

# POLITICS, ECONOMIC DILEMMAS AND TRADE-UNIONISM

by  
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## **Introduction**

Any familiarity at all with the patterns of power-distribution in modern society reveals to us the proverbial battle between capital and labour, employer and employee. Accordingly, any informed inhabitant of any of our western industrial lands has heard of workers' associations and is able to converse with others about trade unions (although trade unions are usually associated with employees only, it should be remembered that there are employers' associations too). This economic battle-scene is so widespread that all and sundry accept it as a natural, unavoidable ingredient of present-day life. We rarely stop to consider its origins, or even faintly doubt that it is really necessary for capital and labour to be at continual loggerheads. Little effort is made to determine the implications of this (usually 'legalized') economic civil strife.

## **Historical perspective**

We do not find wage-earners in the modern sense of the word in the medieval guilds. Instead, the craftsman, with his fellow-artisans and his apprentice, all co-operated in the same enterprise. The apprentice, in learning to master the craft, was wholly dependent upon the training and experience which the master-craftsman provided and, following the completion of his own masterpiece, he too became a master of the trade. Moreover, the trade-guild did not 'produce' for an unknown consumer-market, but on direct order only—according

to known need. There could be no question of over-production.

Neither does the later system of domestic 'entrepreneurship' as yet exemplify the modern wage earner. Here the domestic family takes upon itself (within the confines of the family's dwelling) to perform labouring tasks as required. The father owns the requisite tools, while his wife and children are engaged in his service. The capital-owning entrepreneur provides the raw materials, collects the finished product and provides for its marketing. During the transition from guild to domestic industry, therefore, we see the gradual beginnings of a demarcation between employer and employee. But as yet the father (head of the domestic enterprise), is well-situated in that he owns his house and his tools, and, as head of the family, directs his own domestic enterprise. He is dependent, however, upon the capital-owning entrepreneur for the provision of the raw material and this ultimately occasions the 'separation' between capital and labour (employer and worker).

Not until the transition from domestic industry to the factory system does the modern wage-earner make his entry on the scene. Whereas the medieval craft-guilds could dispose of capital, roof, tools, raw materials and labour, and whereas the father/head of the domestic enterprise could still freely dispose of part of the production-capital (roof and tools) as well as family labour-being dependent on the capital-owning entrepreneur for the raw materials only—the wage-earner now finds himself totally dependent—except for his capacity to work and his ingenuity—upon his employer. Raw materials, tools, and factory buildings now belong to the employer who only provides remuneration for the worker's service of labour. Such is the plight of the wage-earner.

### **Necessary distinction**

Wage-earners appear on the scene as early as the

seventeenth century in England, which explains why the last decades of that century already witnessed the foundation of a number of workers' associations. These organizations, therefore, came about at least one century in advance of England's so-called Industrial Revolution (1760-1830). Nevertheless it is commonly suggested that the modern trade-union movement finds its direct origins in these earliest of workers' associations-on the assumption that both came into existence during the Industrial Revolution, because, it is said, the modern factory system gave rise to the struggle between capital and labour. This, however, is misleading: first of all because the existence of wage-earners and their organizations long preceded modern production methods and the concomitant factory system; and secondly because the Industrial Revolution—with its punch-clock, energy-potential and machinery—was not the only 'revolutionary' occurrence in the history of eighteenth—and nineteenth-century civilization. In short, the earlier workers' associations and the modern workers' trade unions are anything but identical.

We must distinguish, therefore, between the workers' associations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the one hand, and the trade unions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on the other. Furthermore, we must question the idea that the Industrial Revolution—and all that it is said to imply for employer and employee—is a sufficient explanation for the rise of the trade unions in their typical endeavours and strivings. I submit that matters are not quite that simple.

### **Humanism and its positivistic 'social' science**

I stated above that the Industrial Revolution was not the only 'revolutionary' happening of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For it is precisely these two centuries during which the most thoroughgoing revolution in the history of western civilization was effected by the humanistic view of both reality and science.

Humanism, which thrives on its God-forsaking deification of man, subsumes the entirety of created reality under its false religious basic motive of nature and freedom. This dualism depends on an unending antagonism between natural law-regularity on the one hand, and limitless human freedom on the other. With all emphasis placed one-sidedly on natural laws, man-as though nothing but a natural thing-is subjected to the supposedly all-determining validity of exact natural laws; he is a slave to the laws of nature. If, instead, the emphasis is one-sidedly shifted in favour of his unrestrictedness, then man appears now as 'absolutely' free, his own law-giver-an absolute Sovereign.

Subjection to the Creator of heaven and earth, and to his richly variegated and all-encompassing law, is foreign to humanism; therefore it is unaware of the proper distinction between God's natural laws for matter, plant and animal and his norms for man and his cultural task. Yet in the midst of this sorry lack of distinction the rise of humanism's positivistic sciences of man occurred.

Proceeding from the natural-law pole of the humanistic world and life view, it is simply assumed that man's life too is subjected to comprehensive and permanent laws of nature, and that the discovery and formulation of these laws is the prime task of the social sciences. The discovery of the exact, law-conforming character of natural events (as a result of the rapid development of the natural sciences since the seventeenth century) was a misleading stimulus to humanism's exaggeration of the scope of natural law.

Rejecting God and his commandment, humanistic minds in search of natural laws have shared one ideal, viz. the discovery of 'absolute' laws of civilization, to which human society and the entire history of civilization are inexorably subjected. Thus was positivism heralded through the entire range of western social science and hence it arose that the normative aspects of man's life, and also of his societal structures and arrangements, have been societal structures and arrange-

ments, have been subjected to the rule of imagined, but non-existent, natural laws. Inspired by this false epistemology, the methods of the natural sciences were introduced in the social sciences, while cultural norms were replaced in theory by fictional social laws.

