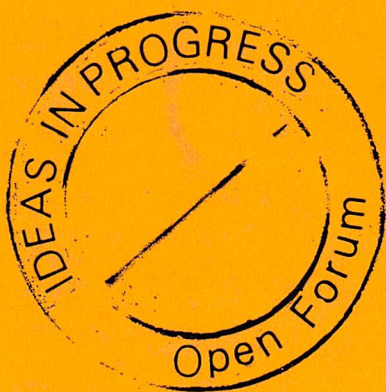


# **James Robertson**

# **POWER**

# **MONEY & SEX**

Towards a New Social Balance



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*IDEAS IN PROGRESS* is a commercially published series of working papers dealing with alternatives to industrial society. It is our belief that the ills and frustrations which have overtaken mankind are not merely due to industrial civilization's inadequate planning and faulty execution, but are caused by fundamental errors in our basic thinking about goals. This series is designed to question and rethink the underlying concepts of many of our institutions and to propose alternatives. Unless this is done soon society will undoubtedly create even greater injustices and inequalities than at present. It is to correct this trend that authors are invited to submit short texts of work in progress of interest not only to their colleagues but also to the general public. The series fosters direct contact between the author and the reader. It provides the author with the opportunity to give wide circulation to his draft while he is still developing an idea. It offers the reader an opportunity to participate critically in shaping this idea before it has taken on a definitive form.

Future editions of a paper may include the author's revisions and critical reactions from the public. Readers are invited to write directly to the author of the present volume at the following address: James Robertson, 7 St Ann's Villas, London W11 4RU, England.

THE PUBLISHERS

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Robertson was born in Yorkshire in 1928. He was educated in Yorkshire and Scotland, and at Oxford University. After two years in the Army and one year in the Sudan, he joined the Colonial Office as an administrative civil servant. In 1960 he accompanied Mr Harold Macmillan, then Prime Minister, on the 'wind of change' tour of Africa. From 1960 to 1963 he worked in the Cabinet Office as private secretary to the Head of the Civil Service and secretary of the Cabinet, Lord Normanbrook. He then spent two years in the Ministry of Defence.

Robertson left Whitehall in 1965 to become a consultant in computer systems analysis and management science. In 1968 he set up the Inter-Bank Research Organization (IBRO), and remained its first director until 1973.

In 1966 Robertson submitted an influential memorandum to the Fulton Committee on the Civil Service. In 1968/69 he was appointed to advise the Procedure Committee of the House of Commons about parliamentary control of public expenditure and taxation. In 1971 his book was published on the 'Reform of British Central Government'. In 1972 he led the IBRO team that reported on 'London's Future as an International Financial Centre'.

James Robertson's previous contribution to the *Ideas in Progress* series was *Profit Or People?*, published in 1974.

## POWER, MONEY AND SEX

*By the same author*

REFORM OF BRITISH CENTRAL GOVERNMENT  
PROFIT OR PEOPLE? THE NEW SOCIAL ROLE OF  
MONEY

IDEAS IN PROGRESS

# POWER MONEY & SEX

Towards A New Social Balance

James Robertson

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‘Those whose lives are fruitful to themselves, to their friends, or to the world, are inspired by hope and sustained by joy: they see in imagination the things that might be and the way in which they are to be brought into existence. In their private relations they are not pre-occupied with anxiety lest they should lose such affection and respect as they receive: they are engaged in giving affection and respect freely, and the reward comes of itself without their seeking. In their work they are not haunted by jealousy of competitors, but are concerned with the actual matter that has to be done. In politics they do not spend time and passion defending unjust privileges of their class or nation, but they aim at making the world as a whole happier, less cruel, less full of conflict between rival greeds, and more full of human beings whose growth has not been dwarfed and stunted by oppression.’

Bertrand Russell.

## FOREWORD

ONE or two friends have raised an eyebrow at the title of this book. It will worry some readers. So a word of explanation may help.

Systems of political power, economic wealth, and sexual relations can all be based on an ethic of domination and possession, or on an ethic of co-operation and shared humanity. In every society these systems are closely intertwined. Together they provide the means by which a society shapes its own future. They are closely related to ideas like sovereignty and ownership, freedom and love.

To illustrate this close connection between power, money and sex – and its crucial importance to the future of the human species – I have quoted extensively from a wide range of thinkers and authors. I hope that readers who are sceptical about the connection or its importance will be prepared to suspend judgement and keep an open mind until they have finished the book.

In their personal lives many people are hung up about power, about money and about sex. The organized structure of modern society suffers similarly. These hang-ups pose a threat to the survival of the human species. How can we liberate ourselves from them?

Social and economic problems combine to create in a sick society the equivalent of psychosomatic illness in individuals. The cure is not of the kind that can be administered clinically by professional teachers and doctors

standing apart. It must come about by processes of learning and healing from within. Effective reform in the political, social and economic spheres is a process of learning and self-healing, collectively experienced. It may be painful. There are old structures to be broken down, before we can break through to a more balanced and more sustainable way of life.

The drive to seize the heights of power and the urge to make a great deal of money are distinguishing features of a male-dominated society. So is the striving for intellectual and technical mastery, the desire to be in the know, the syndrome that special knowledge brings special power and wealth. These have been among the main forces motivating the human race throughout recorded history, but especially in the western world since the Renaissance and the Reformation. The rise of nationalism, capitalism and big science all in their different ways gave free rein to masculine ambition and aggrandizement, and made them respectable.

There have been many changes, often revolutionary, in the last four hundred years. But the whole era of human history that began with the Renaissance and the Reformation is now coming to an end. Its methods of deciding how power and wealth should be distributed between different members and different sections of society are breaking down. Similarly, the conventional pattern of relations between the so-called developing and developed nations, between the primary producing countries and the industrialized countries, between rich and poor, is also breaking down; previously prevailing methods of deciding how power and wealth should be distributed among the peoples of the world prevail no longer. We are beginning to recognize that the finite natural resources of our planet set limits to material growth and expansion; and that this makes the national and international problems of sharing power and wealth even more acute

and urgent. The pressures of modern societies are already causing more and more violence, crime, mental ill-health, and psychosomatic disease. The mounting accumulation of specialized intellectual knowledge and institutionalized activity in every conceivable field of enquiry and endeavour is becoming a crushing burden on the human mind and spirit. In all these spheres we need to achieve a new balance, before escalating disequilibrium leads to complete collapse. Mankind is at a turning point.

The publication of *Profit Or People?*, as an earlier contribution to this series, put me in touch with many new people who are involved in many different ways in shaping the future. They include some who are altering their personal lifestyles and encouraging their families and friends to do the same, for example, by living in smaller, more self-sufficient communities closer to the land. They include scientists and engineers who are developing new forms of technology – low impact, intermediate, appropriate, conservationist, alternative, energy-saving – designed to give us the advantages of scientific progress without the crippling side effects of capital-intensive technology, pollution and waste. There are others who are working to develop an ethos and practice of self-help in fields such as housing, education and health, as an alternative to ever-increasing reliance on large and remote institutions. Other activists are working inside today's established institutions to transform the management style and corporate ethic prevailing in government, business, science and the public services, so that these organizations can live up to a new awareness of their social responsibilities. Others again are working to modernize the formal structure of our social institutions, by redefining the functions, rights and responsibilities of the various participants in government, the economy, and public life. Others are especially concerned with the

developing role of women in society. Yet others feel that party politics is the critical area, and are seeking a realignment of traditional political forces and a restructuring of political thinking and political debate. Yet again there are those who give pride of place to new religious and cosmological ideas about man's place in the world and the universe, feeling that all other changes will follow from new intellectual and ideological perspectives of that kind.

For all of us who are working at these new frontiers there is a natural tendency to feel that our own particular approach is the one that matters most. When I wrote *Profit Or People?* I still felt that the key to a better future would be found to lie in the transformation of our existing political, economic and social institutions, and that other approaches to the problems of mankind were in some sense less central. To that extent my earlier ideas reflected my previous working experience in the fields of government, business and finance. Since then the emphasis has shifted. It now seems to me that all these areas of change – the technical, the institutional, the political, the ideological, the personal, the ethical, the ecological – are equally important. Moreover, the various different strands of thinking and activity in these areas are now beginning to converge in support of one another. Common to them all is the idea of balance or harmony – a balance in the world of nature, harmony between people and nature, harmony between different groups of people and between one person and another, balance within the individual mind and spirit, and harmony between mind and body.

Thus, in developing the idea here that systems of government and money are instruments of social self control which ought to function as balancing mechanisms to enable the billions of people in the world to live in harmony with one another, my primary concern

is still with the *social dynamics* of an equilibrium world. But I see more clearly than I did that, if people are to live in harmony with one another, they must also live in harmony with the planet that is their home, and in harmony with themselves. In thinking about the social dynamics of an equilibrium world we also have to think about the *eco-dynamics* of spaceship Earth and the *psycho-dynamics* of sane and healthy individuals. Conservationists, ecologists and scientists who are working to achieve balance between man and nature; teachers, healers and psychologists who are helping man to live in harmony with himself and his fellows; and those who are concerned, as others of us are, to replace the pursuit of economic growth by self-sustaining social and economic equilibrium: we all are working as co-partners to create a future in which mankind will be better able to survive and prosper. We all, in our different ways, are witnesses to Erich Fromm's perception in *The Sane Society* that 'the necessity to find ever-new solutions for the contradictions in his existence, to find ever higher forms of unity with nature, his fellow man and himself, is the source of all psychic forces which motivate man, of all his passions, affects and anxieties.'

