

THE NATURAL SOCIETY

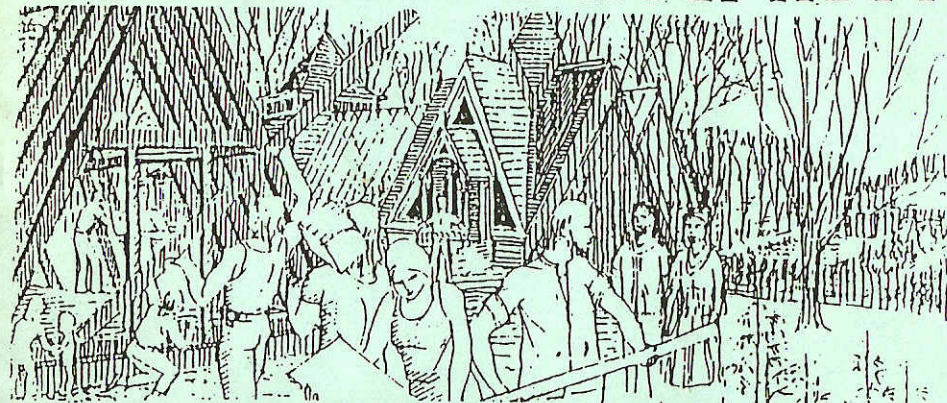
a community of no more than about 500 people, the maximum that one person can know, autonomous, self-sufficient and technologically disinterested. It's not worth the effort.

^ grubby sort of utopia, but the others can't work; capitalism and socialism are both based on the theory of 'Division of Labour' which makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. The wealth of trade and industry does not 'trickle down'. The crops from the peasants, the wealth, are eaten or otherwise used up. All that's left to 'trickle down' back to the peasants is soot, sewage, scrap and shoddy.

The wealth of the core is caused, not by trade and industry, but by the starvation of the periphery, whose land is used to feed the core.

THE NATURAL SOCIETY

A BASIS FOR GREEN ANARCHISM



RICHARD HUNT

Interview

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THE-NATION STATE is not a social contract between the governed and the governors; it is a prison in which the governed are, and always were, forced by laws, born of religion, to obey on pain of violence. How then will society evolve without these constrictions? What is the natural society?

It seems likely that, for a society to live a peaceful, orderly life without laws of Obedience, it should be no larger than about 500 people, which is about the maximum number that one person can know. 'There is an architects' rule of thumb to the effect that the capacity of an elementary school should not exceed 500 pupils if the principal is to know all of them by name - and it has been stated that when a group exceeds 500 persons, it requires some form of policing.' (J.Pfeiffer).

This figure of about 500 seems to be a natural grouping. "Among the least advanced of the food gatherers, the average size of the tribe is between 300 and 400 persons. In the Andamans the figure was 400 to 450 and Kazywicki calculates the average size of 123 Australian tribes as between 300 and 600 souls." (A.S.Diamond). "The Australian data show an amazing constancy of numbers for the dialectical tribe, statistically approximating 500 persons." (Pfeiffer).

How then would this size of grouping apply today?

An island in the Scillies with about 500 people would have few problems of reorganization or basic subsistence. They would have fish in plenty; they would have sheep for meat and wool; they would have timber for fuel and building. But they might get bored with a diet of lobster and roast lamb, so they would do some extra weaving and exchange their cloth and fish for flour or marmalade or caviar. "A Tonkin peasant was only occupied in his fields for about 125 days a year, a Chinese peasant for 120 and a Korean peasant for 140; the Japanese figures were of the same order. The peasants thus had ample time at their disposal and so would engage in industry and trade." (Gourou).

So, with plenty of time, the islanders might decide to put in a little more work to save for a deep freeze, or a record player or an automated cloth factory. Groups who have tried this sort of life today have found it more work, not less, but this is because the government demands more than half their income in direct and indirect taxation. They therefore have to work twice as hard. They are also building up an infrastructure, irrigation, water and wind power, farmbuildings etc., that a peasant society has been able to do over the long centuries. Nor do they work on a social level because they never take their grandparents.

The left wing usually assumes that small communities will be somewhere to the right of the neo-fascists, but anthropologists don't seem to bear this out; "most of these peoples hold very strongly to the view that wealth should not be too unevenly distributed." (L.Mair) "Over the past 50 years in Thak, there has been a gradual equalization

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of land holdings towards the five plot level. Macfarlane suggests that the numerous cross-cutting bonds, linking everyone with everyone else, has reduced conflict and maintained a kind of non-competitiveness." (Gellner and Humphrey).

In fact, in a small community wealth is a bit of an embarrassment. "The possession or acquisition of wealth created difficulties for a rich villager. His fellow citizens who consider themselves his equals, and were as often as not related to him, overwhelmed him with requests for grain and money." (Gourou). The rich man is gradually and painlessly relieved of his burden; but only as long as it is an enclosed, inward-looking society with plenty of crosscutting bonds and mutual dependence.

Consider Jeff who farms 200 acres on the island. No one else has got more than two acres. Now Jeff likes to drink with his friends but he can't hop over to other islands every night. If he wants any company but his wife's, he'll have to go down to the local, the only pub. But while he's got 200 acres and everyone else has only got two, although they will be polite, they won't be that friendly. Jeff is on his own until he gets rid of a lot of his land. A person can only hold on to wealth as long as he doesn't have to mix socially with those without wealth, and in a small autonomous community that is impossible.

Of course, the community, like every other animal society, will have a peck order; but it will be of respect and influence, not wealth and obedience. "A chief is a sacred person, without political authority. Indeed the Nuer have no government and their state might be described as an ordered anarchy." (Evans-Pritchard). "The influence of chiefs was uncertain, and no one would acknowledge any authority to his own will. A chief received deference, indeed, but not obedience... No chief could carry his will against a single dissident." (Diamond).