In the tow of such a positivistic current, not a single one of the social sciences was able to escape the imperialism inherent in this natural-science ideal. One after the other has fallen victim to it and now operates in terms of laws instead of norms: *laws* of faith, *laws* of love, *laws* of economics, social *laws*, *laws* of language, *laws* of history, and *laws* of thought. The creational distinction between *human* and non-human, the difference between cultural norms and natural laws, is effaced theoretically in a blind effort at simplification, and law-regularities reminiscent of the natural sciences are accorded sovereignty over all of our earthly existence.

Now it was precisely these positivistic 'social' sciences as conducted by humanism which, more than all else, contributed directly to the rise of the modern trade-union movement.

It will suffice in this essay to single out political theory and economics for attention. After all, these two social sciences not only appear as convincing instances of the general revolution in science which took place at the beck and call of positivism during the latter period of the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries, but they were to contribute the lion's share in shaping 'academic convictions' which could only issue in the modern, militant trade-unionism we know

### **Political nihilism and positivist economics**

The trend-setting politics of the time (seventeenth to nineteenth centuries) ran on positivist rails. It set out from humanistic individualism's 'sovereign' individual—the discrete, numerical component of a mathematically construed 'people of the state'. It made speed in the direction of state-nihilism, according to which the gov-

ernment should restrict its legislative activities to what is absolutely necessary since the so-called laws of society would then regulate and order all things automatically. Following the program of John Locke (1632-1704), James Mill (1773-1836) and others, the 'naturally measurable' liberty of the individual stands highest in estimation and all is focused on the greatest happiness of the greatest number—an exact computation meant to secure a utopian social balance, to which government could best contribute by standing aside while the 'perfect' individuals experience their salvation according to law.

Still in its infancy, the economics of the time—just as in our day—moved along a similar positivist pathway. 'Enlightened,' among others, by Adam Smith (1723-1790), Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) and David Ricardo (1772-1823) all believe that the 'law' of Supply and demand correctly regulates all economic relations and occurrences and that man in his economic doings has no choice but to subject him-self to the operation of this 'basic law' of economics. In a system of 'unconstrained competition', supply and demand will guarantee continual progress and conserve only the best—a positivist consolation founded on evolutionist assumptions!

A ready ear was lent to tenets of positivist political theory and economics and thus the way was prepared for another revolution (in addition to the Industrial Revolution).

### **England** (*fertile soil for the early rise of trade-unionism*)

Favoured by a tranquil cultural development and a relatively steady economy, England not only offers the best example of today's course of development, but was also the original breeding place of modern trade-unionism. England's trade unions were to serve as the model for other industrial nations. We will therefore concern

ourselves with the history of English trade-unionism.

*Guided by positivism in the social sciences: workers' association becomes trade-union movement*

The English Government protected the workers by various forms of labour-legislation during the seventeenth century; it even prescribed a minimum wage. As late as 1756 a law was enacted enabling the British courts to determine wages for piece-work. However, it marked the end of that era in which the British government showed concern for the fate of its worker-subjects. Theory guides life, and political theory guides government policy.

The very next year (1757)—well in advance of the 'official' start of the Industrial Revolution—we find the beginnings of what would soon become a general repeal of legislation to protect the workers in England. When, in 1776, a protest was raised against the 'spinning-jenny', the Lower House would not so much as receive the workers' petition. The British Parliament would no longer support a labour policy which protected the worker against extortion and reduced ('sub-minimal') wages—that was a job which could safely be left to the operative economic 'laws'.

In 1799 this 'hands-off' policy reaches its zenith in the legal prohibition of all workers' associations in England. In the era shortly to dawn, the wage-earner of the nineteenth century was to appear upon the stage with new, more powerful weapons than the loosely organized and relatively uncoordinated associations of his wage-earning ancestor.

Already during the final decades of the eighteenth century—and in consequence of the nihilism of government policy-makers—a resistance mentality begins to assert itself. (It is this fact that lends a semblance of truth to the idea that modern trade unions were the result of a continuous development beginning with the earlier

workers' associations. However, the ban on the latter *did* bring them to an end in 1799.) Even in 1776 Adam Smith observes: 'People of the same trade seldom met together even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices.'

In short, the spirit of resistance takes hold of the wage-earners as a result of a political change taking place well before the Industrial Revolution. When the workers began to realize that their Government no longer 'cared for its people', but instead stood idly by while they experienced increasing injustice in the newly-developing factories, their confidence in a liberal, unconcerned government evaporated.

Suppose the Industrial Revolution had taken place - but without the positivist revolution in the conduct of political and economic science and the resulting change in government policy. Then the modern trade-union movement would not have emerged as heir apparent of the earlier workers' associations. To reject this conclusion, you must resort to the delusion of Marxist communism which raises economic relations and methods of production to become the 'law' of the history of civilization. Not so! It was an apostate turn of heart which provided students of human society, liberal leaders of state, 'law'-orientated economists, employers *and* employees with a false view of reality; this is the well-spring of modern trade-unionism and not the relationship between capital and labour in the factory system, however much that may have been a supporting factor.

We must not forget that the Industrial Revolution itself took place in this spiritual climate associated with positivist social theory; it is the self-same 'law' revering attitude which also stimulates and accompanies the rise of our mechanized systems of production. Thus workers are left, without government protection, to the 'natural' workings of some supposed mechanics of life—the erring result of a false epistemology that most certainly was not produced in the factory, but rather in the posi-



tivist theories of humanist scholars.

These scholars, when the wage-earner enters the modern industrial scene, observe him and give their theoretical account of him. Denatured and robbed of his truly human features, he is reduced to one of the factors of production to be weighed along with others such as land, buildings, machines and raw materials: the factor of labour, owned by the entrepreneur; an object, together with the other means of production collectively part of the firm; a cog in the production-machinery; a legal object lacking every legal claim to wages (the much-denounced wage-slavery of Marxist terminology).