There is another, more directly compelling, reason why my perspective has broadened. The earlier argument led to the conclusion, which I should perhaps have stated more explicitly, that a highly institutionalized society cannot reform itself by institutional processes from within. The only people in the system who could take the initiatives necessary to change it fundamentally are themselves its prisoners. External factors will be needed to precipitate the required mutation. In thinking further what these external factors might be, I was driven to conclude that, in one way or another, they would have to consist of changes in the hearts and minds of people. The next question was, how might such changes come

about? Might women bring an altogether new outlook to the world of money and government in the West? Might there be interior capabilities in human beings which – hitherto thought of as supernatural or paranormal, and therefore untrained and undeveloped – could provide a much needed counterweight to the exterior, alienating forces of technology by which men have hitherto sought to amplify their powers?

I do not claim that these questions are particularly new. Nor do I claim that they are explored very deeply or developed very fully here. Certainly, no cut-and-dried answers to them will be given. However, the beginning of wisdom is to *ask* these questions, and to see them as part of the same universe of discourse as questions about the future structure of government and business, nationally and internationally. One of the most damaging weaknesses of western societies today is the fragmentation of our perception and understanding.

A few signposts to what follows may be helpful. We take as our starting point what R. H. Tawney, in *Equality*, called ‘the collapse of two great structures of thought and government, which for long held men’s allegiance but which have now broken down. The first is the system of independent national states, each claiming full sovereignty as against every other. The second is an economic system which takes as its premise that every group and individual shall be free to grab what they can get and hold what they can grab’. Our first task, therefore, is to consider how political power could be redistributed in a more balanced way than at present, between the various levels of government in the world, ranging from the United Nations at the top to the local council at the grass roots; and how, correspondingly, economic power could be redistributed in a balanced structure whose constituent parts will remain in equilibrium with one another.



Without laying down a detailed blueprint, then, the first two chapters outline a political and economic structure to replace the nation state as it is dismantled, and the centralized, late capitalist economy as it is unscrambled. My aim in those two chapters is to take up the ideas put forward in *Profit Or People?* and, using them as a starting point, to indicate the general direction to follow if we are to transform the institutions of government, law and money into a social framework for balanced, organic activity in place of mindless, competitive, cancerous and ultimately suicidal growth. This accords with the global perspective outlined by Mesarovic and Pestel in *Mankind At The Turning Point*, when they say that 'were mankind to embark on a path of organic growth, the world would emerge as a system of interdependent and harmonious parts, each making its own unique contribution'; and that we need to create a sustainable balance between interdependent world regions, which will lead to 'global harmony – that is, to mankind's growth as an 'organic entity' from its present barely embryonic state.' The purpose of these two chapters about government and the economy is to suggest the kind of institutional transformation that must form part of Mesarovic's and Pestel's 'eventual transition into sustainable material and spiritual development of humanity.'

However, there is a central feature of modern societies that appears to frustrate all hope of any institutional transformation of this kind. This is the institutional imperative itself – the compulsion that insists on size, on growth for growth's sake. There are ample reasons for fearing that the process of institutionalization has now acquired a built-in momentum of its own, that it points us towards ultimate collapse, and that its nature precludes the possibility of its own reversal before collapse occurs. We can make constructive suggestions

bearing directly on the need for institutional reform, and a number of such suggestions are put forward in Chapter 3. But measures of that kind cannot by themselves be enough. More will be needed, if we are to exorcize the institutional imperative before it is too late.

The next step, therefore, is to recognize that the institutional imperative derives directly from the *program*\* which governs the behaviour of people in human societies today. Mankind has inherited this program from the past, by a process of genetic and cultural evolution in which the key areas of power, money and sex have been closely intertwined. By a kind of tragic irony, the inherited program now conflicts with the type of behaviour needed if the human race is to achieve survival as a species in the environment which (with the help of the inherited program) it has created for itself. We shall be able to transcend this conflict only if we use our growing understanding of genetic and cultural evolution to override the inherited program. In particular, we shall have to use our growing understanding of the way that human behaviour and ideas have evolved and may be expected to evolve further in the closely related areas of power, money and sex.

This leads us to take a closer look at the complex patterns of human behaviour and thought which focus on power, money and sex, and to examine the possible scope for redefining such concepts as power and wealth. In Chapter 4 I suggest that out of the political and economic bureaucratization of modern society there could, paradoxically, emerge new concepts of power and wealth, as aspects of the capacity for self-realization.

In Chapter 5 I consider whether the increasing participation of women in activities that have hitherto been largely the preserve of men might possibly encourage

\* A *program* refers to a set of behavioural instructions (e.g. a computer program), as distinct from a *programme* meaning a series of events.

these new concepts of power and wealth to take root. I suggest that it could do, provided that women's participation aims at bringing the man-made world into a saner and healthier balance, not simply at giving women a fairer chance to compete in the man-made world on equal terms with men. The liberation of women from the traditional shackles of the women's world is now being accompanied by a corresponding liberation of men from their very different prison on the other side of the great divide. Fundamental changes in sex roles are already taking place; the sexes are converging; the need to establish a new balance between them is now beyond doubt; and this new balance could be one facet of a radical transformation of our inherited attitudes to power and wealth.

Near the beginning I said that many of us who have been working at these new frontiers separately and in our own ways are now converging in support of one another. In the concluding chapter I return to the theme of convergence, but in a more general way. Convergence is apparent everywhere in the world today. Our very planet, Earth, is converging upon itself to become a single global village. Man is converging with Nature once again. Governors are converging with governed. Masculine is converging with feminine, logic with emotion, reason with intuition, science with religion, West with East. The old divisions and demarcations are disappearing. The old mould is breaking. As John Donne said nearly four hundred years ago about the last such break-up of an epoch, " 'Tis all in pieces, all cohesion gone." ' No wonder so many people today see nothing but confusion and disaster. The old order is changing and the outline of the new order is not yet clear.

If convergence is one of the main features of the crisis now facing mankind, it is also the key to the solution. The need now is to bring these processes of convergence

into focus. In that way, rather than by attempting to lay down detailed blueprints of the future, we can bring our problems into a common perspective and thus construct a shared basis for truly creative action. Especially, as we are concerned with *ideas* in progress let us recognize the scope for promoting convergence in the intellectual and institutional spheres, where immense forces of moral energy could be released by imploding – as in nuclear fusion – today's serially proliferating structures of specialism. This is the way to trigger off the mutations which will precipitate fundamental changes in attitudes and institutions; and only through such changes shall we be able to create a new balance – a new state of natural, social and psychic equilibrium – on Earth, before the old one collapses irretrievably. By deliberately focussing today's converging trends upon the future, mankind may be able to break through to a new and higher state of conscious self-control and thereby to navigate the looming crisis of survival.

During the writing of this book I have discussed these ideas with many people in one context or another. Among them have been the participants in a project on the future legal and financial structure of business enterprise, which has been sponsored by the Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society. They also include students and colleagues at the London School of Economics, and fellow participants in a series of Futures Forums held in London in April 1975, with whom I have talked about various aspects of study and planning for the future. They include officers and members of the Conservation Society with whom I worked on the preparations for launching their 'Campaign For Survival' in the latter part of 1975. They include a group of people from whose discussions at Conway Hall in London stemmed the 'Turning Point' initiative launched there towards the end of 1975. They also include a wide

range of other people who, in their various ways, are exploring the contours of the 'new age' and 'alternative society' of the future. I cannot mention many individuals by name. But I would like to acknowledge particular debts of gratitude to David Berry of the World Futures Society, Colin Hutchinson of the Conservation Society, and Peter Cadogan of the South Place Ethical Society, for putting me in touch with so many people and ideas that were in tune with my own thinking.

My wife, Anne, read the text in draft and suggested many important improvements. Alison Pritchard worked with me on *Profit or People?*; we have continued to work together throughout the present book; and many of the good things in it are due to her. Finally, I would like to thank Marion Boyars for this further opportunity to contribute to *Ideas In Progress*, and once again for her shrewd and sympathetic editorial suggestions. Neither she nor any of the other people whose names I have mentioned is in any way responsible for the faults and shortcomings that it still contains.

## 1. DISMANTLING THE NATION STATE

**S**MALL is beautiful. Only one Earth. Those two phrases convey many of our thoughts and feelings today. More and more of us are rebelling against big, remote institutions; yet, at the same time, more and more of us are recognizing a wider responsibility for the planet that we share with billions of our fellow humans. We want more personal scope to manage our own lives; but our actions may help or harm people of other countries and other generations, and we have to organize and control ourselves accordingly. That is one aspect of the dilemma facing mankind today, and there is no way of avoiding it. We are searching for a new balance in the structures of decision-making – a new balance of political power.

