair continuance of activity in the yards the workers' committees impose disciplines in a few rare cases on workers who are not playing fair by their fellow workers. The contractual obligation of the enterprise are, in general, met by the liquidator. There is, therefore, a curious balance between the liquidator ('capitalist control') and the shop stewards' committee and the regular meetings of the workers ('workers' control'). Ships continue to be built. No declarations of redundancy are accepted. The workers have one central demand: all yards to be kept open — no redundancies. Their demand is the the demand for jobs within a capitalist society. Of course many of the workers understand that there are no economic solutions for Clydeside until far-reaching political changes have been won. But their demand is 'jobs'. They do not even go so far as demanding nationalisation of shipbuilding or nationalisation of these yards. These are demands for which the wider movement must fight.

At the same time a wider Scottish movement has developed and presses for wider economic measures to restore prosperity to the Clydeside. In this workers from Upper Clyde Shipyards have played an important part. From the outset they recognised the necessity of strong alliance with the wider community. The support of the community is essential to them and, they are well aware, that the prosperity of the community depends upon the prosperity of their shipyards. Wide sections of the Scottish people have been swept into the movement that the U.C.S. workers' action precipitated. For example, the election of a new Rector of Glasgow University fell due in the course of the 'work-in'. The students nominated one of the U.C.S. shop stewards, Jimmy Reid, and he was duly elected by a large majority against two distinguished personalities. The Scottish T.U.C. also held a 'social audit' to which a mass of experts' evidence was presented. This was an event of considerable importance. The Trade Unions moved away from the activities to

which in the normal course priority of time and funds is devoted and examined, albeit for a short matter of days, the social and economic factors bearing on the decision to close the U.C.S. yards. Irrefutable evidence from a number of quarters piled up to demonstrate that the decision which the financial mechanism of capitalism, the State bureaucracy and the Government had arrived at was totally indefensible from the standpoint of social rationality. The trade unions, albeit for a short period of time, stepped aside from their more accustomed activities to do for themselves the research and investigation that the established mechanisms of society failed to undertake and failed to present to the public.

The U.C.S. struggle has fired the imagination of the Labour Movement throughout Britain. In every part of the country trade unionists and Labour Party branches have been organising meetings to be addressed by speakers from U.C.S. This struggle has become a symbol of the fact that the workers intend to struggle against redundancies and unemployment in a new way. In the 1930's there were great demonstrations of the unemployed 'for work or maintenance'. Today the fight against unemployment comes from the trade unions and from the workers in employment and is directed against capital and State polices which are being called to account and held responsible for unemployment. The laws governing the working of the economic system are coming less and less to be regarded as 'natural laws' to which men have no alternative but to submit.

The example of U.C.S. has now been followed in several other places. At a conference held by the Institute for Workers' Control on Unemployment on the 8th and 9th January there were representatives from U.C.S., Plessey's (Alexandria), Fisher-Bendix in Liverpool, the River Don Steelworks, Shell (Carrington) and elsewhere. In all these places 'sit-ins, or work-ins' or some other novel form of action is being taken to challenge closures and redundancies. Undoubtedly U.C.S. is the standard bearer for these actions, but in each case the type of action being taken is markedly different. This is indeed the most important thing about these "workers' control movements" against redundancy; the workers in each case are looking at the peculiarities of their situation, finding out facts about their employers, looking at the impact of threatened closures on the community, seeking support from organisations in the wider community and so forth. The actions taken differ widely from case to case. What they all have in common is a determination by united workers' action to challenge the formal right of capital to do as it likes with its own property. The movement is not revolutionary nor seen as revolutionary by the bulk of those who support it. Nonetheless it is not afraid to defy legal formalities where it is perfectly clear that these conflict with what the

people regard as socially just. Under such circumstances the widest possible discussion and publicity is of vital importance. Every effort is made to ensure that the media present the workers' case and there have been some successes. At least not all the propaganda of press and broadcasting has been hostile; but trade unionists have become from their experience over the last few years more and more aware of their weakness vis-a-vis media which are for the most part controlled by capital. They are beginning to see how very weak are the means of communication that they themselves control. However, as the idea of the 'social audit' develops, that is as the workers and the people in the community dependent upon their industries begin to probe more deeply the impact of current social policies on their lives and begin to look for alternatives, it may well be that they will try to find better means of communicating their views and their findings.