What with government aloof on the sidelines, this 'labour-factor' could not but declare his distress in vain, nor could he find sympathy with his entrepreneur-employer. After all, the science of economics had established that only a limited and fixed amount of the total national income was available for wages. No one could change this even a penny's worth—whatever the total national income might be. Such was the answer of 'law' economics with its 'iron wage law' (final decision as to the price of labour).

Only Malthus was able to rise to the occasion with 'wise' counsel. Impressed by the 'logic' of the 'iron wage law', he did a simple bit of figuring: fewer workers, more wages, and vice versa. Therefore: birth-control! That would cut the workers' families down to size; the supply of labour would decrease and hence guarantee higher wages. In short, the workers should duly adapt to the 'law' of supply and demand—actually, they must gradually disappear—and then their misery-under-the-breadline (also seen positivistically!) would vanish as well.

### **The union movement—a character profile**

Following the ban on their organizations (1799) the workers' leaders were chased as rebels and traitors. So

the rise of trade unions was delayed until the repeal of this prohibition in 1824. (The dangers of the French Revolution had not materialized, but the rich in England were forced to take seriously the gradual rise of revolutionary ideas [one man, one vote]. The Reform Act, for example, was enacted in 1832, extending the right to vote to even greater numbers.)

Fully acknowledged legal personality, however, was not to be granted to the trade unions until fifty more years had passed, and then rather more as a result of the struggle in the political parties between country and city than because of changed philosophical convictions.

Nevertheless, the wage-earner continued to be a fully-orbed personality—despite his humiliation with a craving to be recognized as such; and therefore, following 1824, he endeavoured on his own account to break the positivistic fetters holding him tight and to entrench himself against the capital-owning entrepreneurs. Lacking government aid, the workers had to forge their own weapons, and needed trade unions in order to accumulate their own economic power. Presently we see the rise of the trade-union movement eager to do battle with the capital-owners, ready to use every legal means that it can muster, forcibly to exact compliance with its demands.

Trade-union capital over against employers' capital—the chips are down in the battle of labour. And this would provide the workers with a twofold victory in the end: first of all over their employers; and secondly over the idling government of the liberal/democratic polity, within which these self-same labourers would, in time, be able also to employ the weapon of the vote.

Before we take a look at the arsenal of weapons at the command of the modern trade-union movement, we must consider the counter-arguments of those who would point to the labour-legislation enacted during the nineteenth century. That legislation is said to prove that the governments of the western nations once again followed a policy of labour protection. The truth, how-

ever, is that only the pressure which the workers brought to bear upon government caused it to pass this legislation. (The tension between labourer and government was not removed along this road of *concessions!*) We must remember, too, that humanist socialism, in various forms, appeared in western lands during the nineteenth century, and that Marxism, particularly, was to spread from England throughout Europe. If therefore the governments of western democracies did indeed wake up at some stage, it was too late, in any case, to steer Europe's labouring masses clear of the pitfalls of socialism and the rising dictatorships.

### **The weapons of modern trade-unionism**

Unlike the loosely organized workers' associations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we now see a gradual co-ordination of various workers' associations within the respective industrial sectors. So, in time, powerful trade unions developed in all of the various trades.

In this economic struggle for power between capital and labour, the trade unions, of course, found they could not do without the acquisition of their own capital and hence, right from the start, they began to amass resistance-funds and strike-funds, through membership fees and unemployment and strike-levies. To the extent that the capital means of the trade unions increased, therefore, the trade union leaders could and did step up their demands. They could and did call for strikes more frequently in order to procure higher wages, shorter working hours and better working conditions. Where the idling government refused to defend workers' rights against exploiting employers, the trade unions had no choice but to continue the lost battle for justice in the form of an economic struggle for power.

Under the guidance of union councils, a refinement of typical battle-tactics took place. Favoured by the interdependence of the various industrial sectors within

the context of the national economy, it was soon no longer necessary to call all workers to strike at once—not even in the same trade-sector. Indeed, a small percentage would suffice, not just to stop a particular subsection of the economic machinery, but even to affect the whole economy. A relatively small number of strikers, therefore, could attain success; while the central strike-funds could support them the more easily, thus increasing and maintaining the effectiveness of trade-union pressure.

With sufficient reserve capital at their disposal the centralized trade unions could win almost any battle—just so long as all workers would work for the same wages in each trade-sector, and as long as there was no outside labour-potential to take the place of paid strikers. To close these gaps, a system of collective (trade) bargaining contracts and closed shops was introduced. Both measures were indispensable to the trade-union movement in fighting mood.

The collective agreement entailed that the representatives (officials, leaders) of a trade union, and not the individual workers themselves, concluded a labour-agreement with the employers. This prevented employers from paying unequal wages for the same labour, and prevented a worker, when forced by sheer necessity, from working for less wages.

The collective agreement alone, however, was not enough. It required the support of the closed-shop policy, which meant that employers were compelled to hire trade-union members only. As a result, non-union members (outside workers) could not be called in to aid the employer during a strike. But the implementation of this measure called for vigilance (the pickets) on the part of the workers, to prevent non-union members from being hired, and fellow members from working despite a union-called strike.

Perseverance finally led both employers and liberal/democratic governments to admit to both these principles. With that, the weaponry and battle-strategy of

modern trade-unionism were largely complete. Ultimately, therefore, this signified that the individual worker and the employer were both dependent on the power of trade-union leaders, for it is they who determine to what end the labourer is to be employed, and just what labourer may work in a firm; namely, union members only. Not a trace of 'free competition' or an 'open trade market' in all this, of course; so we see that the 'law' of supply and demand respecting wages does not apply—a dogma from the arsenal of positivist economics has been blasted to smithereens!