Consider Major General John Weston, retrd. When our island decided to go autonomous, to pay no taxes and to get nothing back, the major general, if he stayed, would lose his army pension. He might go back to his London flat, but he might decide to stay. He's got a good sized garden and likes the idea of fending for himself; it takes him back to his young days. He can no longer afford the daily help and when he goes to the pub, it's mild, not double malt whisky. His position in the peck order has taken a jolt, a major general no longer carries much weight. But supposing he had been in the tank corps and had a real interest and knowledge of engines, and could help mend generators, back up the peck order he goes. He drinks mild but he commands respect.

And how would the island, without laws, cope with law and order? The local bobby no longer gets paid by the government, so he has joined a friend on a fishing boat, and is not around when two neighbours come to blows about a fallen fence. Wives run for help and the two are separated, the smaller one with a bloody nose. There is a general feeling that both of them acted childishly, but that the bigger one should not have allowed himself to get into the fight; it is made gently clear that the next time the smaller one would get support. But if the dispute is not settled, friends would persuade them, for the sake of peace, to find someone to arbitrate between them. If they both felt that the Major General would be unbiased, they might ask him. A leopardskin chief "gave his final decision as an opinion couched in persuasive language and not a judgement delivered with authority. The verdict is only accepted because both parties agree to it." (Evans-Pritchard)

But if the little bloke had been Jeff, the farmer with 200 acres, he would have got no support. "Serves him right." Jeff depends for his protection on the goodwill of the community and he can never have that and 200 acres as well. "Conflict was first of all a matter between individuals, then a concern of the families and finally of the bands. The delinquent person was cautioned, ridiculed, gossiped about and shamed into

After forty years of governments' ineptitude, hasn't it begun to dawn on you that your leaders are only ordinary mortals and know no better than you how to run your life. Haven't you realized yet that economists simply don't understand the economy, that psychologists don't understand human nature, that educational experts know nothing about teaching children. How much chaos will you accept before you tell them to flutter off.

Those who are scared to do without leaders are the cause of our problems. So we are stuck with politicians who lead us with charismatic bravura from one crisis to the next. They are not gods; their experts are not infallible. How many more ridiculous laws must they pass before we tell them to crawl back under their stones? If the primitive societies can do without leaders, why can't we?



CIVILIZATION has reached a watershed. For the first time in thousands of years in mankind's history, the peoples are beginning to question the existence of the gods and the right of others to demand blind obedience, the power to order their lives. Slowly and powerfully, in Eritraea, in Brittany, in Scotland, in the neighbourhood associations of America, in the islands of the Caribbean, smaller groups are eroding the power of the Leviathans. Since the middle of the century the average size of the state has been diminishing. But the process is slow; the rulers are reluctant to abdicate power.

Devolution is inevitable, but the process could be traumatic or it could be painless. If the present policies of the rulers are continued much longer, there will be social and economic breakdown and millions will suffer and die. The Natural Society will be achieved but the process will be agonising.

If devolution is urged forward with all deliberate speed, the crash might be avoided; but there is not too much time. At a minimum vote for any candidate who offers more devolution, who is against the Common Market, for instance, whatever his other idiot policies. But lest events overtake this slow process, get out, find others, and together put forward ideas to strengthen your community, to resist governmental, bureaucratic interference. You must persuade others that the problems of society lie, not with the right or with the left, but with the whole centralized system.

But if you are going to form a group, be careful not to elect a committee. Don't abdicate power to an inner clique; and no rules! Don't let the majority tyrannize over the minority. Action must be by consensus.

If we honestly want peace and laughter, there is no alternative but the Natural Society. It will be unsophisticated, but you cannot get rid of poverty, or war, or unhappiness without losing your discos and your symphony concerts. They are all offspring of the same tyranny, obedience to the rulers.

Rules protect the rulers, not the ruled. Those words will ring across the world and change that world. No longer will the establishments be able to con the peoples out of their possessions, to tyrannize over them with their theories and philosophies for their days in the sun are almost over, and their hypocritical, predatory world will be replaced by a more gentle, honest, peaceful, Natural Society.



most children can cope. But it only needs a few delinquents for society to be impossible.

So unless we rebuild the small independent communities, we are heading for total social breakdown and no amount of flogging or redistribution of wealth will avert it.



It is usually argued that discipline is essential to the efficient running of any organization. A hierarchic, disciplined society depends on a carefully cultivated assumption that it is natural and necessary. I have already shown that it is not particularly natural. Is it necessary?

I suggest that the work done on the ground by the Social Services is carried out efficiently in spite of and not because of the hierarchic structure. Were the managements of the Old Peoples' Homes and the Social Service managements to be struck by indisposition, the staffs would cheerfully carry on. They are responsible, intelligent and concerned. Management in this case is clearly superfluous, so that obedience is similarly superfluous.

Nor is management particularly clever and the higher you go the less particularly clever it is, because the further from the ground that that the decision is made, the less chance there is of it being right. It has been said, for instance, that all the major decisions taken by the British governments in the last hundred years have been wrong. And in a tight hierarchic structure, a wrong decision taken at the bottom, challenged, is bound for disciplinary reasons to be supported all the way to the top. In a recent case of two London Transport computer operators, they were disciplined for painting a rest room without permission. It was not the painting that was in question but the discipline. "The cases were dealt with through all the stages of our agreed disciplinary machinery in which the grounds were that the men disobeyed instructions." Notice that whether it was a good or bad thing to paint the room was not considered relevant. Obedience was the only issue and the decision, right or wrong, was bound, for disciplinary reasons, to be supported right to the top. The whole 'disciplinary machinery' is a clever and totally fraudulent charade. The rules are fixed to allow the individual no chance. Carefully unstated, but proved in the courts, is the implicit demand for blind obedience in every contract of employment.