A good example of social justice intervening against 'formal justice' is the 'sit-in' at Plessey's Alexandria. Here intricate engineering plant was made available at very advantageous terms to Plessey's as an encouragement for them to develop work in a area which had suffered heavily from unemployment. The withdrawal of such plant for use elsewhere the workers and the community regarded as tantamount to theft; and on the day when the workers were due to leave the factory and join the unemployed, instead of walking out of the gates after receiving their pay, they walked back into the factory, held a meeting and decided to sit-in, maintaining the plant ready for use *in situ* and at the same time guarding it against removal by the formal owners.

The demand of the whole community at Alexandria is 'simply' for the 'right to work'. This is not put forward as a revolutionary demand here or elsewhere. It is put forward as a reasonable demand that any decent society should be able to meet. But is it in fact a revolutionary demand? It is worth pausing on this question since it typifies the dilemma confronting workers' committees and the associated community movements when demands are pressed against the will and intention of those who represent capital. The actions of those who represent capitalism fall broadly into two categories:

1. Actions dictated by the necessity of making profits, and
2. State policies.

Capital demands the inalienable right to do with its capital as it likes and the law of survival in the market/commodity system dictates the singleminded pursuit of profit. It can be diverted from these simple necessities only by the compulsions of State power and compulsions requiring unprofitable activity can only be made effective if the State provides funds in lieu of profits. State policy insofar as

it supports the capitalist economy must make its over-riding economic objective that of smoothing the way for the profitable turnover of capital. For the State itself to function in lieu of capital can hardly be concordant with this aim. Moreover 'pump priming policies' or Keynesian policies, that is Keynesian policies designed to stimulate investment and hence economic growth, will if they get near to achieving full employment put the workers in a very strong position vis-a-vis capital and so serve to decrease the margin of profit, making investment less profitable and the bargaining power of the workers much stronger. In such a situation workers' committees determined to extend 'workers' control' in every possible direction will be in a very strong position and capital in a very weak position.

One sees some of these factors at play in the case of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders. There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that the crisis driving the firm into bankruptcy was one of liquid cash rather than overall insolvency. (It is an astounding fact that the books of the company were so tightly closed that no meaningful 'management accounts' were made available to show what the true position was). At all events it was quite clear that the cost to the Government, even if some loss had to be incurred, would be far less if they nationalised the yards and continued to run them than if they closed them down and paid out relief money to the impoverished community. Their stubborn unwillingness even to contemplate such a course was a policy decision and not an economic decision. Their over-riding policy was to facilitate the profitable turnover of private capital in the economy as a whole. In practice this means helping the international companies to deploy their capital freely and to compete effectively in the international markets, which in turn implies reducing direct State investments, partly for policy reasons and partly in the belief that this consumes resources which private capital covets for its own use. This policy also implies weakening the position of labour and increasing unemployment.

One is compelled, therefore, to ask whether Marx was not right when, in his book on "Class Struggles in France 1848-50", he described the "proletarian Ministry of Labour" as "a ministry of impotence, a ministry of pious wishes". The real ministries of employment were, in his view, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Trade. Marx recognised in the slogan *The right to work* "the first clumsy formula wherein the revolutionary aspirations of the proletariat are summarised". But he added: "The right to work is in the bourgeois sense, an absurdity, a miserable, pious wish. But behind the right to work stands the power over capital; behind the power over capital the appropriation of the means of production, their subjection to the associated working class and, therefore, the

abolition of wage labour as well as of capital and of their mutual relationship”.