The victory of trade-union weapons did not take place without participation in party politics, of course; universal suffrage essential to revolutionary democracy provided the necessary channels. The increase of trade-union power, incidentally, took place simultaneously with the democratization of western states: ultimately all workers were to have the right to vote. On the strength of the trade-union movement, labour parties and even labour governments were to come about in due time; and even where these are lacking, the strength of the labour vote in an industrial nation is powerful enough to cause other parties to sing to their tune. The legal position of the trade-union movement—including its battle tactics—is thoroughly entrenched by legislative enactments in every democratic state; even in places where there was never a labour-party government, as, for example, in South Africa.

By legislative measures, therefore, trade unions were granted full democratic 'citizenship status', thus rounding off a developmental process in which the trade-union movement managed to do away with all the economic and political tenets of positivism. What employers and liberal/democratic governments had not been willing to guarantee, viz. the unrestricted legal rights of the working bodies, was now exacted forcefully from them by the trade-union movement.

## **Uniformity**

On the mainland of Europe and in the younger western nations, the modern trade-union movement struck root fifty years later than in England. In the main, however, its development shows the same basic features everywhere. In two aspects, however, there is important difference. Firstly, there is the fact that the Continent generally allows room for two or more trade unions in the same industrial sector, whereas Anglo-Saxon lands usually do not. In doing so, Europe recognizes the 'world-and-life view' held by the workers and accordingly we find Protestant Christian, Roman Catholic, liberal and socialist trade unions, while elsewhere just one trade union per trade sector is allowed. Within the latter model, workers of principally divergent persuasions are all of them compelled to belong to the same trade union; an arrangement which readily causes Christian workers to follow unbelieving and Communist leadership.

Secondly, there is the difference that trade unions in numerous western nations may mobilize their funds towards political party objectives. In England, for example, this is legitimate practice. South Africa, I think fortunately, is an exception to the rule.

## **International integration**

Thanks to the position of unions on the European continent, the international trade-union movement has differentiated into three main groupings, viz. the Protestant Christian, the Roman Catholic and the so-called neutral (liberal and socialist) groupings. The last mentioned is the most powerful and is, to say the least, dominated by socialism and continuously undermined by communism.

Of course the international integration of workers provides the trade-union movement with added striking-power, as is proven time and again by a nation's workers being on strike because their comrades are

embroiled in struggle elsewhere: a state of affairs that confronts international politics with new problems, and that may oblige a national government to take the demands of foreign workers into account.

Thus western democracies have become entangled, both nationally and internationally, in the knotty affairs of the modern trade-union movement—a complicated constellation from which, today, communism benefits most.

### **Positivistic failure**

Within the time-span of hardly 150 years then, the trade-union movement has succeeded in forcing western entrepreneurs as well as democratic governments to their knees and—as will soon be clear—in starting all-out economic civil war (between capital and labour): a civil war which—if sufficient communist fuel be added to the fire—will cause so much dissension that every civil polity may easily be delivered to the experience of totalitarian dictatorship.

During those same 150 years, however, the errings of the positivistic social sciences have also been revealed for what they are by those same workers who initially were told that they could best die a childless death to meet the specifications of these sciences (Malthus). Governments that once stood idly by, were forced to enact protective labour legislation, and even legislation favouring the workers, while the ‘law’ of supply and demand was replaced, without apology, by the ‘law of the trade union’. Governments were thus forced to perform a task (and entrepreneurs into a position) of which no positivist could have even dreamed at the start of the nineteenth century. Of free competition in an open labour-market nothing materialized, because the presupposed societal *laws* obviously do not exist.

Of the positivistic intellectual climate (the womb of the trade-union movement), only the antiquated text-

books—among them, political philosophy and economics—remain; fortunately still available for historical perspective on one of the most serious derailments into which the humanist view of reality and science has led western civilization. Indeed, this false religion, with its false scientific guides, has plagued every democratic society, finally affecting all the organized professions.

*Let us also consider this . . .*

### **Universal professional egotism materialism**

Initially restricted to the ranks of wage-earners and craftsmen, the trade-union idea was soon taken up by employers in the form of employers' unions—as a means of resistance against the rising labour-forces. The offspring of this sectional economic struggle was a professional egotism which came to hold sway over all the organized professions in our extremely complex society. Thus the private trade-union attitude of the nineteenth century developed into a universal sectionalism which, practically, no organized profession is able to escape.

Of course we do not object in principle to the differentiation of the professions as the positive result of truly historical norms. Cultural progress depends in part on the increase of professions, but that is not to say that the differentiation should eventually idolize these professions.

Any cultural development is only able to maintain itself when the cultural differentiation of labour is borne by a solid foundation of integrative factors, which interrelate the independent units (among them the multiplicity of professions) in a cultural solidarity. Mature, fully-fledged units must not undermine this foundation by encouraging the break-up into sectional interests.

The typical trade-union attitudes and professional egotism of our times, however, destroy this very solidarity, because the professional egotist understands only one endeavour, viz. to further his own material interests



at the expense of all who are not comrades-in-trade. Private profit is the end justifying every means, and for its sake all forces are harnessed.

The principle of the closed shop (exclusive trade or profession) has served this professionalism eminently well; that is why it applies in many an independent profession today. Just think of the exclusive apprentice-system and of the established method by which to ration entry to a free profession, namely by means of private 'expertise'-examinations (controlled by those who 'run' such professions); and consider also the oft-accompanying abuses, all of which is to the detriment of society as a whole.

Professional egotism, therefore, not only teaches western man to value personal profit more highly than communal well-being, but also to worship material progress as the only ideal worth living for—the root-dynamic of materialism in every age. Persons belonging to professional organizations can easily be misled, therefore, into such avid pursuit of their own welfare that all nationally integrative factors, such as communal religion, communal mother-tongue, communal national commitment, communal fatherland and state-citizenship lose their grip on them. They become cosmopolitan professional citizens.