At this point some brief preliminary remarks are necessary about power, and about what we mean when we talk of power. One of the themes running through this book is that power can take various forms; that different people (and the same people in different circumstances and at different times) have different ideas about power; that our ideas about power evolve over the centuries, much as our ideas about God, or nature, or justice or love evolve; and that, as the long course of human history unfolds, new concepts of power may come to prevail because they become more useful items in mankind's survival kit.

For example, we can think of power as the power to destroy, to cripple, to dominate, to command, to frighten, to obstruct, to compel servility and obedience from other people – in other words, the power of some people to impose themselves in a hostile and negative way on their fellow men and women. In a more neutral sense, having power can mean being in a position to represent other people and to take decisions which will affect their lives for good and ill – in other words, the kind of power possessed by politicians or managers in government or industry. Finally, power can also mean the power to create, to heal, to lead, to teach, to encourage, to help, to elicit respect and love from other people – in short, the power to contribute positively and constructively to the lives of our fellows. The first kind of power is based on personal strength and aggression, often of a fairly primitive nature, physical or psychological. The second kind of power is based on the occupation of particular positions and roles in the ordered structure of organized society. The third kind of power is based on personal creativity, on the possession and development of interior capacities of mind and spirit and personality from which there springs constructive and liberating person-to-person contact and communication.

All these three kinds of power can be mingled in one individual, as – to take a fairly recent example in British history – in the person of Winston Churchill during the second world war. But one of the suggestions I shall be exploring in the later parts of this book is that, over the course of centuries and millenia, the nature of power and our concept of it is evolving from the first kind of power, through the second, towards the third – from Achilles and Genghis Khan, through Gladstone and Justinian, towards Gandhi and Jesus Christ. And among the hypotheses I shall be putting forward is that, while one important aspect of the human task today is to con-

solidate and bring under control the second kind of power, i.e. the power that resides in the decision structures of organized society, another important aspect of the task is consciously and deliberately to develop and widely disseminate the third kind of power, i.e. the kind which is based on the creative attributes of human personality.

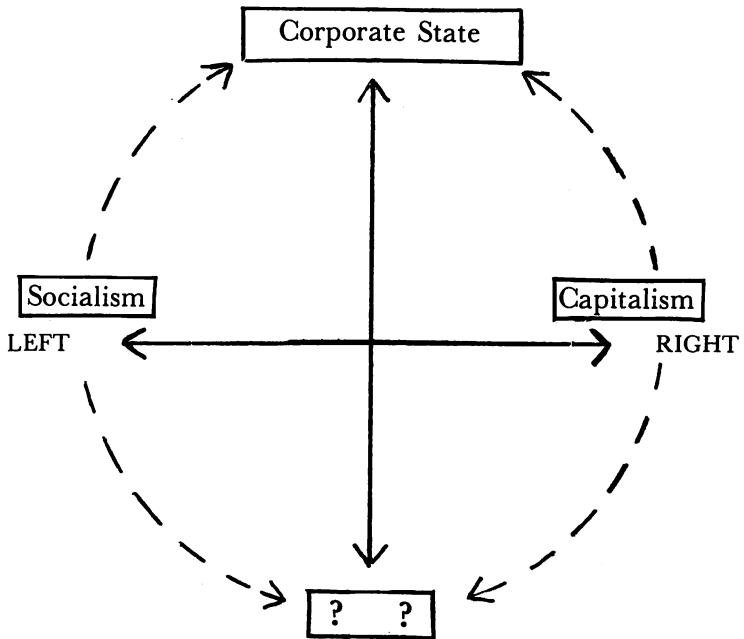
As an example of world-wide trends in the structures of social decision-making at the present time, *Figure 1* illustrates what has been happening in politics and the economy in countries like Britain during the last fifty years. The institutions of government, finance, industry and the trade unions have all been getting bigger and looming continually larger in our lives. More nationalization has been accompanied by the growing power of central government. Until quite recently there has been a steady stream of mergers and takeovers between big banks, and between big industrial companies. Trade unions too have been making much more powerful political use of their growing size and weight. Whether the government of the day has been of the right or of the left – theoretically capitalist or theoretically socialist – has made little difference. Politicians, civil servants, industrialists, financiers and trade unionists have drifted closer and closer over the years in the search for economic growth, attempting together to manage the economy and plan the future development of industry, and to find ways of controlling prices, incomes and the distribution of wealth. Meanwhile, Keynesian economists and other adherents of the intellectual establishment have propagated the view that solutions are to be found centrally for problems of this kind. A host of academics and commentators now broods over our affairs, pronounces continually upon them from a central point of view, and casts its shadow over them from a great height.



*Figure 1*

**CENTRALIZE**

*BIG* Trade Unions, Government, Finance, Business



*SMALL* Grass Roots Organizations

**DECENTRALIZE**

In political terms, the old conflict between right and left has developed into a scarcely concealed corporate state. The result of general elections now makes only a marginal difference in the power-sharing arrangements between politicians, public servants, big industrialists, top financiers and the leaders of the big trade unions. This is true of countries like the United States, Germany and France, as well as Britain. There may still be much huffing and puffing between politicians of the left and politicians of the right; in Britain there may still be cliff-hanging pay talks at 10 Downing Street between the CBI and the TUC which sometimes lead to strikes and industrial disruption; and widely reported public dog-fights may take place about proposals for further nationalization. But, in spite of all this, the drift to centralization proceeds inexorably. Meanwhile, the so-called mixed economy – once the pride and joy of British pragmatism and compromise – has turned into a thorough-going muddle. The proper functions and responsibilities of government, industry, finance and the trade unions have become hopelessly confused. 'Crazy mixed-up' would be a better description than 'mixed'. A recent British writer, Neville Abraham, perceptively called his book *Big Business and Government – the New Disorder*.

Many people are now becoming aware that too much centralization simply does not work. As Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox put it in their book 'The Imperial Animal', 'we were not evolved to cope with organization on this scale; it is almost literally inhuman.' Centralization is coming to be seen as a blind alley, politically and economically. As we reach what the American scientific writer, Hazel Henderson, has called an 'Entropy State', it is clear that we are coming to the end of that road. As she says, the 'transaction costs' of getting anything done are now so great that virtually nothing is done. Congestion in the corridors of power is bringing the traffic to a

standstill. Giantism, it now turns out, gives the shadow and not the substance of power to those who lead the big battalions. When they give the order, their troops do not march. When they pull the levers of power, the machinery does not respond. The channels are clogged. The links are disconnected. Communications have broken down. That kind of power is becoming a delusion.

The fact is that to agglomerate more and more functions of government in the same place, i.e. at the level of the nation state, is contrary to both the principles 'small is beautiful' and 'only one Earth'. It is obvious that local and personal affairs cannot be sensibly managed by a centralized government in a remote capital city, and that global problems cannot be effectively tackled by individual nation states. The forces that perpetuate and continually strengthen the concentration of government functions at the level of the nation state are thus perverse. It is true that continually increasing centralization seems to be inherent in modern society, since – if power is already centralized – it is the centre that must take new powers to put things right when they go wrong. This explains the apparent compulsion to more and more centralization, even when attempts are made to stop it from time to time. But, as I shall argue later, this compulsion is an aspect of the institutional imperative that stems directly from the nature of the masculine mind. Because men are not equipped to bear children or accustomed to nurse them, they are more remote from nature's realities than women are. In Erich Fromm's words, man is thus 'forced to develop his reason, to build up a man-made world of ideas, principles and man-made things which replace nature as a ground of existence and security.' The trouble is that these man-made constructions, including the governments of nation states, then acquire a life-force of their own, detached from the real-life tasks

that have to be carried out. This is one of the ways in which the fantasies that control the minds and shape the ambitions of men perpetuate the problems that men think only they are qualified to tackle.

Are countries like Britain becoming ungovernable, as is so often claimed? Would it not be nearer the mark to say that their governing institutions, their governing elites, and their governing assumptions have lost their relevance? The credibility gap that now separates the majority of people from the world of big government, big business and economic punditry, simply reflects the fact that people no longer take seriously the overgrown schoolboy fantasies of the men in power, the men in the money, and the men in the know.

In addition to the centralizing drift towards a corporate state, a grass roots backlash has been gathering impetus, as *Figure 1* shows. On the right there are the free enterprise economists, the small business lobby, the rebels against taxes and rates, and the self-employed. On the left there is the workers' control movement and growing pressure for industrial democracy on the shop floor. Scottish, Welsh and Ulster nationalism has been getting stronger. Whatever people may have thought about Britain's future relations with Europe from a political point of view, the idea that they were being railroaded into Europe by the business and political elites caused widespread resentment. Local action groups, consumer groups, residents' and conservationists' associations, and a whole host of 'alternative' pressure groups have been gathering strength. Admittedly the 'small is beautiful' movement has been very fragmented so far, compared with the centralized mass of the new corporate state. But that is only to be expected. As Francis Bacon said, 'those things which have long gone together, are as it were confederate within themselves; whereas new things piece not so well.' In any case, fragmented though it may be, the

demand for an alternative to bigness and over-centralization is making itself widely felt.