Are we then to conclude that the demand for ‘the right to work’ which is on the lips of more and more British workers is an empty delusion? One only has to compare the struggles against unemployment in Britain today with those that took place in the Thirties to realise that this cannot be so. The great struggles that took place in the Thirties laid foundations for much that has subsequently happened in British politics, but the central focus of those struggles was better payment, a bigger ‘dole’ for the unemployed. Today the struggles, led by trade unionists in work are about the deployment of capital and the generation of economic activity. Of course there is still an element of delusion in the demands that the broad mass of workers are making. But who can say what exactly is the nature of this delusion and how deep it goes? The demand that a modern society should so conduct itself that all men and women can contribute some part of their energies to the process of social production is a reasonable demand. To suggest that society should be so adjusted and changed as to meet this reasonable aim is also perfectly justified. The delusion is in under-estimating the stubbornness of entrenched views and entrenched interests, in not recognising that these ‘reasonable’ aspirations are also ‘revolutionary aspirations’. But in the last analysis it is only possible to find out how stubborn such resistance is by attempting to overcome it. The struggle that is now developing behind demands for the right to work is attempting to overcome this resistance. Few workers ever expect easy victories and those engaged in the present struggles are gradually learning that their objectives are difficult of attainment and that the struggle must be long. Understanding of the inherent contradictions in the present situation is the best mental preparation for long struggle.

The fact that the present is a period of social transition implies profound contradictions. For example, planned disposition of economic resources against the ‘natural’ workings of capital and the market is perfectly possible in a capitalist economy as is demonstrated in time of war. But to resort to economic measures diametrically opposed to the whole spirit and philosophy of a capitalist society is in times of peace only conceivable in a period of extreme emergency. However political pressures may well generate such an emergency and measures of economic planning in diametrical opposition to the economic principles of capitalism may be dictated by such emergencies. Plan may have to be used by the champions of market simply to save the social structure of the market society. Oskar Lange wrote perceptibly on this point in his essay “On the Economic Theory of Socialism” in 1938: “As the decay of capitalism continues, there will arise many occasions when the capitalist parties will prove unable to

enact reforms which are necessary even from the point of view of securing normal functioning of the capitalist society. Being sociologically closely connected with the dominating vested interests, viz, monopoly and financial interests, the capitalist parties may be utterly incapable of any action that injures the vested interests with which they are associated, even if these interests should prevent the normal functioning of the capitalist economy as a whole. And the greater the economic and political instability of the capitalist system, the more nervous the capitalist parties may become about changes, fearing that to admit the necessity of changes would open the road to socialism”.

Socialists may find themselves — another contradiction — implementing policies “to make capitalism work” in order to provide an economic basis for the struggle of workers’ committees. Widening control at the base implies a functioning economy. A sudden leap out of the market economy into some totally different form of economy is not conceivable. However, policies for ‘making capitalism work’ are fraught with many dangers. The less the power of the workers at the base, the greater these dangers become. It seems to be therefore that the priority in relation to trade union structure, in relation to the organisation of the economy and in relation to community life and social welfare must always be the strengthening of the people’s committees, the workers’ committees and organisations *at the base*. But in developing struggle and organisation at the base one cannot shut one’s eyes to the dependence of each local unit on national and, indeed, international economic structures and systems. Realistic national policies need to accompany the inventive initiatives of movements at the base.

Debate, understanding, education, research into feasible alternatives, vivid and rapid communication of ideas and understanding all become increasingly important if the mounting movement by people, to control for themselves their own destinies, is to prove effective. Cities, factories, housing estates and every ‘primary’ social organism requires the support of a wider system. No community can be an island, it requires the knowledge, the materials, the products of other communities and in turn each receiving community must know how to meet the needs of others beyond its borders. The only economic and social boundary that is acceptable is the earth’s atmosphere. The world is one world. But this is not an argument for centralisation; on the contrary it is a strong argument for the maximum possible *decentralisation*. Careful analysis of centralisation so often defended in the name of efficiency, will reveal that the major motivation is centralisation of control and power. If one considers what must be centralised in the interest of harmonious social living one will find, I

think, that it constitutes only a small part of the sum total of social and economic activities.