Such idolizing of the professions has been already long at work in precluding Christian prospects for the West. Instead, it offers vain imaginings of material blessedness—a ready market for communist paradisaic promises. The differentiated and independent professions, which ought to work together for the good of our civilization, have become materialistically embroiled in mutual warfare and one after the other, quarreling all the while, falls victim to the mammon of the coming Anti-Christ.

### **Revolutionary-democratic impotence**

That western democracies have been unable to call a

halt to the disintegrating process of materialist civil antagonism was to be expected, for the wholesome continuance of a form of state in which the citizenry places its government into office by means of the vote is dependent upon the cultural solidarity and responsibility of that citizenry. Indeed, only the solidarity of a democratic people can guarantee that they will be prepared to accept personal losses for the good of the public interest, thus revealing a civil-political loyalty on which the government can count in maintaining a balance and harmony in the multiplicity of legal (jural) interests.

Mutual differences with respect to political principles (and the resultant rise of political parties) is not in principle at odds with a successful course of events in a civil polity, but then political principles must be able to support these party differences. The political party system must be rooted politically; that is to say, it must, on the basis of a *cultural-political* foundation of power, seek the monopoly over the office of government, instead of doing so on the basis of *cultural-economic* power. The latter foundation must put a sectional government—in the service of an economic group—into office, rather than a state-government in the public interest.

Besides, the party system must not, obviously, shelter within it principles which deny the character of the civil polity. The possible victory of a communist or national-socialist party is the undoing of every democratic state and society valuing civil liberty. Party formation for the sake of the establishment of a dictatorship cannot be condoned by a democratic citizenry.

Of course, culturally mature citizens must always be aware of the cultural responsibility they bear in placing, their government into office. The electorate must assure themselves that the government exercises its governmental capacities in the public interest; further, they must see to it that the government maintains, in law and at law, the requisite conditions for the existence of all manner of non-political expressions of life, including the

professions; and even that it furthers their well-being positively, for only under the sway of such a government, with real concern for the nation, can the culture of a mature citizenry blossom fully.

Integrated in civil outlook and culturally responsible, consciously disapproving of totalitarian political conceptions, every democratic society clearly requires anything but economic sectionalism and professional egotism.

On closer inspection, it appears that the trade-union attitude and occupational egotism of our day is precisely out to undermine these requisites of the civil polity. In times of economic prosperity, subversion usually keeps from view, only to surface during economic adversity and crisis in order to seek control. Then it becomes plain that the enhancement of economic interests has grasped hold of the entire personhood of the materialistic professional. It takes hold of his heart and directs his whole being to protect his material property and prosperity; there is always the enclave of well-to-do professionals. His interest in government policy is restricted to the advancement of his own economic interests—the bread-and-butter vote, easily diverted from one party to another—for the only government he desires is that which places its offices at the service of *his* material security. The state, too, must be beholden to the professions.

When professional interest ultimately becomes the most important criterion for party formation, all political principles of law and justice are cast aside and replaced by economic considerations. Economic parties replace political parties and economic forces are decisive in times of political elections. The state is denatured to become an agent of the professions, while the government becomes the jack-of-all-trades!

Professional egotists cannot meet the requirements of cultural solidarity and political responsibility. Indeed, the materialistic current flows in the opposite direction, since it wishes to use the state against all 'economic enemies'; in order, so doing, if necessary with the power

of the sword, to make all things subservient to the economically strongest group, a professionalism dictatorship. The right to vote in the hands of such people, therefore, constitutes a threat to the continued existence of the democratic state which is as dangerous as it is in the hands of communists or national-socialists, for the professional materialist will not object to a totalitarian dictatorship any more than these do, as long, of course, as the government is in the control of his professional colleagues. This pattern of affairs easily gives rise to a situation in which the bread-and-butter voter can be won for the idea of a dictatorship.

### **Economic parties**

These conclusions are supported by present party alignments in numerous democratic nations. Let us picture some of them briefly to show that present day professional egotism is steering towards a situation in which the office of government must be manned by the strongest economic party, in order thus to turn each and every economic competitor out of the ring.

#### ***1) South Africa***

In my own country, economic party formation did not fully develop. This relatively favourable position is due to the fact that we are only now building an industrial economy of any importance, and to the fact that our two chief parties are supported by the cultural-political contest between republicanism and separate development over against imperialism and equalizing integration. Party struggles, therefore, still rest upon a political basis and voters from all economic groupings together belong to the same party. National Party or (until recently) United Party rule could still be in the public interest.

The National Party-United Party relationship did, though, reflect the relation of poor-rich to some extent; the Afrikaners lying far behind in terms of economic riches. National Party policy was misconstrued as

favouring farmers and labourers, while the United Party supposedly favoured capital and the rich. Yet no one can maintain that the National Party or the United Party is mainly concerned with economic sectional interests. There are, however, numerous indications which suggest that South Africa is not immune to economic party-formation.

Particularly during the First World War, when we were forced to pay more attention to our secondary industries, the trade-union movement showed rapid growth. Today our trade unions are well established, subject to the control of the central union councils, and to a system of labour-legislation protecting their traditional arsenal of weapons by and large. (Strikes occur, but labour laws have effectively restricted the employment of this battle-axe, since due procedures must be followed including attempted mediation by councils for reconciliation-before a strike may legally take place. Hence the 'go-slow' and 'work-to-rule' are more familiar to us than actual strikes.) The influence of the trade-union movement has visibly affected a number of other organized professions: farmers, teachers, doctors, and lawyers etc. have also talked of strikes in case their demands were not met.

The only economic party-formations worth mentioning in our political history are a number of labour-parties and their amalgamations and schisms between the years 1910 and 1945. The most important part the Labour Party played in the government of South Africa was in the so-called Pact Government of General Hertzog during the years 1924-1929.