An example of how extreme are the changes now being proposed in certain quarters in Britain is to be found in Peter Cadogan's *Direct Democracy; An Appeal to the Politically Disenchanted; The Case for an England of Sovereign Regional Republics, Extra-Parliamentary Democracy, and a New Active Non-Violence of the Centre*. Cadogan argues that over-mighty government is characteristic of both the public and the private sectors of British national life; that the country's problems are not economic, but constitutional; and that a clear break is now needed with the desperately tired values and procedures of parliamentary party politics, representative government and bureaucratic officialdom. Direct democracy, he says, is different in kind. It is the constitutional form of incipient classlessness.

When I first read this privately published pamphlet towards the end of 1974, I thought – as I subsequently told the author – that many of the proposals in it came perilously near the lunatic fringe, if they did not actually go beyond it. But steadily I find my sympathy growing with such assertions as 'we can in future do without the centralized nation state', that 'all taxes can be regional', that 'the starting point is individual and small group responsibility', that 'direct democracy involves principled non-violence', and that 'land, properly understood, does not and cannot *belong* to anybody'. Even if Cadogan's line of thought appears to ignore global problems and our personal responsibilities as citizens of the world, ideas like his are pressing for serious exploration today. That this is so is a measure of how fast the situation is changing, together with our perception of it.

There are, then, these two opposing currents of political movement, in one direction towards a centralized corporate state bogged down in muddle and con-

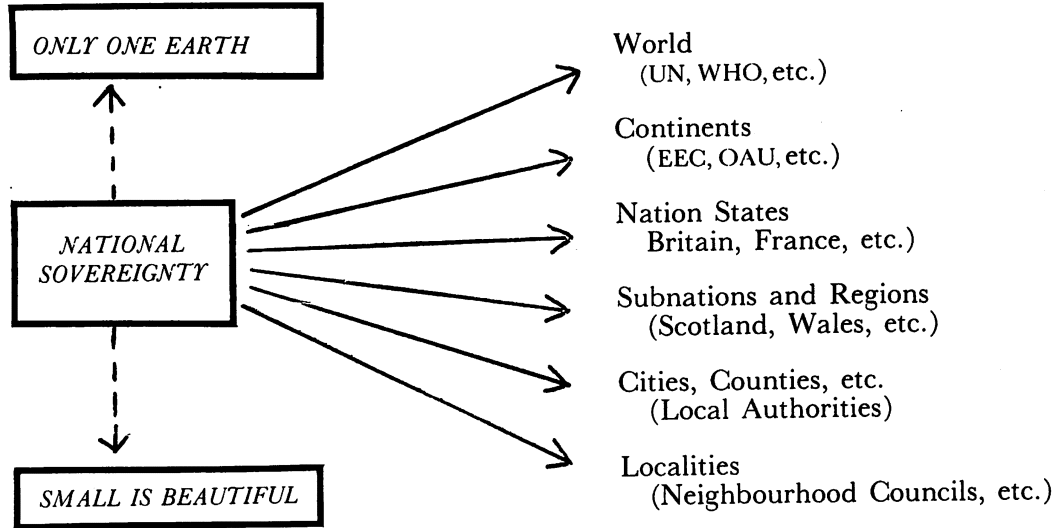
gestion, and in the opposite direction towards a multiplicity of separate grass roots activities. It is this pull between big and small that underlies much of the strain and stress in party politics in countries like Britain today. It helps to explain why relevance has evaporated from the conflict between capitalism and socialism, and why the liberals, social democrats and progressive conservatives of the centre are often no more than wishy washy moderates in the old no-man's land between left and right. A country like the United States is larger and wealthier, and it has stronger traditions against big government in favour of personal and local freedom. There remains more room for manoeuvre there than in a densely populated, older, economically poorer and more highly institutionalized country like Britain. Nonetheless, very similar trends and tensions appear to be at work in American politics today.

However, the most important question is not about the surface froth of politics. It is more fundamental than that. The most important question is whether some new ideology or political platform will soon emerge that will enable us to reconcile the principles 'small is beautiful' and 'only one Earth', and strike a new balance between them.

If in our next diagram (see *Figure 2*) we broaden the perspective, we see that in fact the peoples of the world are already coming to recognize that the nation state can no longer act effectively as the main centre and focal point of decision and power in human affairs. In some respects at least, the progressive accumulation of government functions at the level of the nation state has begun to be reversed. The drift towards centralization and the corporate state in countries like Britain in recent years has been accompanied, and could soon be overtaken, by contrary currents of change. In some respects, the bundle of functions, rights, duties and powers that has con-

*Figure 2*

## THE REDISTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL POWER



stituted national sovereignty has begun to be dismantled. Few people would now deny that some functions of government need to be carried out at world level (by the United Nations), some at continental level (for example, in Europe, Latin America, or Africa), some at sub-national level (for example in Scotland, Wales, or the English regions), and some in the districts and smaller localities where people actually live and work. This reflects a recognized need to redistribute political power and government activity on a worldwide scale.

As that redistribution of political power proceeds, and a new fabric of government institutions begins to emerge worldwide, many different problems and questions will arise: how shall multinational companies be controlled? how shall the international monetary system operate? how shall a new world economic order be brought into existence? But in tackling these questions as they come up, it seems clear that practical people will worry less and less about the old legal fiction called 'national sovereignty'. They will accept as a matter of course that the bundle of powers and functions exercised until recently at the level of the nation state has now got to be dismantled, and that those powers and functions must be redistributed by a steady process of constitutional redefinition – outwards to the wider world and inwards to communities smaller than the nation state.

In this perspective, the way to resolve the apparent contradiction between 'small is beautiful' and 'only one Earth' becomes rather clearer. Those who stress the 'small is beautiful' approach are concerned with the failure of the centralized nation state to provide conditions in which people can live their daily lives as members of human communities on a human scale. It is only the extreme communitarian version of this view which holds that macro problems will take care of themselves if we limit our attention to the micro



problems. On the other hand, those who take the 'only one Earth' view and urge that we should all regard ourselves as citizens of the same small planet, are concerned with the failure of nation states to provide a global perspective for dealing with global problems. There is no necessary conflict between the two views. Once we accept that a structure of decision-making and government which is based on paramountcy of the nation state is inadequate both from the local and from the global point of view, the way is clear for us to concentrate on transforming the present structure of government into a new multi-level structure of decision-making for a self-governing world. There will of course continue to be institutional problems at every level of the hierarchy. Empire building, red tape, and other bureaucratic distortions are just as rife in international organizations and local government as they are in national governments. But once the principle is accepted that the multi-level tasks of government worldwide should be clearly structured, those distortions will at least be easier to identify, and perhaps even to rectify and bring under control.

As we shall find in the next chapter, there is a parallel between these changes in the worldwide structure of government and those that are taking place in the economic structure of the developed countries. In the latter case, the relative rights and duties of the various stakeholders in the business system have become confused, and the old demarcation lines between business, finance, trade unions and government are fast disappearing. A new definition of the functions, rights and duties of the various participants in the industrial economy is needed, if the system is to be brought into balance. In that sphere too, 'constitutional' reform is needed; but in that sphere constitutional reform will reflect and crystallize a redistribution of *economic* power, as compared with political power. In that case it is the

anachronistic rights and duties of economic ownership, as compared with the anachronistic rights and duties of political sovereignty, that have to be replaced.

In other words, the declining years of the nation state are also the declining years of capitalism. The era of human history that was dominated by the concepts of national sovereignty in the political sphere and ownership in the economic sphere, is now passing. It was an era in which nationalism and capitalism – and their derivatives, fascism and state socialism – flourished. It was an era of proliferating expansion, economic growth, and the continual pushing forward of new frontiers. It was suited to a world in which mankind's environment and the resources it offered were infinitely greater than the impact of human activities upon them. It was an era in which masculine drives and ambitions were unleashed, and in which a philosophy of aggression and competition was reflected in the divisive idea of the nation state and the exclusive concept of property rights.

As that era draws to its end, we can already see its successor as an era of re-integration and convergence, rather than expansion. We can see its ethical basis in the principles of ecology, social responsibility and self-realization. Astrologers see it as the Age of Aquarius; mystics and meditators see it as the Age of Enlightenment; increasing numbers of engineers, agriculturalists, technologists and even economists, are coming to see it as a 'spaceship' age in which the resources of the planet must be recycled, as opposed to a 'frontier' age in which mankind rapes nature and moves on; and women may come to see it as an age in which they will enter into their own, and humanize the man-made world.

For philosophers and scientists, including social scientists, the dominant conceptual model of the world in this new era is likely to be a model of multiple systems of perception, decision and control, interlocking and in-

teracting in dynamic equilibrium. The ecological model will be its paradigm. As the next chapter suggests, such a model provides the conceptual basis for a decentralized equilibrium economy, to replace the centralized, mixed and muddled, growth economy which now has to be unscrambled.

## 2. UNSCRAMBLING THE CENTRALIZED ECONOMY

**I**F we are to dismantle the congested apparatus of the nation state we shall obviously have to discard the traditional right wing commitment to national sovereignty and the traditional socialist preference for centralized government. We shall also have to reject a good deal of other conventional thinking about industrial society. For example, we shall have to reject the socialist idea that the public responsibilities of economically and socially important industries and services will be best met if those industries are nationalized. We shall have to reject the Keynesian idea that economic activity is best managed at the national level. We shall have to reject the corporatist idea that economic policies should be decided by discussion and agreement between national governments and national representatives of industry, finance and the trade union movement. We shall have to question the continued existence of national currencies.