Establishments maintain the fiction that any decision can be questioned on appeal to a higher authority, but even when this actually happens, they will still demand blind obedience to the decision of the highest authority.

Thus obedience is not for efficiency but for the maintenance of the power of the establishment. For instance, when we colonized Africa, it was impossible to assert our authority, (to remove the surplus by taxation) without a chief, therefore one had to be imposed to act as a hostage for the obedience of each village. "When chiefs proved recalcitrant or non-existent, they were replaced or installed by colonial nominees." (B. Davidson). As a carrot the chief was given extra privileges and cash, a higher rate of pay. It was in the colonizers' interests to have a chief; it was in the chiefs' interest; it was in no one else's.

The only purpose of discipline and obedience is to maintain the power of the elite.

We have been conditioned for hundreds of years to believe that we are too incompetent, too stupid, to be responsible for our own lives, that we must be led, that we must have leaders. Are you that incompetent? Are you that stupid? And if you do not think you are, who are you to say that everyone else is? While everyone will angrily reject the idea that they themselves are totally inadequate, they will happily say that everyone else needs to be told exactly what to do, that they need leaders. Grow up! Take charge of your own lives and let others take charge of theirs; you're old enough now to do without leaders.

conformity." (Haviland). The problem of our present society is that families have broken up; grandparents live away from parents who live away from children, so that the family sanction for good behaviour is considerably weakened. The community sanction, in towns, vanished long ago. Our problem of law and order is caused mainly by the disintegration of the small community.

The island could get along without us very well. But what about the mainland? What about the people of Penzance? They would be alright for food as long as they like fish, but they would have to obtain wood and timber. The clay pits are not far away, so they could manufacture pottery and poultries to exchange for the natural resources that they needed. They would settle into exclusive street groups of about 500 people, each with their own factory, and each competing with other street groups. But since manufacturing is harder work than agriculture, there would be a move out of the towns and into the villages. Jeff's two sons and their families would go back to the island. (They had had to leave because the government had taken half the islands income away by taxation and spent it on the mainland, creating employment at the core at the expense of the periphery). The Major General's niece in London would go to stay with him, until the rest of the island considered that enough was enough.

In the more densely populated areas, the land would be worked more intensively and, to the extent that they were not self-sufficient in natural resources, they would go into manufacture. A community might have a steel works or a car factory, or a hospital, or a university.

It might be thought that these smaller factories would be less efficient than the present ones because they would lack the economies of scale; but about the only profitable British steelworks, in Manchester, employs 250 people. A survey (Economica '68) showed that the smaller companies were on the whole, more profitable than the larger. This is probably because the economies of scale are negated by the diseconomies of anonymity.

What about health? Once again we are confronted with a basic misunderstanding of primitive society. They are in fact healthier than we. Of the Bushmen "10% were determined to be over sixty years of age, a proportion which compares favourably to their percentage of elderly in industrial populations" (Lee) "Australia presents us with a spectacle of a continent from the pathology of which entire classes of disease prevalent in other divisions of the globe were until comparatively recent times, completely absent. Thus the whole class of eruptive fevers, smallpox, scarlet fever and measles, so fatal elsewhere, were unknown. Epidemic cholera, relapsing fever, yellow fever, whooping cough and diphtheria were equally absent, as also was syphilis." (Davidson). Urban man is riddled with disease and spends about £10 a week curing that disease. Primitive man is healthy.

But that doesn't mean to say that our accumulated knowledge would just disappear. There would still be hospitals, medicines, doctors and nurses, run as communities.

It is important (and I recognise that this will stick in the throats of the liberal humanists) for the even distribution of wealth, for a caring society and for the maintenance of order, that the community should be a totally separate geographical and social entity. If there is much social mixing between groups, if people work outside the group, it will weaken the community bond; and primitive societies recognized this by their use of dialect and costume to differentiate themselves from their neighbours. Xenophobia is the key to the communities success.

If Jeff can go drinking with rich friends outside, if he works outside, he won't depend on the group for friendship, he won't need their help in times of illness; he has no need to conform to their mores or to give up his 200 acres and the group falls apart into the unstructured society we have today, destroyed by the concept of the Brotherhood of Man.

The Natural Society will not be cultured or liberal or advanced or powerful or hardworking or great; it will be warm and well-fed; it will be peaceful, healthy, lazy and parochial. Perhaps that sort of society is not for you, but unbolt the door for those who want to go through. And there may be quite a number, for there would be no taxation which would double your income; it would mean a small plot of land and it would mean being your own boss. And it would work because it has already worked, all over the world.



IT'S a grubby sort of Utopia, perhaps, but there are very good reasons why the more visionary societies won't work. And to understand those reasons we have to look deep into history.

It is now accepted in the anthropological world that primitive man is well-fed, long-living, peaceful and happy. Today the Kung Bushmen "obtain a better than subsistence diet in an average work week of twelve to nineteen hours." (Haviland). The pygmies in the Ituri Forest work still less. Neither of them cultivate for as a Bushman said, "Why should we grow things when there are so many mongongo nuts in the world." If there were a few more mongongo nuts in the More Counties we'd probably say the same thing.

This disinclination to work has been so widely observed that frustrated planners and economists have given it a jargon name, the 'leisure preference'.

Agriculture started, not because man was suddenly imbued with the Protestant Work Ethic, or conversely because it was less work, but because he was hungry. It started when a population had grown beyond the level which the land could support at a hunter-gatherer economy. There was just not enough game or wild fruit and veg. One of the first places to start cultivation, Mesopotamia, had suffered a disastrous change of climate when the rain belt moved north at the end of the Ice Age. In spite of what our educators say, that 'Fertile Crescent' was in fact a desert by 5000 BC., during the 'Thermal Maximum'.