The absence of strong economic party-formations to date does not guarantee that such will continue to be the case. Indeed, when the clash between separate development and equalizing integration is no longer fundamental to the party platforms, economic parties will flourish more readily, unless our main parties continue properly to protect workers' interests, thereby keeping the wind out of the sails of labour-party formations.

Next to economic party formation our political history also shows instances of parties which sought to establish a dictatorship. Besides the Communist Party—abolished since the law against Communism of 1950—mention must, in this context, be made of the ‘Grey shirts’, the *Ossewabrandwag*, and even the New Order. These attempts to establish a communist or national-socialist dictatorship in South Africa were ill-timed, since the requisite political confusion and democratic impotence were lacking.

Those democratic states in which a greater degree of industrialization and an unrestricted trade-union movement favour a rather more accentuated professional egotism, offer the best illustrations of the ways in which this cultural phenomenon gives rise to economic parties and even dictatorial regimes.

## 2) *England*

In England the trade-union movement gave rise to the Labour Party during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. It was to be the union movement’s political weapon. During the twentieth century the British Labour Party has succeeded in placing governments in office—the instances deserving of mention follow the Second World War, especially the recent six-year rule of Mr Wilson. The Conservative Party chiefly champions large capital and industrialists, with liberal-socialist compromises to cater for the labourer’s vote. English political party life therefore shows clear signs of economic tension; consequently the two main parties now rule in turn on behalf of sectional economic interests.

In view of the fact that the British Labour Party is heading for a socialistic welfare state and that in the long run the workers will succeed in gaining increasingly long terms of office, it is clear that England, rather slowly, is moving towards an ultimate workers’ dictatorship. The democratic impotence of the people permits its economic civil strife to continue.

### 3) *The Netherlands*

In the Netherlands, the rise of labour parties also dates from the closing decades of the previous century, and today the *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour Party) repeatedly dominates the Dutch political scene, usually -in co-operation with the Roman Catholic State Party.

The Roman Catholic State Party and the Protestant Parties, however, prevent Dutch workers from unitedly supporting the Labour Party, because these parties draw their support from all economic groupings. Yet the Labour Party attracts almost a third of the Dutch electorate, which implies that a coalition cabinet (the standard form in the Netherlands) can hardly be formed without the Labour Party's support-workers' interests are sectionally favoured after all, and that, note well, in the very swell of a welfare state. (It should be observed at once that the labour—or so-called 'social'—legislation of the Netherlands succeeded in imbuing a considerable percentage of Dutch workers with indifference towards the trade unions. They are so well cared for by government that union membership has actually become superfluous. Had the English governments been able to effect such a situation in the England of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, numerous western states would probably not now be saddled with militant trade-unionism.)

The Netherlands, too, knows instances of Communist and national-socialist party politics. There even was a time when the Communist Party of the Netherlands was powerful enough to declare itself openly against the House of Orange (just after World War II) and I only mention the part which Mussert's Nazi party played prior to and during the German occupation of the Netherlands.

### 4) *France*

Political party life in France shriveled away, practically, under the pressure of a number of economic par-

ties, all so small that usually three or more were required to form a coalition. It is not surprising that de Gaulle put a stop to this political fragmentation.

These examples suffice to demonstrate how much political instability has been occasioned by the modern trade-union movement and professional egotism in western democracies, and to show that this may well be the forerunner of totalitarian regimes. The dictatorships of modern times are, all of them, products of 'ideologies' which placed workers in a privileged political position.

## **Workers' dictatorship**

### ***1) Germany***

The Weimar Republic (1920/1933) illustrates how economic party-formation favours the rise of dictatorial regimes. All the integrative factors were dissolved, in large part because of the hopeless situation in which Germany found itself following the First World War. Though the times demanded national solidarity and responsibility above all, an economic party strife was unleashed, providing Adolf Hitler with the opportunity of reducing a differentiated society to a meagre tripartite arrangement of the working, the soldiering and the governing classes—poor enough restraint to facilitate a oneman-operation. The political immaturity of a considerable part of the German people did not, of course, contribute to the successful existence of a German democracy, but this alone would not have put Hitler quite so neatly in the saddle.

Although it may not seem so at first sight, we must observe that the dictatorship of national socialism was also a workers' dictatorship. Hitler undertook the battle with his National-Socialist *labour-party* and with it he effected his constitutional rise to office in 1933. It is clear, therefore, that he managed to link up with the trade-union movement. Placed in the saddle by the well-nigh exclusive strength of the workers—because they also had the right to vote—they, in particular, were



favoured under Hitler's regime at the expense of all other economic groupings.

## 2) *Italy*

Italian democracy, too, was among the first to devolve into an arena of warring economic parties. Communism flourished in its troubles and this gave rise to so much confusion that Mussolini, without so much as a fight, could take control in 1922 and establish a fascist dictatorial regime. He too was supported by the workers; fascism moreover, provides a good example of the so-called corporative state, in which professional grouping served as criterion for the stratification in the order of the state.

## 3) *Russia*

The history of the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) is so well known that it is unnecessary to prove that Lenin gained control with the aid of the strike.

Labourers, controlled by their union leaders, evidently become docile subjects of workers' dictatorship, simply because the workers' leaders man the offices of government.

In this connection we note that modern dictatorial regimes (communist and national socialist) established themselves most readily in those countries where the average cultural level of the population was relatively low. This relation between a culture and its type of state runs like a scarlet thread throughout history—a continual and serious warning! But it is also useful to notice that the workers' movement, mobilized in trade unions, constitutes the gravest threat to the democratic state in those places where the great mass of workers is culturally immature (and that includes political immaturity). It explains why the modern workers' movement out to gain dictatorial success had a more difficult time in erstwhile Protestant lands than in Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox countries. Indeed, the history of the workers' trade unions has, after 150 years, amply

proved that people who are politically too immature to bear the responsibility of a democratic electorate may nonetheless be quite effectively mobilized towards a dictatorial regime, because the trade unions consolidate their ranks economically for political irresponsibilities. Of course! For in what dictatorial regime does even the least political responsibility weigh on the shoulders of the slaves of state?