In other words, if we are thinking about dismantling the nation state, it follows that we also have to think about unscrambling the centralized national economy. We must think about how to evolve an institutional framework for a world society that is democratically decentralized – a world society in which the power of economic decision-making, like political power, will be internationalized, decentralized and widely dispersed.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to sketch an

equilibrium model for a decentralized industrial economy. This model, to quote from Hazel Henderson in the U.S. journal *Business and Society Review*, will help to conceptualize 'the cybernetic requirements for operating interdependent economies on a finite planet'. It will suggest how the institutional structure of the world economy could be redesigned as one of the balancing mechanisms for an equilibrium world society, thus contributing to a better balance between man and nature, a better balance between man and man, and a better balance between material and non-material concerns in the minds and hearts of individual people. Thus, where the previous chapter concentrated on redefining the structures of government decision-making and the patterns of political *power*, this chapter focusses on the structures of economic decision-making and the role of *money* as one of the main internal regulators for a free, but socially responsible, society.

Some people have pointed out similarities between my ideas and J. K. Galbraith's. So it may be helpful if, before we go any further, I briefly state the points of agreement and difference between us. We are agreed that the present dividing line between the so-called 'public' sector and the so-called 'private' sector is laughably absurd. As Professor Galbraith says in *The New Industrial State* (Pelican Books, page 386): 'Increasingly it will be recognized that the mature corporation, as it develops, becomes part of the larger administrative complex associated with the state. In time the line between the two will disappear. Men will look back in amusement at the pretence that once caused people to refer to General Dynamics and North American Aviation and A.T. & T. as *private* businesses'. Where I differ from Galbraith is that I want to look forward to the next stage, beyond the massive extension of the public sector which his diagnosis implies, to a new kind of radically decen-

tralized, pluralist economy in which the functions of business and government, national and international, regional and local, will have become freshly defined on a new basis and will once again have become clearly distinct from each other.

I must also mention at this point a radically different attitude to economic activity and economic institutions. This is that money – and also laws – are in themselves alienating and divisive. The suggestion, therefore, is that we should aim to create a de-institutionalized society in which relations between people would not need to be governed by impersonal devices like laws and money. Peter Cadogan powerfully advocates a ‘gift economy’ of that kind. As he says in *Direct Democracy*, western economists define work as an activity concerned directly or indirectly with production for exchange through the medium of money in the market. The value of work is then equated, more or less, with price. But in fact there does not have to be a market, and to assume that there does distorts the true nature of work. Subsistence economies use no money and therefore have no prices. Moreover, even in advanced societies people work for a smaller proportion of their time on money-earning work than on unpaid work – productive or unproductive as the case may be – for example in their house and their garden, in the leisure hours of the day, at weekends and during holidays. Already, therefore, people spend a greater part of their lives in the gift economy than in the market economy. Cadogan’s suggestion is that our personal happiness and quality of life will be increased, in so far as each one of us can extend the frontiers of the gift economy and reduce the role of the money economy in our lives.

Personally, I believe that that is becoming a valid suggestion for more and more people in countries like those of Western Europe and North America. The con-

cept of work without money implies work that is an expression of one's own creativity, work whose results are freely given to one's fellows and to the world in which one lives. It is very different from the concept of work as something which is provided to job-consumers by remote employers, backed by an employment services industry whose activities include collective bargaining, job creation, and the provision of redundancy payments, unemployment benefits and industrial training courses. It is closely related to the kind of concept of power that I mentioned earlier – power as the capacity to contribute creatively to the lives of other people, by teaching, by healing and in a wide variety of person-to-person contact and communication. This kind of work is the kind we should aim to encourage, even if we accept that we may never be able to recreate a society entirely based on a gift economy.

For practical purposes, we do, in fact, have to make that assumption: that it will never be possible to switch over altogether to a gift economy. It may be true that many aspects of people's lives are not directly affected by laws and are not directly concerned with monetary transactions. It is no doubt also true, certainly in our personal lives, that the more our thinking and feeling and behaving are influenced by legal and financial considerations, the more cramped and inhibited our relations with other people are likely to be. But in a world containing several billion people many aspects of our relationships with one another must necessarily be conducted at arms length, with the help of institutions like law and money. This is why a good system of law and a good system of money are so important. Only if there are good rules and a good scoring system for the game shall we be able to forget about them, take them for granted, and get on with the game itself. Even if we were aiming to phase out the market system altogether and

eventually reach the destination of an economy based entirely on unpaid work, one of the staging posts en route would almost certainly have to be an honest and reliable money system.

One of my starting assumptions, then, is that a good system of law and a good system of money will, for practical purposes at the present time, be essential features of a decentralized economy in which personal initiative and social responsibility can work together and not against each other. They will provide the structure needed for such an economy to maintain its equilibrium. They are the two basic control mechanisms in the model of the economy which I shall now outline.

This model is in essence very simple and straightforward. But it is unorthodox. For both these reasons it is not easily grasped by economists, businessmen, bankers, government officials and politicians, whose mental perceptions are focussed on the search for complicated new versions of conventional ideas.

The model is essentially organic. According to it, human societies consist of numerous centres of perception, decision and control. Every person and every organization constitutes such a centre – each possessing a greater or lesser degree of autonomy. Each has certain responsibilities and certain rights. These rights include claims upon the resources of material, energy and skill which are available for use by society as a whole – claims which can be transferred by one member of society to another, or exchanged between them.

Wealth consists of rights and claims to use resources; each member of society has a certain set of rights and claims at any particular time. Economic activity consists in the use of resources by members of society and the corresponding transfer of money by them to other members,



representing the transfer of claims to use resources in the future; each member of society is engaged in a certain set of economic activities at any particular time. Law provides the mechanism by which a society formally specifies its members' responsibilities, rights and claims, money the mechanism by which a society places a quantitative value on its members' claims and thus facilitates their transfer and exchange.

The behaviour of all members of society is governed by external rules and constraints (including those of a legal and financial character), as well as by their own habits and attitudes. How they all behave determines how they all interact. How they all interact determines the character of the society to which they belong – for example, how free it is, and whether it remains in a steady state of self-regulating balance or suffers from cumulative instability.

To sum up, therefore, an important aim in the economic sphere today should be to evolve at every level – international, continental, national, regional, local and personal – economic agents which behave as interdependent but autonomous centres of perception, decision and control. The nature of their interdependence, i.e. the way they interact and the manner in which they exchange resources and claims on resources with one another, will be governed by systems of law and money, to much the same extent as the nature of a game – such as football or bridge – is shaped by its rules and scoring system. A primary task for governments, therefore, must be to see that those systems of law and money are so designed as to encourage the kind of economic activity that will maintain a world society in equilibrium and ensure the survival of the human species. I concentrate in this chapter on the evolution of a decentralized economy within an equilibrium society, in order to illustrate this concept. But the corresponding evolution of interdepen-

dent economies in an equilibrium world is, of course, equally vital.

This conception of society as an organism, the interactions between whose parts are formally controlled by rules (laws) and by the exchange of quantified rights and claims (money), has something in common with the medieval conception of society. In R. H. Tawney's words in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, medieval thinkers saw society not as the 'expression of economic self-interest, but as held together by a system of mutual though varying obligations. Social wellbeing exists, it was thought, in so far as each class performs its functions and enjoys the rights proportioned thereto'. The difference, of course, is that, whereas medieval thinkers perceived society as embodying a system of obligations that were divinely sanctioned, I am suggesting that the framework which maintains society in balance consists of social mechanisms socially designed and socially administered. The medieval model of society was static and theological. The modern model is dynamic and cybernetic. It recognizes that people are responsible for shaping the society in which they live, and for revising its institutional framework in accordance with changing needs. It emphasizes that government officials, as the paid servants of society, should concentrate on keeping the balancing mechanisms of law and money in good order.

This last point is of profound significance. Operational improvements in the actual mechanisms of economic decision-making and control at every level of our world society, of the kind I shall now suggest, should be fostered by those who are supposed to be trustees for their good working. This will achieve infinitely more than all the pretensions of economists, political scientists, politicians and government officials to evaluate a society's economic needs objectively and to intervene in a society's economic affairs dispassionately from outside,

as if in some way they were above the battle. It might be far-fetched to compare those pretensions with the attitude of the well-known schizophrenic, Schreber, who said, 'He who has entered into a special relationship with divine rays, as I have, is to a certain extent entitled to shit on all the world'. But even in a much milder form a solipsistic attitude, together with what Theodore Roszak in *The Making of a Counter-Culture* calls the myth of objective consciousness, is an unhelpful guide to thought and action in public servants. It lays them open to the charge of vanity that Simone de Beauvoir makes in *The Second Sex* about Montherlant's attitude to women, when she speaks about 'the agreeable fairyland that the man of vanity creates around himself . . . Montherlant's works, like his life, admit of only *one* consciousness'. Likewise, in a political and economic sense, our neo-Keynesians recognize only one seat of consciousness and sovereignty in the structure of organized society. Their intellectual vanity cannot allow them to admit that they themselves are no more special than the other members – the other centres of perception, decision and control – in a pluralist society.