Again, in spite of what our educators tell us, agriculture means more work. More food is produced but the labour input is higher per unit of food. The hunter-gatherers don't cultivate because, intelligently, they know it means more work.

The first form of cultivation, in forested areas, is known as 'cut and burn', where a small area is cut down and burnt, cultivated for a few years, then left to grow wild again to recoup its fertility and a new area is cleared. But as the population increases, all the forest gradually has to be cut down and subsistence agriculture has to replace 'cut and burn' and it means more work. "Even after 'cut and burn' has been abandoned, when the work admittedly becomes more laborious, most cultivators in Africa are still only occupied for a fraction of what we would regard as a normal working year; two-four hours a day on average." (Clark).

Whereas hunter-gatherers move round their territory as certain trees come into fruit and certain animals move their annual way, the cultivators in order to protect both their growing and stored food, are forced to stay put. This has certain advantages. They can build more comfortable dwellings, they can use pottery utensils which would have been too heavy to carry around. But these advantages are only side effects of a deteriorating situation forced on them by their growing numbers.

Thus the first important development of progress has been totally misunderstood by everyone, including the economists. Instead of agriculture being the invention of a creative species which brought increasing leisure, we find that it is caused by a scarcity of resources brought on by a growing population and that it means harder work.

When early American colonists first arrived in the almost uninhabited fertile lands of the eastern seaboard, they brought with them the relatively sophisticated techniques of European agriculture. But with all the virgin

becoming increasingly visible.

While they continue to demand Blind Obedience to their own laws, they are aware of its invalidity. At the Trials of Nuremberg the plea by the Nazi leaders that they were only obeying orders was rejected.

But even if one accepts the legitimacy of the nation-state, its policies cannot work. The assumption of the capitalist societies is that if the captains of industry make fortunes then that money will 'trickle down' to the poor and everyone will become richer. I have shown that since work does not create wealth, and since wealth is only natural resources and therefore finite, one man can only be wealthy by taking wealth from another. Wealth, in theory, can never 'trickle down', and experience over the centuries has proved this in practice. Even the economists are now rejecting the 'trickle down' theory.

Thus capitalism can never produce a more egalitarian society. It can never produce more employment for all since employment is dependent on the supply of natural resources and not on some mythical business confidence.

Socialism and communism make the same mistake. They assume that industrialization will increase wealth. But work does not create wealth, it just moves it around a bit. So if they obtain more raw materials, they are only richer because others are poorer. If they increase employment, it is only at the cost of other countries' unemployment. We have hospitals and theatres because poorer countries starve.

In this analysis of progress, I have tried to show that economic growth is the means whereby we obtain natural resources from less densely populated countries in order to avoid being cold and hungry. It is not a measure of wealth; it is harder work. We didn't choose economic growth, we were forced into it. But both capitalism and socialism assume that it is a desirable end in itself. Their economic policies are geared to encouraging something which is in fact produced by the deteriorating circumstances of an increasing population; so that there is no way that they can improve life and increase economic growth at the same time. The two things are contradictory.

But just as inevitable as the economic failure of the present political systems is their failure in the social field. The increasing crime rate is caused, say the right, by the ending of corporal punishment and going soft on the criminal. The left says it is caused by poverty. Both are wrong. It is caused by the ending of the religious sanction and the ending of the community sanction.

We no longer believe in Hell, so that if priests threaten fire and brimstone to make us behave, we are not impressed. But, more important, our grandparents no longer live next door and our uncles no longer live down the street. So if we misbehave, their disapproval has less influence, we are less ashamed.

In a small community where everyone knows everyone else, if Johnny Jones decides to scrimp apples, and if Mrs. Smith sees him, he'll know she will tell his mother. He'd think again. And if Johnny had scammed and been caught, his father would have been subject to a certain amount of humorous criticism in his local that evening. He'd have gone home and persuaded Johnny against the idea in the future. But in an anonymous society, Mrs. Smith doesn't know Johnny or Johnny's mother, and his father doesn't drink in the local or work with his neighbours. There are no sanctions on Johnny.

Capitalism, by its removal of the surplus from the periphery to the core has broken up the villages and forced the population into anonymous towns. Socialism and the Welfare State is no better. When the state pays an old age pension, for instance, the pensioner no longer relies on the community or his children. The children can go off and the pensioner dies alone. The grandchildren will be brought up without the undemanding affection and approval of the grandparents, aunts and uncles. A child of overstrong parents is now totally alone, forced to be alone by the Welfare State, to grow up neurotic, insecure and delinquent. Of course

only be at the expense of the general population. The oil tycoons are wealthy because the small farmers and the black urban worker, for instance, are poor. Recently kwashiorkor, a disease of malnutrition has been found in the South-West.

The underdeveloped countries are certainly poor, not because they have a low G.D.P. or because they have few artifacts to act as stores of value, but poor because their natural resources are sold abroad at a profit to the local elite alone, creating high local prices; and poor because the import of manufactured goods causes unemployment. They are poor because we are rich: they are unemployed because we are employed.

THE immediate economic problem today is considered to be how to get the world out of recession and thus provide employment and create wealth. The solution is considered to be to get the leading economies to reflate (print money) in concert, so giving the consumers more spending power to let them buy more cars and refrigerators from other countries (us) and so create employment and wealth. The economists believe that if a factory has produced a car, it has created wealth which can be spent to create yet more wealth. By their theories the new car can be bought with the car that was built twenty years before and is now gently turning to rust.