### **Humanistic bonds of kinship**

It is necessary for clarity's sake to observe that the conclusions which follow must be viewed against the backdrop of the secularized working masses of Western Europe, England and America.

Trade-unionism was to steer towards a materialistic professional egotism; in what soil could socialism find better nourishment? What could attract the uprooted masses of workers more than the paradisaic dream of a 'workers' kingdom on earth'? What could the socialist-revolutionary worker hate more intensely than his employer—the enemy whom he must continue to fight economically?

Born of humanist apostasy, the materialistic trade-union movement is en route to the depths of an anti-Christian regime, as is evidenced by the bulk of modern communist dictatorships—each claiming that the advancement of the workers' interests is his only purpose. It is but a step from revolutionary democracy's trade-union dictatorship to the communist regime.

There is a religious kinship between the trade union movement on the one hand and the totalitarian political motive on the other. Let us enquire more closely.

As the brain child of humanist individualism, the trade union idea in time undermines the foundation of every differentiated (civilized) society. By the unleashing of an individualistic sectional strife-on the basis of positivist convictions—all the prerequisites of a democratic order of state are eliminated. All integrative fac-

tors lose their force, as does, ultimately, the juridical task of maintenance of balance and harmony in a plurality of legal interests, which is a democratic government's responsibility.

The people, fragmented under such an impotent democracy, must somehow be provided with the semblance of solidarity; integrative forces must be brought into play in order to call a halt to materialistic fragmentation. The revolutionary-democratic citizenry, which by turning its civil liberties into license reaches the level of anarchy, must be forged into an orderly unit.

And the 'remedy' which humanism offers is the iron rule of a military dictatorship, in which the unmanageable people of the nation must be drilled into uniform togetherness, in the name of the workers and under the banner of humanistic socialism.

Humanism reigns throughout. Individualism absolutizes the individual, while communism and national socialism absolutize a community of men: workers' mass and 'volk' respectively, but still human beings, only in greater number. Thus the idolatry of totalitarian 'ideologies' is only humanistically 'more glorious'. A change in appearance, but not of heart.

In short, it is the same humanism which gave to modern times the autonomous, God-like individual, the trade union attitude, professional egotism, economic civil strife and totalitarian ideology—all within the political framework of two humanistic types of state, viz. revolutionary democracy and totalitarian dictatorship.

Another family likeness exists. The individualistic strand of positivism looked to 'natural necessity' for its final causes. In both communism and national socialism such determinism still rules. Historical determinism—the materialistic explanation of the history of civilization—lies behind every cultural development for communism. In national socialism, the natural regularity again comes to the surface as a historical-biological interpretation of history. The future is here projected on the basis of 'volks-bios', 'volks'-blood' or 'volks-geist'. No further

question of true freedom and responsibility remains. Such norms have vanished as they did before the 'law' of supply and demand, the social mechanics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the positivist intellectual climate that simply had to issue in the workers' movement.

Theoretically 'liberated' from obedience to the ordinances of God Triune, the humanistic individualist, communist, and national socialist could only accommodate themselves to the requirements of 'laws of civilization'. They do so without any responsibility, for if 'laws' determine all in advance, no one can be called to account for what they cause him (as individualist, communist or national socialist) to do. Then the future is certain, plain and simple.

The choice which humanistic individualism and socialism presents to man, therefore, is typical of every choice which the evil one places before man; to the right, or to the left, one inevitably winds up before his 'lordship'.

## **Summary**

1) The British Government policy of the seventeenth and of the first half of the eighteenth century, was a policy of labour-protection; hence the rising wage-earning populace could make do with loosely organized workers' associations.

2) The appearance of a positivistic conduct of the social sciences—humanistic in origin—effects a radical turn-about in the labour policy of the British Government since the second half of the eighteenth century, viz. from protection to 'hands-off'. This necessarily creates a spirit of resistance among the workers against both government and entrepreneur.

3) The Industrial Revolution brings about a situation in which the worker, more than ever, requires government protection, but precisely then it is absent owing to the decisive influence of positivist political and econom-

ic theories. Towards the end of the eighteenth century all workers' organizations are even prohibited by the liberally aloof British Government.

4) When the workers, in 1824, once again received the right to organize, their movement appears as a resistance-movement (also against the iron wage-law and birth-control) in the form of co-ordinated trade unions, and ultimately powerful central trade-union councils. In order to protect workers' interests against exploitation they developed their own militant weapons and battle-strategy.

5) The 'concession-policy' of labour-legislation during the nineteenth century was the result of pressure which labour brought to bear upon the liberal government, and this could not suffice to defuse the war-fired spirit of the trade-union movement.

6) In addition to union weapons, the workers would also employ the political right of suffrage in their battle, and gain a doubly sure victory over both entrepreneur and government.

7) Following the trade-union movement's expansion to other western industrial nations, the trade-union motive was to spread to other organized professions as well, giving rise to a universal professional egotism capable of involving every democratic citizenry in economic civil warfare—fertile soil for the dawning socialism of the nineteenth century.

8) Professional egotism demolishes the conditions necessary for the existence of a democracy, since it is incompatible with the cultural solidarity and responsibility required by a civil polity.

9) When government is denatured to the role of professional agent on behalf of powerful economic interests, the ready transition to modern workers' dictatorships such as those of communism and national socialism is easily understood.

10) The fragmented democratic society is in totalitarian manner compelled to solidarity by means of military force in modern dictatorial regimes.

11) Where the humanistic individualism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had brought about so much license that all integrative factors were cut off by the root, there the modern dictatorial regime binds together so forcefully that no breathing space is left for civil liberties.