Some of the most important elements in our model of the modern economy are shown in *Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6*. A business enterprise, a financial institution, central government, and an individual person or family, are all shown as nodes or distribution points which receive money from and pass money to other members of society. Similar diagrams could be drawn for local government agencies, public corporations, charities, partnerships and other corporate bodies of all kinds.

If we now imagine all these entities linked by the flows of money passing between them, we can picture the whole of society as a multitude of distribution points (or

Figure 3

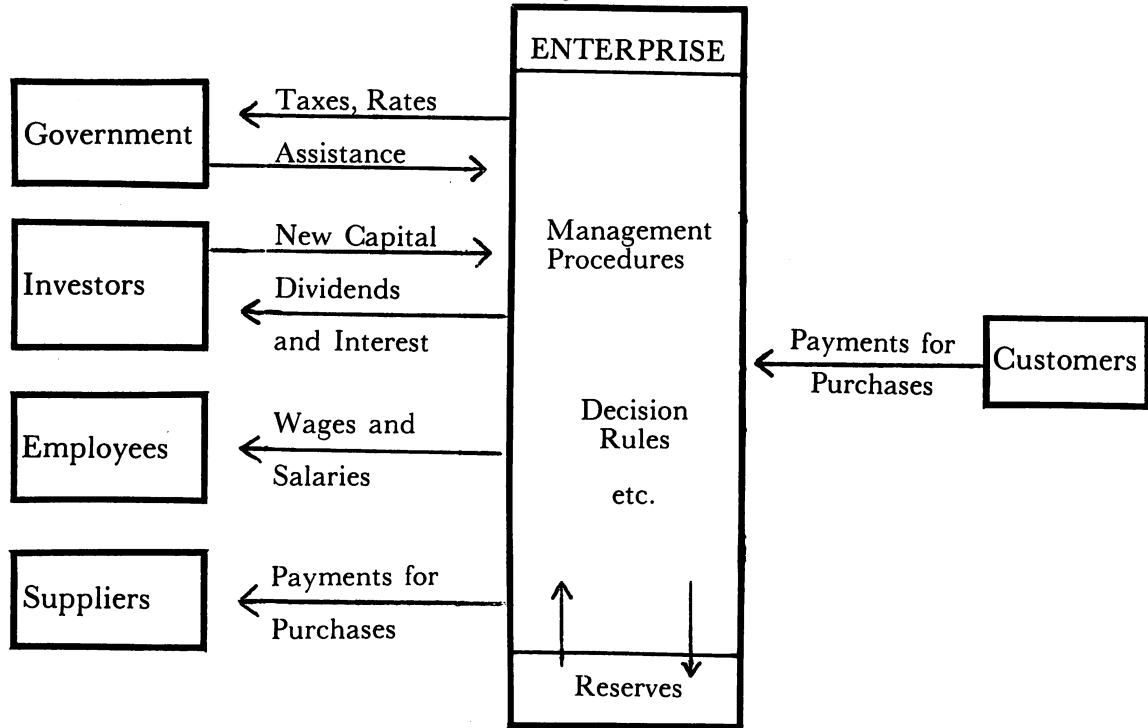
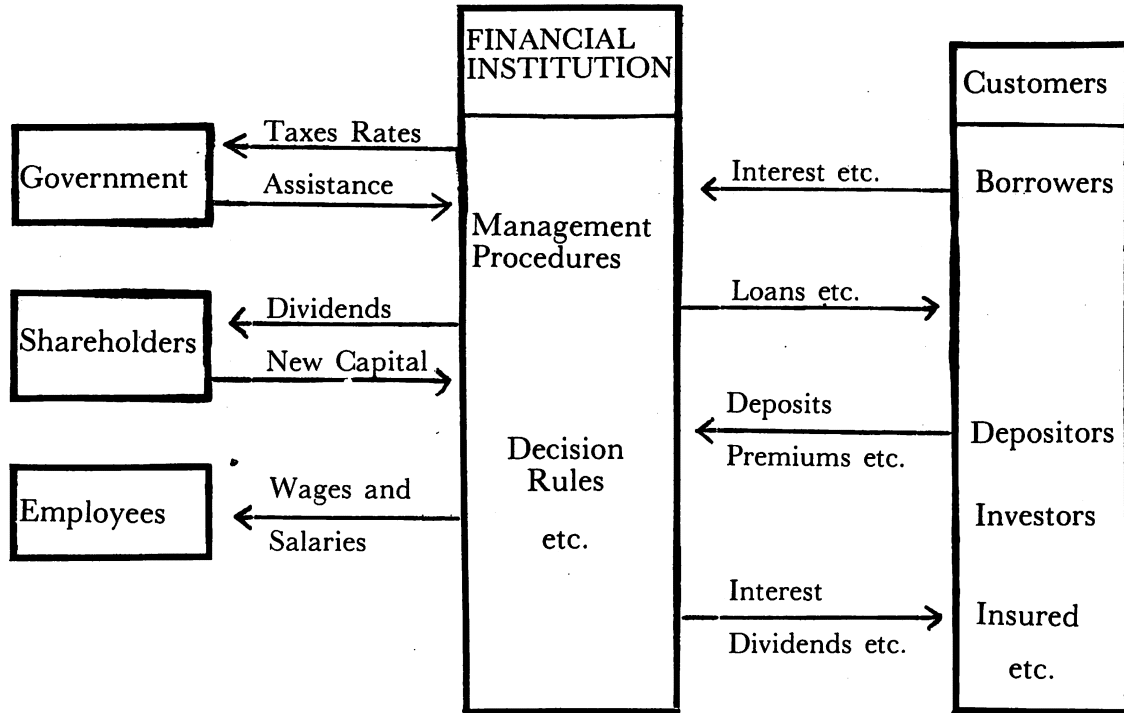


Figure 4



*Figure 5*

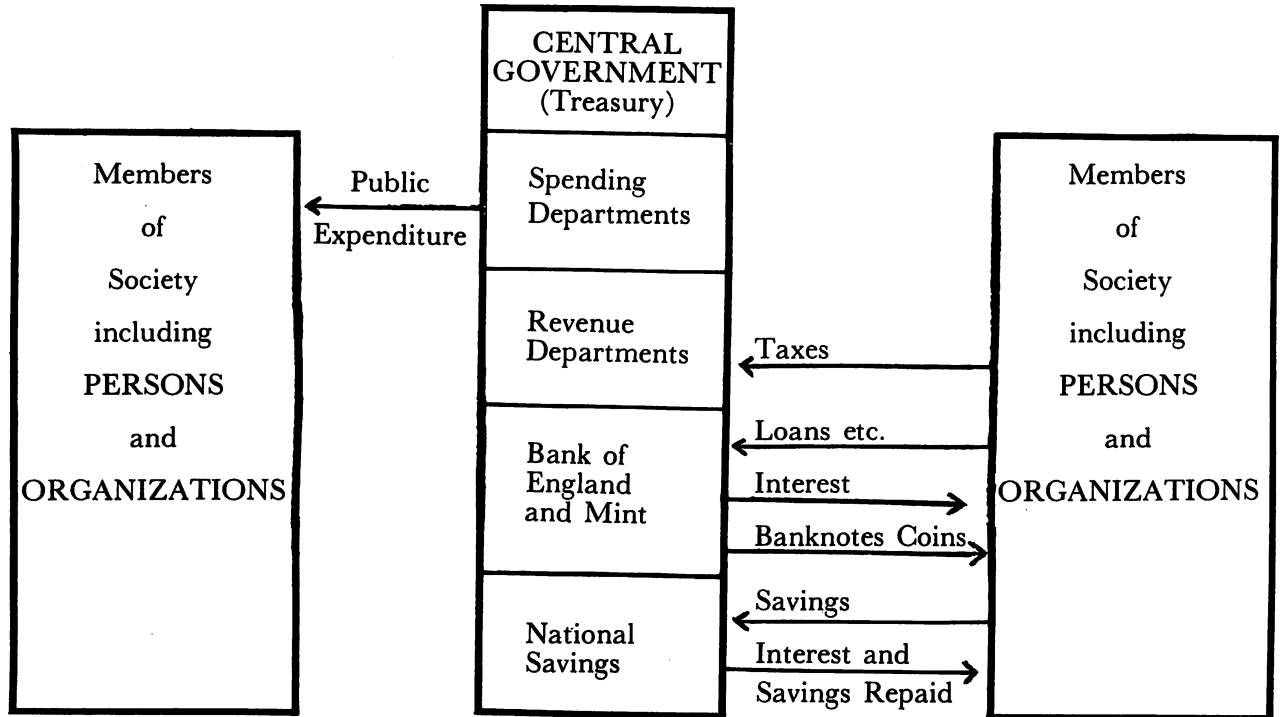
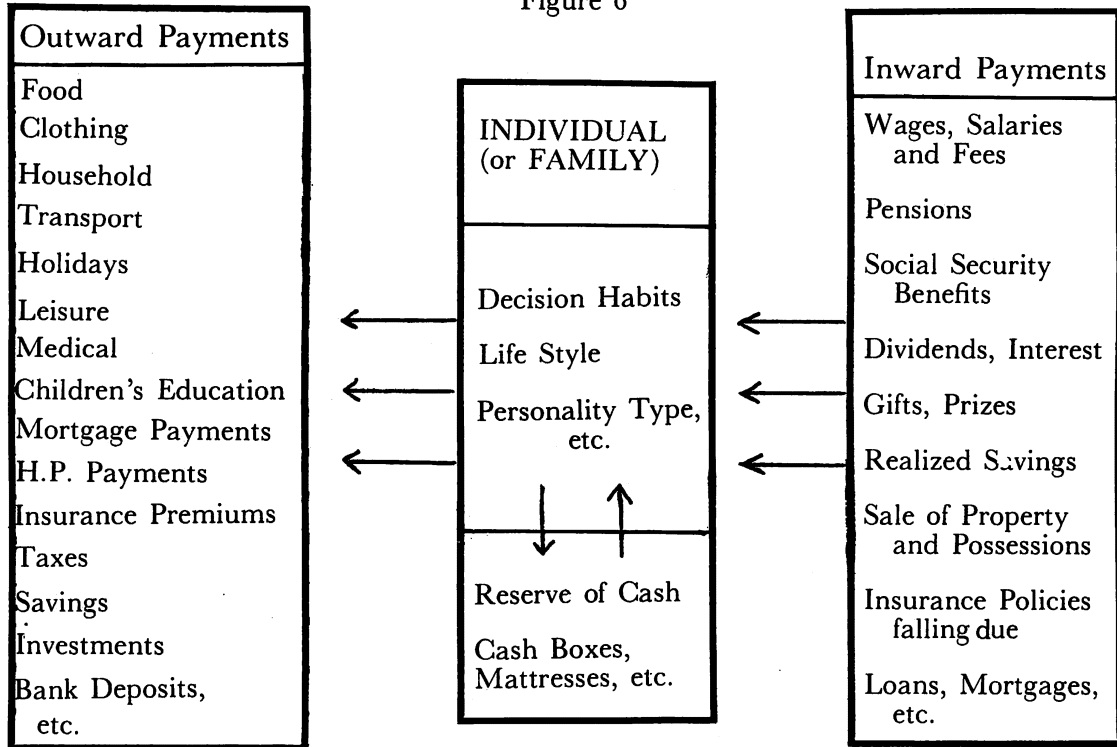