The worst centralisation in modern capitalist society is the centralisation of finance and money and property. A great deal of the miseries of human existence would be immediately relieved if communities were free themselves to use the resources in association with which they live their lives. If a community happened to have sited in its midst a large reservoir serving many neighbouring communities, it must surrender to these communities some measure of control over such a resource. But if one removes the compulsions of centralised finance and centralised capital and envisages social groupings in economic activity and community life, settling things for themselves and by themselves as much as possible, then I think one will find that the number of decisions that have to be referred for decision with others outside the community are only a small fraction of those that are settled centrally in an authoritarian or bureaucratic manner at present.

The aim that workers' committees are pursuing of greater control on the spot, is an aim that societies of the future will need to extend and generalise to all spheres of human activity. The contention that modern technology requires centralisation is without foundation. Of course large communities may be dependent on one or two large power stations. Of course, a single shoe factory may be able to supply the population of a considerable territory. But the number of people employed in the power stations or the automated shoe factory need be no more than a few hundred, a smallish 'social organism' in which individuals can be known to one another and for the most part can arrange between themselves how their activities are to be conducted. It must naturally become a matter of social ethics that undertakings to meet the needs of others are faithfully observed. But to recognise that other human beings have needs that must be respected is quite natural to decent human beings and has nothing to do with bureaucratic centralisation.

The aim of decentralised, inter-communicating human communities and groupings of comparatively small size is perfectly realistic and realisable in practical terms. It implies an ultimate escape from market regulated, profit motivated economic structures based upon private ownership of the means of production. Direct planning of what to make and how to use productive resources will need, in the end, to prevail against market regulation of the economy. Plan is in diametric opposition to the market but for many years, inevitably, these two diametrically opposed concepts of economic organisation and social structure must necessarily co-exist as best they may. Workers' committees and the movement for 'workers' control' is, in my belief, the standard bearer of 'Plan' against the 'Market'.

The strongest force moving in the direction of social change is the maturing political and social consciousness of ordinary people. This is not some miraculous 'change of heart'; it is the end result of a long process of social and political struggle in a world of rapidly changing technology. Processes of production have changed and man's understanding of human society has changed. Deeper knowledge and understanding of the material world makes it possible for us to develop technologies well-adapted to the requirements of new types of social organisation. In particular control and use of the electron 'electronics' makes possible an infinitely richer flow of information between human beings. New types of computers and television may well generate new art forms and means of rapidly understanding and transmitting understanding of complex situations. Such developments could prove of profound value to decentralised social structures. Up to the present such technologies are too much used as servants of centralisation. There is an appalling asymmetry in the media of information. Information is poured out from isolated centres to feed the minds of millions who are provided with no means of themselves feeding back information to others. The techniques of information processing are used to facilitate control of large organisations by small centralised bureaucracies. They are hardly at all used as means of *inter-communication* between the mass of human beings. They are used primarily to evaluate decisions by the criteria of profitability when it is becoming more and more clear that the market, so far from assuring effective allocation of resources, is effecting a squandering of irreplaceable scarce materials and the generation of 'pollution', which the market fails to cost but which is doing irreparable harm to the community of man on a global scale.

The more perceptive minds of the present age — and scientists in particular — are coming to recognise that social, material and moral pollution will require, if it is to be countered, new social structures. Undoubtedly these new social structures must be subtly integrated and richly endowed with means of intercommunication. But within this integrated awareness of each social grouping's relatedness to others, the main decisions about the conduct of their affairs must be left for men and women to settle for themselves as they see fit. Democracy, if it means anything, means just this — the power of people over their own lives.

Industrial democracy implies such power in relation to productive processes. "Workers' Committees" and "Workers' Control" is the practical expression of man's striving towards a new social structure capable of using the new productive forces that science puts at our disposal, quite simply and directly to meet our needs as social human beings.