The economists believe that if Germany and Japan reflate (print money), their populations will buy our products, giving us employment to make things for them to buy etc. But Germany and Japan are not that stupid. America is. She printed billions and, surprise, surprise, she's got inflation.

The economists believe that work creates wealth and they think that the extended boom from 1940 to 1970 proves them right. But it seems much more likely that recent economic growth has been bought on a vast Keynesian extended credit. We bought refrigerators and machines which make refrigerators and paid their producers with paper money promising to pay with non-existent natural resources. We created employment with credit and now the new restrictions on the money supply is slowing down that credit, causing unemployment.

The second major economic problem is considered to be how to make the underdeveloped countries as rich as the developed ones. For us there is a simple and inconvenient answer: to get out, to stop buying food and raw materials from them, which would reduce their prices and their need to work so hard feeding both themselves and us; and to stop selling them our manufactured goods, which would reduce their unemployment.

The result would be that we would starve and have rocketing unemployment. Happily for us there is no immediate chance of this policy being put into practice, since it would hurt their elites too much. The only thing we have to fear is the unlikely chance of land reform whereby the latifundias are divided up into owner occupied plots.

The only real way to help the underdeveloped countries is for us to reduce our population until we are self-sufficient.

GRADUALLY in every country the Divine Right of Kings became unacceptable and the king's laws of obedience were quietly transferred to an elected oligarchy and are for the moment generally accepted by the population, even though the underlying power to demand obedience had vanished since few governments today claim that they are divinely inspired.

But without divine inspiration it is necessary for governments to convince the population that they have access to some higher knowledge than is generally available. This is the reason for the elevation of the expert to sainthood. The expert has replaced the priest, but his feet of clay are

land available, there was no need for their old intensive methods and they quickly reverted to 'cut and burn' because it was less work. Technologically they regressed.

When a tribe in Java was driven off their cultivated land into the jungle by the Dutch, they forgot their agriculture and reverted to hunter-gathering. They did not find the comforts derived from agriculture worth the extra work. They regressed and they indicate an unexpected motive of human behaviour. Like every other particle and organism in Nature, man obeys the Law of Least Work.

Don't try to understand the contorted motivations of mountaineer, artist or industrialist. Just ask yourself how hard you would work if you were warm and well fed and all your friends and family were outside in the sun. How bored with leisure would you have to get to go and work on a factory production line? Many people say they enjoy their work. What they mean is that they enjoy the company of their colleagues, they enjoy the competition of business or they enjoy the exercise of authority. It is not the work itself that they enjoy.

So if we find man working hard, instead of praising him for his industry, we must ask what are the adverse conditions which have forced him into this undesirable situation.

Why, for example, did man start making cloth?

As the population grows, all the cultivatable land has to be used. But as the forest is reduced, so is the amount of game it can support; fur and leather become scarce. In order to keep warm the people are reduced to weaving, and this is harder work; and though cloth has the advantages of comfort workability and appearance, these are only side-effects of a shortage of animalskins. Cloth is less durable, more expensive and harder work. Once more, when man is working hard, it is not just for the pleasure of it.


But because the new technology is more expensive, it is first used by the rich as status symbols or armaments. In Scandinavia bronze scythes were in use long after iron had replaced bronze for swords. It was only when bronze became as expensive as iron, because of a shortage of tin, that iron scythes replaced the bronze. Cloth would first have been the mark of wealth until the increasingly expensive leather forced the whole population to wear cloth. We are seldom better off because we have what used to be luxuries. Chicken meat is a contemporary example, since beef has become so expensive.

But leather and food are not the only resources in short supply. As the forests are cut down, timber also becomes short and takes on an exchange value. A farmer with no trees on his land must sell off some of his food for firewood and building timber (fuel and raw materials). Therefore although he is growing more food, he cannot support so many people actually on the farm. The poorest, forced off the farm, have to make things which will persuade the farmer to exchange for food. He will only do this if they put more labour into the artifact than he would do himself. Specialization is harder work and it is caused by poverty, not leisure. "Certain orthodox views of evolution are better turned around; the amount of work per capita increases in proportion to technological advance and the amount of leisure decreases." (Sahlins)

The blacksmith in myth is often lame, such as Hephaistos, Vulcan or Wayland Smith. In less advanced societies the smiths are of the lowest castes or classes. In Baluchistan "they lived in their own segregated camps and were employed by the company in their traditional menial capacity of sweepers and blacksmiths." In more general terms mythology bears out this analysis in another way. It nearly always describes a golden age that was in the past.

To exchange his food the farmer must go to market. Roads and bridges have to be built; carts with wheels have to be constructed; more efficient tools have to be made and all this extra work has to be included in the cost of the food. The more intensive agriculture becomes, the more work is

involved: "the need to support a larger population from a given area of land is going to call for an increased input of labour per unit of food produced - particularly when we take into account the labour which will have to be used for private investment in the form of improvements in farms and public investment in means of transport, irrigation etc." (C. Clark).

 When a farmer grows a surplus of food, he has created wealth; but kept too long the food goes bad so it is convenient to exchange it for cattle which live longer, give milk and can be exchanged back for food. Cattle, besides being food themselves, are a store of value for more perishable foods. At this point there is no wealth other than natural resources.

Now, supposing an artisan needs food and makes a plough and exchanges it with the farmer for food. This he eats. The farmer now has a plough worth, say, a bushel of corn. But it is a diminishing store of value. The plough deteriorates and each year is worth less food. By the end of its life, say, twenty years, how much wealth has been created? If the plough has contributed to producing more food, then wealth, food, has been created. But the plough itself has vanished; it is not wealth. Work does not create wealth; it just moves it around a bit, in this case, food from farmer to artisan.