Figure 6



decision centres) connected with one another by a very complex network of money flows. Every person and every organization – every individual member and every corporate member of society – will appear as a node or distribution point on that network, directly linked by incoming and outgoing flows to all the other members of society from which it receives, and to which it pays, money.

Each of these distribution points or decision centres has what Arthur Koestler has called 'the dual character of being a subordinate part and at the same time an autonomous whole.' As he put it, all these 'sub-wholes or holons are Janus-faced entities which display both the independent properties of wholes and the dependent properties of parts. Each holon must preserve and assert its autonomy, otherwise the organism would lose its articulation and dissolve into an amorphous mass – but at the same time the holon must remain subordinate to the demands of the (existing or evolving) whole.' In other words, each member of society is to some extent an active decision centre on the society-wide network of money flows; none is a merely passive recipient and transmitter of money. But, at the same time, the activity of each is constrained by the structure of the larger system, and by the activities of other members of society.

Each member of society, as a financial decision centre, has its own built-in mechanism of choice and decision and control – the set of circuits, as it were, which shapes the pattern of its incoming money flows and the pattern of the flows that it sends out, and transforms the former into the latter. This mechanism consists of the rules, constraints, attitudes, habits, behaviour patterns and decision procedures that govern the way each company, each financial institution, each government authority, each family, each individual and each other member of society plans and manages its activities.



Among the most important of the externally imposed constraints are the formal constraints imposed by Law and Money – the first laying down the rules about what may and may not be done, and the second recognizing that the total amount of money going out must be balanced somehow or other by the total amount of money coming in. Other important external constraints arise from the position in society and in the economy of a particular individual or organization (including its wealth, i.e. the total set of rights and claims it can exercise upon society's resources), and from how a particular individual or corporate member of society is treated by other members with whom it deals. Subject to those external limitations, however, each member of society is free to behave in a wide variety of ways. For each one, therefore, the pattern of its incoming and outgoing flows of money reflects at least to some extent the active, autonomous facet of its dual character – the way it perceives the world, the values which it holds, and the goals it pursues – as well as its passive, subordinate role as one member of a large and complex society. Thus, to some extent, the actions of every member of society (as a decision centre on the society-wide network of money flows) influence the actions of the other members with whom it deals, and help to determine the overall pattern of money flowing through society as a whole.

It is sometimes said that, since money is transferred from one member of society to another as payment for real transactions, flows of money are properly regarded as no more than comparatively unimportant counterflows mirroring the transfer of real goods and services between different members of society. But that is only half the story. Flows of money, together with holdings of money and other forms of wealth, actively help to shape the behaviour of society's members and the nature of the whole society to which they belong. Indeed,

the financial structure of a society – the way the flows of money are channelled through one particular set of decision centres or another – is one of the most important factors determining who shall have power to take the decisions that will shape society's future.

If, for example, the pattern of flows is highly centralized – in other words, if taxation, government borrowing and government expenditure are very high – we shall live in a society which is centrally controlled and dominated by the state. Centralized money flows will both reflect and reinforce a centralized structure of political power. It will be politicians and civil servants who take the decisions that shape the future. The more taxes they raise, the more they will deprive other people of the power to take these decisions; while the greater the public expenditure they control, the more they will arrogate this power to themselves. If, on the other hand, big financial institutions like banks and insurance companies occupy the strategic centres on the money network, we shall have a society in which financiers and money men wield disproportionate powers of decision and control. Another possibility is a society in which business and industrial leaders are able to retain in company reserves much of the money that has flowed into firms in the so-called private sector, and thus to keep the spending of it under their own control. In that case, industrialists and business people will have a disproportionate power to decide the shape of the future. Finally, we may have a more participatory society, so organized that politicians and civil servants, financiers and money men, businessmen and industrialists have to seek the agreement of taxpayers, investors, customers, working people, and the public at large to the way they distribute the money passing through their hands. The reforms that I shall suggest will help to create a situation of that kind. It is the only way power can be given to people to make

the financial decisions that will shape the future. It is the only way to combine a wide spread of free choice with social responsibility in a political and economic democracy. Without it, such ideas as consumer sovereignty, worker sovereignty, or citizen sovereignty are no more than myths.

Thus the structure of our society's money system will not only reflect what kind of society we have. It will also help to determine what kind of a society we are going to have in the future, and who is going to have the power to decide its shape. As John Rawls says in *A Theory of Justice*, 'an economic system is not only an institutional device for satisfying existing wants and needs, but a way of creating and fashioning wants in the future'. Responsible men and women will not regard the existing economic system as given. They will not aim to change it to their own advantage and to the disadvantage of their fellows. They will aim to transform it by a process of evolutionary re-design into a system which will create and satisfy the wants and needs of a sustainable, civilized and fair society.

Our model of industrial society, then, consists of numerous decision centres exchanging flows of money with one another, i.e. between themselves and other members of society. The kind of society we have is both reflected and determined by the rights and claims which these centres enjoy, and by the overall pattern of the money flows between them. This model allows for a wide variety of financial structures, i.e. for a wide variety of possible distributions of economic power, all of which could – at least in theory – remain in a state of equilibrium.

However, as we shall now point out, the model also enables us to see how disequilibrium occurs, and to see how – once disequilibrium has set in – equilibrium could be restored.

The economies of the advanced industrial countries, especially Britain, seem by the middle 1970's to have reached a state of chronic instability. Inflation has been the most obvious symptom of this. Our model suggests that the cause of inflation is altogether different from anything that economists have supposed. The cause is not economic at all. It is constitutional, in the sense that inflation can be seen to arise from the absence of an effectively defined structure of rights and obligations and functions in the economic sphere, and from the resulting loss of balance, autonomy and control by all the main participating elements in the economic system. They all try to *maximize* profit, or wealth, or utility, or welfare, or economic growth, rather than to strike a balance between competing interests; as a result, all the main elements in the economy exert de-stabilizing, inflationary pressures on the rest. Inflation and economic instability are thus a systemic feature of any densely populated, densely institutionalized, pluralist society whose main economic agents are all dedicated to a primary aim of continued material growth. As this model suggests, the only lasting way to restore stability and eliminate inflation will be to introduce effective mechanisms of balance and control in *all* the various decision centres in the economy. So let us now examine in greater detail what that would involve, in terms of institutional reforms and changes in corporate and individual ethics.

The business enterprise (Figure 3) is one important kind of decision centre in the economy. When we look at its mechanisms of control, we find that the framework of law defining the responsibilities of those in charge, and the rights and duties of the various stakeholders in relation to one another, is disjointed and does not match the relative power of the different stakeholders (e.g. investors and employees). The fact is that the legal framework for business enterprise has grown up piecemeal, and the

time has come to develop it into a coherent whole. It should be based quite clearly on the requirement that those in charge shall serve the interests of all the stakeholders (including especially the employees, customers, investors and the public, as well as suppliers and creditors) and maintain a fair balance between them, rather than try to maximize profits for the shareholders.