12) Humanistic individualism and humanistic socialism (e.g. communism and national socialism) stem from the same religious root. Therefore humanism offers no other solution to this problem of civilization than modern totalitarian dictatorship, with the socialist welfare state as its ready introductory phase.

## Conclusion

And what next? Has trade-unionism come to stay? If so, how are we to evaluate and use this societal force Christianly?

In view of the present situation in the Netherlands it is not so evident that trade-unionism has come to stay. When we consider that it was called into being by a false economic theory, we must admit that a proper government-policy, in conjunction with correct economic theory, could make the continued existence of trade-unionism superfluous, however unlikely that may seem at this moment.

Our serious objection to the modern trade-union movement applies equally of course to the wrong attitude of the employer towards his employee. I call your attention to the state of affairs in the firm (enterprise, company) itself, leaving aside other societal implications.

The economic enterprise is to be typified as an *economic community* in distinction from the church as a community of faith, the family as a community of love and the state as a jural community. Those life ordinances which qualify as communities are characterized by the presence of their own typical *structures of authority*; in addition, each has its own unitary character which

binds the members of the community together in such a way that their coming and going does not destroy the community.

In the economic community of the enterprise, employer and employee accordingly are interrelated within a structure of authority: an economic unity of labour and production, in which the employer exercises the economic office of authority, with the employee as the subordinate to this economic authority. Within this economic communal framework, employer and employee must co-operate in solidarity, all things being focused on their common economic aim, viz. the economic success of the enterprise. In this sense the worker should most certainly be considered the employer's co-worker and not as a part of his economic property or business assets. Contrary to traditional economic theory, the worker must not be reckoned as just one of several factors of production. He is not to be considered on a level with location, building, machinery, money and raw material. These are all economic goods (objects), whereas the worker is economic co-worker (active subject) together with his employer.

The nature of the enterprise, therefore, requires the worker's commitment to his service of it. This comes to light when labour is performed with a singing heart rather than for a certain wage (however important that may be).

Such labour with a joyful heart demands recognition by the employer of the worker's (co-worker's) voice in the enterprise which is *his* too! His *voice* too, because without that the economically mature co-labourer cannot, in principle, experience the joy of work.

*Let us examine this more closely.*

There must be confidence on the part of the labourer in the economic enterprise; this not only concerns the question whether the employer will be in a position to pay his weekly or monthly salary but first of all whether his life is safe within the firm—else he will be *gone* be-

fore he receives his first pay-cheque. Further, whether his health is safe in the firm—else he will be *sick* before the first pay-cheque. Once the confidence (trust) aspects of the firm have been met, and not otherwise, the employer can justly appeal to the *fidelity* of the worker to his work: he must perform to the best of his ability. But then there must also be a mutually satisfying arrangement for the employee's *just wage*. In addition, *labour harmony* (team work), *labour balance* (sparing use of labour), *work contacts* (economic intercourse), *work-language*, *business-style* and *business-planning*, as well as the firm's *economic atmosphere and tone*—all of them are facets of the worker's intimately live daily task, all of them givens of which dead business/economic goods know absolutely nothing.

Then we can see a culturally (and hence, economically) mature co-worker in the firm: as a fully fledged human personality, with his responsibility, first of all towards his Creator, and also towards himself and towards his neighbour both within and beyond the firm. And this, his living responsibility, demands that he has at least an economic voice within the firm. Only then can he be a respectable co-worker and fellowman and not the production-slave of his employer!

But then this employer-employee relationship (economically focused) is undeniably very intimate, and provides the employer with a unique life-sized responsibility. He, the man who calls the worker, must take care that his firm meets all the requirements for the co-labourer's responsibility and joy in working. He must be happy to hear from his co-worker in what respects things may be amiss, across the entire gamut of the firm's affairs, so that these may be redressed. (This employer-employee relationship by no means implies that the employer passes the responsibility and authority out of hand to his employees. No indeed, for that would mean to turn the enterprise over to them—and leave.)

Now contrast, and compare with this, the position of employer and employee who meet each other as trained



extension-units of the employers' and employees' unions. They are together in the firm, but beyond the confines of the enterprise in question each of them looks outwards towards another authority—his respective union.

The trade-union mentality has blown the intimate communal character of the modern enterprise skyhigh, and employer and employee are asked to face up to each other not as fellow-workers but as antagonists in their living daily work. Just pay those highest wages, provide the shortest work-week, and offer the most wonderful bonuses and fringe benefits: there is no joy, just polarized strife. That is why both parties complain so readily about each other. Seldom the two of them meet in the same company of friends.

Much in our lives, however, goes otherwise because the Creator maintains the work of his hands; despite our false theories or wrong arrangements! We know that there are many firms where things accord with the pattern outlined above: firms where joy in labour can be found with neither employer nor employee. But we know as well that there are many firms where matters are as outlined just before that: firms in which the employer-employee relationship meets the demands of the enterprising community and where the trade unions have not succeeded in denaturing the character of the firm, with its intimate communal relationships, in the least. We recognize them easily as most successful enterprises; they keep their co-labourers from the start until their very last day of working service, singing in their hearts much of the time!

They show us that trade-unionism is superfluous, in principle. Why should a labourer worthy of his wages (and receiving them as well) be organized yet again *beyond the firm* in a separate community (the union), wasting time and dues on it, when the communal situation in his firm is right?

May the day dawn in which employers' and employees' unions exist only because they see a calling to train

economic workers towards a proper exercise of authority, a proper speaking-out on matters, and co-responsibility in every enterprise; to be better fellow-workers, and not professional fighters from the start.

*Won't that be a Christian day?*

### **Postscript**

If you wonder why I have not used the terms 'working class' and 'capitalist' at all, I have expressly avoided doing so, because these concepts are more at home in the arsenals of communist vituperative.

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*(Article translated from the Afrikaans by Phil Brouwer)*