If a potter also needed food, and the farmer's surplus was limited, the potter and the plowright would have to share that surplus. All the artifacts are only worth the available agricultural surplus (and fuel and raw materials). If you double the artifacts you halve their value. Wealth is increased, not by the manufacture of artifacts, but by an increase in the supply of natural resources. At this point there is still no wealth other than natural resources.

Now supposing a man brings in a nugget of gold. The farmer reckons it is pretty and doesn't tarnish. He reckons he could always exchange it for a bushel of corn. But if there is no corn, it has no value. If he exchanged it for a plough, the plough is still only a diminishing store of value for natural resources. The import of gold has created no wealth. But if, in a period of food shortage, the potter and the plowright and the gold trader all wanted food, the available food surplus would be divided into three. That is to say, a unit of currency will reduce the value of an artifact. All the artifacts plus the gold are now worth the farm surplus.

THE VALUE OF SURPLUS NATURAL RESOURCES EQUALS THE VALUE OF ALL THE ARTIFACTS ON THE MARKET PLUS ALL THE CURRENCY PLUS ALL THE STORES OF VALUE PLUS ALL THE CREDIT.

Adam Smith said, wrongly, "Consumption is the sole end and purpose of production." It is not. Acquisition of natural resources is the sole end and purpose of production. But every economist since Smith has made Smith's mistake, and so built the edifice of modern economics on a fundamentally false premise. No wonder economists are in a pickle.


If bad weather produces a low crop the farmer will not be able to buy the artisans' products. There will be unemployment. If the forrester has a fire, he will not be able to exchange his timber for artifacts. There will be unemployment.

THE AMOUNT OF SURPLUS NATURAL RESOURCES DETERMINES THE AMOUNT OF AVAILABLE EMPLOYMENT.

If the level of employment is determined by resource production, and

was no surplus natural resources to buy. At first food imports were paid for in gold until they were able to build up an exporting industry. Their economic miracle was simply the pent up pressure for food fuel and raw materials for a dense population.

I have tried to show that progress and economic growth are simply functions of population density, of the need to stay warm and well fed in the face of increasing demands by the establishment, dictatorial or democratic. And I have tried to show that it is not a one way street. If the population falls significantly, or if the establishment becomes less rapacious, then technology regresses as during the Dark Ages or after the Black Death, the period known as the golden age of the peasant, or in early colonial America or quite recently in South America.

 BUT if economic growth and progress are the products of a deteriorating situation, why do we seem to be wealthier than the underdeveloped countries?

Part of the problem lies in the definition of poverty and standard of living. The hunter-gatherer knows no scarcity. Food and heat are abundant. He has been called the first affluent society. The only things a pygmy will take from civilization are a steel knife, tobacco and the occasional top hat. He has a per capita gross domestic product of nil. He is warm and well fed; he has everything he needs or wants. He has no money. How poor is he?

The inhabitants of India or Mongolia with an income of say £100 survive. In Britain with such an income we would be dead of cold and starvation within two months. The fact is that in these less developed countries much of what is vital for life is free; timber, wild fruit and veg, game etc. In Britain we have to pay for water. In Tokyo they even have to pay for oxygen. So we are not living the good life simply because we have a high gross domestic product, whatever the politicians may say.

I have already shown that work does not create wealth so that the number of factories or artifacts we have is no indication of prosperity. But Britain does possess a great deal of potential wealth. The British Empire taxed its colonies. It creamed off their surplus and removed it to Britain, where it was converted into buildings, furniture, pictures etc., which still retain their store of value in terms of food, fuel and raw materials. To this extent Britain is wealthier than most.

To what extent do the trappings of an affluent society indicate wealth? 69% of British women work and threequarters of those are of the poorer classes. They can mostly do their shopping only once a week, so that for them a refrigerator is not a luxury but a necessity, and without a car how do you carry a week's supply of shopping; and when you work all day, the same could be said of hoovers or convenience foods etc.

One real measure of affluence is the amount of meat, fruit and vegetables in a diet. Today we rely more and more on cereals and sugar, the cheapest form of protein and calories.

There is another reason why we might appear to be more wealthy than is the case. Since most credit has no backing of natural resources, we have bought cars with paper money that promises to pay in food that hasn't yet been grown or coal that hasn't yet been mined or copper we haven't worked to acquire.

It seems likely that Britain lives as she does by exchanging her store of value built up by the Victorians and by living on tick.

One more aspect of the apparent wealth of a country is that an image that a country gives does not give the whole story. American films have given the impression of great general wealth. As I have already shown, a high G.D.P. is no indication. If there is great individual wealth, it can

declined in the third century, Rome had no further need for the extensive wheat lands. The Roman Empire declined and fell. And as the population declined, so technology regressed, as we might expect. "The fall of Rome was made manifest in the restoration of a culture designed not for cultivation but for the exploitation of the natural wilderness." (Duby)

Great Britain used a mixture of the two systems. She got herself an empire and she got herself industrialized. By the end of the 18th century her population was rising sharply. The serious timber shortage finally made it necessary to dig for coal on a large scale and to build the vast network of canals, roads and railways needed to transport it, and other necessities, all over Britain. Never before or since has a population worked so hard while this infrastructure was being built. Only when it was finished was child labour outlawed. Once more a shortage of natural resources has produced new techniques which require more labour.

We think we work less hard than peoples of the past because we compare ourselves with those days of the early Industrial Revolution; but that time was exceptional. In ancient Greece, "the effect of the dormant periods meant that for almost half the year there was little to do on the farms." (A. French). In mediaeval Flanders where the woolworkers were amongst the poorest and most hardworking in Europe, "holidays were frequent since all Holy Days were usually appointed obligatory days of rest.... Even when only the Apostles' Days were observed, the total annual holiday would be longer than now, particularly since work commonly stopped at the mid-day dinner bell on the vigil (the previous day) of each feast.... The ordinances of Arras decreed that there should be no work for four days at Christmas, eight days at Easter and eight at Pentecost." (Camb. Econ. Hist. Eur.)

The peasants, of course worked less hard. "At Thaxted a virgater had worked 137 days in winter and summer (together) and 38 during the harvest, on the basis of a five day week, four weeks holiday at Christmas, Easter and Whitsun and 61 Saints days in winter and summer and 4 in the harvest season." (N. Kenyon).

Britain had to import food or she would starve. The people we exported to didn't absolutely need our goods, so we had to produce them, cotton in Lancashire, cutlery in Sheffield, more cheaply than they could make them themselves. We had to work harder than they did by the input of more labour, including more investment in machinery and more infrastructure. So much for the Protestant Work Ethic and the lazy native.

Also, since no one grows more than is needed, the food producing countries had to work harder to produce for both themselves and us. As with Athens, we bartered with the local elite to the detriment in terms of unemployment and higher food prices of the local inhabitants. It is no different today.

About 1870 there began the Great Depression which lasted for twenty years and no economist has explained it. By about 1870 corn began to arrive from America and because it was much cheaper, Britain did not have to produce so many goods to buy the necessary food. The demand for steel slumped etc. etc.

The economists failed to explain it because they thought that consumption and not the acquisition of natural resources was the object of production. But in this case the British population obeyed the law of least effort and worked only as hard as was necessary to stay warm and well fed. The depression was a depression for commerce and industry, but not for the majority of the population. Wages levelled out but prices dropped. They didn't need to work and they didn't! This is a good example of a trade depression which improves the life of the common man. The same was true in the time after the Black Death or the 1930s Depression when the 80% of the population who were employed enjoyed the same lower prices.

In 1868 the Japanese were suddenly allowed by their establishment to trade with the outside world, to import food. For two centuries there had been malnutrition food shortage and famine. There was no industry for there

if a farmer decides to spend his surplus on a plough share from Canada rather than clothes from Hong Kong, then employment in one place can only be at the expense of employment in another. Employment in London must be at the expense of employment in the Scottish Highlands or Mozambique.



AMONG the primitive hunter-gatherer, groups number about 25 people. When the population density increases, and they are forced to cultivate, they coalesce into groups of about 500, the maximum number of people that one person can know; and they use dialect and costume as a means of identification to the tribe; and a means of excluding outsiders.

In a natural economy, as its numbers grew above the optimum 500, it would split into two because of increasing dissension, each cultivating its own half of the territory more and more intensively; each, to the extent that it needed to import raw materials, manufacturing one product, jealous of its knowledge and techniques. This is to a certain extent what happened in South East Asia. The group would need no chiefs or rules or policing: "when a group exceeds 500 persons it needs some form of policing." (Pfeiffer). It would have a natural peck order, but those at the top could not demand obedience of the others. "The chief has no institutionalized authority and little disciplinary power." (Haviland). The chieftain is usually spokesman of his group and master of its ceremonies with otherwise little influence, few functions and no privileges. One word from him and everyone does as he pleases." (M. Sahlins). There is no centre of authority in the village and moreover it is customary to avoid public responsibility....for fear of exciting jealousy." (M. Douglas).

But, particularly in Europe, the natural economy became distorted by the priests.

The seeds of this distortion go right back to the most primitive societies, though religion was, at this stage, far less significant and demanding than we had been led to believe. The Andaman Islanders fear their god, indeed; but also take great delight in cheating him by breaking his rules in certain circumstances where they believe that he can't see. His rules came from witch doctors; "long established customs may be altered overnight as a result of a revelation by some seer, only to have the new customs overthrown themselves in the course of time by the next revelation." (L. Cipriani)

But this less than wholehearted obedience to the laws of the god as handed down by a seer was the unlikely means whereby the elite grew to power. In a small group the seer was always a prophet in his own land; he was Fred Smith, he had warts and B.O. and wasn't amazingly successful with women; he obviously had the 'power', but he was equally obviously still only a man. It had never been possible for him to demand obedience of the rest of the tribe. But now, with the growth of religion, the situation changes and man makes a momentous departure from the Natural Society. It was now possible for the group to grow beyond the size of 500 and still be an ordered society, but this depended on the acceptance by the population of a god, of his prophet and of his laws. Without that acceptance order could not be maintained in an anonymous society.

The behaviour of the Eskimos shows that the development of religion is not a progress in thought but an accommodation to more densely populated living in a more anonymous grouping: "the people have two ways of grouping themselves, and to those two ways correspond two judicial systems, two moral systems, two sorts of domestic economy and of religious life. To a real community of ideas and interests in the dense agglomeration of the winter, are opposed an isolation, a social atomization and an extreme moral and religious poverty in the dispersal of the summer." (Mauss).

But acceptance of a religious fiat brought far more dangers than advantages. The seer or prophet could now demand obedience, and the

autocratic chief, that we think of as typical, begins to emerge.

Once a society grew larger than 500, when there was a degree of anonymity, some, who didn't know the seer, could be persuaded that he was something special, that he really had the ear of God. And if the people could be persuaded to do what he said, his family and friends were not slow to see the potential. It was in their interests to boost his superman image and it was in his interests to let them do it. The individual depended on the oligarchy and the oligarchy on the individual.

The prophet, backed by the oligarchy, could now put on the pressure. In Israel, "Moses told the people, "You must obey all the commandment of the Lord, your God, following his instructions to the last detail, going the whole way he has laid out for you; only then will you live long and prosperous lives in the land you are to enter and possess..." (Deuteronomy)

Just in case the carrot wasn't enough, the stick was applied. "He, (the Lord), issued the following command to Moses: "Execute all the tribal leaders of Israel. Hang them up before the Lord in the broad daylight so that his fierce anger will turn away from the people." So Moses ordered the judges to execute all who had worshipped Baal." (Numbers 26)

Having established the principle of Obedience to the Law, the Lord proceeded to take His people to the cleaners. "A tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain or fruit, is the Lord's and is holy. If anyone wants to buy back this fruit or grain, he must add a fifth to its value. And the Lord owns every tenth animal of your herds and flocks," etc. (Leviticus, 27)

And where did this money go? To the prophet-king, Moses, and his family and friends, who could now buy their henchmen, bureaucrats, policemen, soldiers, priests, etc. to reinforce their position. Thus they were able to live in comfort, without the need to work, by forcing the inhabitants to hand over part of their agricultural produce. They were also able, after a little chat with the Lord, to rewrite the rules when changed circumstances might threaten their income.

RULES PROTECT THE RULERS, NOT THE RULED.

Very often the elite gained their position by invasion, Moses in Israel, William the Conqueror in England. The invaders took it by the sword but legitimized the theft in connivance with the religions and the theory of "The Divine Right of Kings". Of course the population can only be conned in this way as long as they believe in the same god. That was why it was so useful to convert all the Africans in the colonies to Christianity. Once a population believes that a ruler is chosen by God, then it is a simple matter to demand Blind Obedience (or obedience to the law; it is the same thing) of the population.

The peasants were now forced to produce a surplus (for a surplus is never produced voluntarily) and that surplus was stored in the palaces, the garrisons, the abbeys, and the castles. Therefore the poorest peasants with the least land were forced to go to where the surplus was kept to earn back by labour the food which had been taken from them. It was the extortion of a food surplus from the land by the Establishment which brought the need to invent writing. The first written clay tablets were lists of agricultural stores in the temple warehouses of Mesopotamia.

Thus towns and cities grew up round these castles and abbeys. They have no independent economic validity. They produce no wealth, for work does not create wealth. They are simply places where the extracted surplus was spent. If a king goes away and the surplus is no longer brought to the city, then the city dies. In 1570 Akbar the Great built a city at Fatehpur Sikri. Fourteen years later he left, taking the surplus with him. So the people had to leave to. All that remained was an elegant skeleton of a beautiful sandstone city. "The private dwellings and the shops decayed and disappeared; the walls, mosque, mint, treasury, caravansary, palaces and other public places remained; no industry has since come near." (J. Galbraith).

The idea that people only work for others because of poverty is admittedly an unusual concept in our society but more primitive peoples

would accept it totally. In Nepal, "Each of the larger settlements in the valley has, attached to it, a number of low caste families, either blacksmiths, leather-workers or tailors." (Gellner and Humphrey). In Polynesia, "in some villages there is a despised community of craftsmen and traders, highly skilled in wood-carving and basketry." (Diamond). "Where land is cheap, where everyone who so pleases can obtain a piece of land for himself, not only is labour very dear, as respects the labourers' share of the profits, but the difficulty is to obtain combined labour at any price." (Gibbon Wakefield).

Once an establishment can control a population by laws of obedience, it can adjust the laws to suit itself. In England the local Guild Merchant paid gold to the king and in return received the monopoly of the wholesale trade of the area. It received a charter to hold a market or fair. This means, in reality, that the rest of the countryside is forbidden to have a market, a situation which the population is forced to accept, however unwillingly, by the laws of obedience. Farmers have to come to the market town where their selling price is forced down by the monopoly and the buying price for cloth etc. is forced up. (And if you think this sort of monopoly no longer exists, just try selling your glut of lettuces in your local High Street. They'll find a hundred reasons why you can't. It is still illegal to hold a market without permission and two have recently been forbidden here in Reading.) The division of trade into wholesale and retail was the means whereby the monopoly was enforced.

And just as trade was monopolized, so was manufacture. Capitalism was not the product of the accumulation of capital or entrepreneurial flair, but of monopoly enforced by the laws of obedience. Commerce was forbidden to the poor on all but the lowest levels.

Cities are biologically unhealthy; the fertility rate declines as the density increases; growth is mainly by immigration. Cities are medically unhealthy: "the mortality rate for all causes is often well above the national average." (Coates and Rawster). As for crime: "statistical studies have shown that the frequency of crime is several times higher in the cities than in the rural areas." (Glozer)

For the Establishment cities were centres of luxury and leisure and since it was only they who had the leisure to write, it is their judgement of cities which has remained. The inhabitants of Hogarth's Gin Alley would hardly have agreed with Dr. Johnson about London. By removing any surplus, by taxation, from the periphery to the centre, employment is created in the city at the expense of employment at the periphery. This is the basic reason for the flight to the cities. But the economists don't know that.



Once a nation has outgrown its own food and resources we reach the final stage of economic growth. There are two methods of importing, barter and theft.

Athens used the first. In order to get grain she had to persuade the Black Sea tribes to sell their corn to her. In return she had to produce an artifact that was cheaper than the indigenous product. She had to destroy the indigenous pottery industry causing unemployment. Were these lands owner-occupied, the farmers would have sold any occasional surplus. But since the establishments owned the land, they were able to sell off the food in return for gold or the status baubles of civilization, to the detriment of the farm workers who now had to work much harder producing food for both themselves and Athens and they had to pay more for their corn being in direct competition with the Athenians. It was therefore in Athens' interest to support the authority of the local establishment against the local peasantry, (as it was in our interests to support the Shah of Iran).

Rome manufactured nothing. She sent her armies into the wheat producing countries and 'taxed' them. This theft method does not need the support of the local elite, as Boadicea found out. When the Roman population