The out of date 'constitutional' responsibility of business managements to make maximum profits for shareholders has provided much of the impetus for confrontation between the 'two sides' of industry. As confrontation has intensified, control has seeped away from management. It is now exercised remotely and divisively by the trade unions standing behind the employees, by the financial institutions standing behind the investors, and by central government. What has happened is this: competition between organized employees and institutionalized investors to get a bigger share of the financial cake has squeezed business managements into raising prices to their customers; financially irresponsible monetary policies, on the part of governments intent on maximum economic growth, have enabled companies to raise prices without losing customers; the resulting inflation has then led governments to impose centralized controls on companies to limit their prices, their dividend payments and their salary and wage payments; the continuing imposition of corporation tax based on traditional concepts of 'profit', on top of price and profit controls has then created a 'doomsday machine' which has tended to deprive companies of cash; in these circumstances companies have been unable to raise new finance for investment; which has made it necessary for the government to set up new central organizations, like the National Enterprise Board, to fill the gap. So one malfunction has led to another, inevitably, in an es-

calating progression of centralization and remote control. This has been a powerful contributory factor in the growth of Hazel Henderson's Entropy State in which, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the transaction costs of deciding anything and doing anything in the congested corridors of power now outweigh the value of any achievement that results. It has also meant that individual business enterprises have lost much of their autonomy.

The only way to reverse this process, and thus to stem inflation and heal confrontation in industry, will be to revalidate the authority of business managements on a new basis of social acceptability. This will require business managements to accept formal responsibility for serving and balancing the multiple interests involved in their enterprise. That will involve appropriate revisions to company law, fair trading law, employment law and other law governing the behaviour of business firms. It will involve the development of new procedures that are widely understood and widely accepted as fair and reasonable for distributing the income and the assets generated by business enterprises. It will involve the introduction of new methods of measuring, monitoring and reporting on the performance of business enterprises, which will clearly show the benefits and the costs they are creating for other members of society. Finally, in addition to changes in the requirements externally imposed on business enterprises under the law, changes will also be needed in their internal constitutions, internal decision procedures, and internal management styles. These things reflect the corporate ethic of a business enterprise and its outlook towards the society and the wider world in which it operates.

Only by a powerful effort on these lines, to re-establish the social acceptability of business enterprise, will it be possible to restore the power of decentralized self-control, to re-introduce internal balancing mechanisms that

work, and to resolve internally the inflationary pressures generated by competing interests within the enterprise. Only thus will it be possible to create a situation in which there will no longer be a need, and no longer an excuse, for damaging and divisive outside intervention in the affairs of business enterprises by big trade unions, big financial institutions and big government.

Financial institutions (Figure 4) are also now suffering from uncertainty about the way in which their directors and top managements should be expected to discharge their multiple responsibilities to employees, customers, investors, and the public. The volatility of the financial sector, for example in Britain in recent years where bust has followed boom in such fields as property and fringe banking, underlines the need for effective mechanisms of balance and control. As we shall see, government monetary policies and government failure to control the money supply have been an important contributory factor, but weaknesses in the internal constitution of the financial institutions have also played a vital part in the recent troubles.

As Figure 4 shows, financial institutions like banks and insurance companies have two kinds of customer. The first consists of people and organizations who entrust money to these institutions – depositors who deposit their money with banks, savers who invest their money in unit trusts, policy-holders who pay insurance premiums to insurance companies, employees whose pension contributions are paid into pension funds, and so forth. Customers of this first type are really *suppliers* to financial institutions. They supply money which is the main material used by financial institutions in carrying out their business. The second type of customer consists of the people and organizations to whom financial in-

stitutions put money out – including the customer to whom a bank gives credit or a loan on overdraft, the company in whose shares an insurance company or a pension fund invests money, and the person to whom a building society lends money on a mortgage. The first type of customer thus comprises those who in the broadest sense *lend* money to financial institutions; the second comprises those who in the broadest sense *borrow* money from them.

This process of channelling money from lenders to borrowers, and thus of transforming savings into investment, is at the heart of any society's economic activity. It can be carried out in a balanced way, or in an unbalanced way. Lack of balance will lead to a faulty pattern of investment, and to inflation.

One of the accusations made against financial institutions, especially in Britain, is that they have failed to carry out their investment responsibilities: instead of investing in economically useful industries and socially desirable services, they have speculated in existing assets like property and land; and instead of taking steps to improve the performance and efficiency of firms in which they have invested money, they have concentrated on getting a quick cash return for themselves. To this the financial institutions reply that their first duty is to the kind of customer whose money they have received in trust, not to the kind of customer to whom they have put money out. In other words, the present constitution of financial institutions, the present legal framework in which they operate, and the present rules and decision procedures which they use, provide no mechanism for balancing these two responsibilities.

The idea that financial institutions should be aiming to get the maximum monetary return for their depositors, rather than simply a fair and acceptable return, is bound to exert special inflationary pressures. In this respect, there is a special need to create effective



internal mechanisms of balance and control in financial institutions, in addition to the need that applies to business enterprises in general.

Central government (Figure 5) is the most influential single decision centre in the whole complex network of money flows that run through society. In Britain, for example, the spending departments of government allocate about half the resources and distribute about half the spending power of the country, according to the normal way of measuring these things; while the revenue departments by taxation, and the Bank of England (and National Savings) by borrowing, preempt the equivalent amount of resources and spending power. In other words, the spending departments, revenue departments and borrowing departments of central government – under the overall supervision of the Treasury, the Cabinet and Parliament – are responsible for an incoming and outgoing pattern of money flows that strongly influences the total pattern of money flows through society as a whole. It thereby affects the circumstances and the behaviour of all society's members.

Again, as in business enterprises and financial institutions, the outlook and procedures of central government can be such that the pattern of the money flows coming in and going out is determined in a balanced way or in an unbalanced way. But the importance of the government's financial activity is so great that, if the decision procedures and control mechanisms for handling government money are muddled and obscure, and if the responsibilities of politicians and government officials for balancing the various interests involved are unclear, then the efficacy and the credibility of the country's whole financial and monetary system will be undermined as a mechanism of social choice and economic resource allocation.

Government procedures for planning and managing

public spending and public revenue have, in fact, virtually broken down in a country like Britain today. They are full of obscurity; shrouded in mumbo-jumbo, ancient and modern, parliamentary and economic; and riddled with unresolved conflicts of interest. Past irresponsibility and past tendencies to political aggrandizement and bureaucratic empire-building have virtually deprived today's politicians and government officials of all power to control the patterns of money flows for which they are meant to be responsible. Only in 1975, after British public expenditure had demonstrably run out of control, did the pundits recognize that 'cash limits' should be placed on government spending plans!

It is true that difficulties arise from ideological disagreement about a government's proper economic role, and from unavoidable bureaucratic inefficiency. These difficulties are among those that have to be resolved in the normal processes of politics and administration. But it is also beyond doubt that the rules, procedures and behaviour of governments that are committed to maximizing economic growth are bound to have a powerfully destabilizing and inflationary effect on the whole industrial economy. A balanced system of controls over government spending, borrowing and taxation is sorely needed.

Finally, what about individual members of society (Figure 6)? In a sense, they are the most important decision centres in our model. They, too, can handle the money coming in and the money going out in a balanced or unbalanced way. They too can exert stabilizing or destabilizing influences on other elements in the economy, and they too are subject to stabilizing or de-stabilizing influences from these other parts of the system.

The habits, lifestyles and attitudes of individual people, as influenced by their educational background,

social position and other similar factors, shape the pattern of their incoming and outgoing flows of money. In this respect their behaviour is deeply conditioned by the aspirations which the rest of society encourages them to adopt, for example by political and commercial advertising campaigns. If people are systematically taught that maximizing material consumption is the aim, and are persuaded to want to possess more and more material goods which they had never thought of having; if they are constantly encouraged to rely on outside institutions to meet all the important needs in their lives; and if they find that the prices and taxes they have to pay for these things are constantly going up – then it is no wonder if they press to be paid more and more money to enable them to meet these increasingly pressing financial demands. It is not surprising if they thus inject their own de-stabilizing anxieties and greeds into the inflationary process, contributing thereby to the further escalation of economic and social disequilibrium. Nor is it surprising if, like the people in charge of government and business finances, they find it difficult to choose between different possibilities and to balance competing demands. They too feel that they are losing control – in this case over their own finances and their own lives. People are deprived of personal autonomy by the contradictory pressures and pulls of the institutionalized consumer society, in much the same way as business managements have become trapped in the untenable position imposed upon them by the conflicting demands of big government, big finance and the big trade unions.

The only way in which individuals can recover personal autonomy and balance will be to reject the personal ethic prevailing today, that sets such a high value on material consumption. Some people find it possible to do this, even though it means swimming against the current that runs so strongly in modern societies. But, in

general, if 'Grab what you can!' and 'Grow, grow, grow!' are the names of the game that everyone else is playing, most people will join in, if only to show that they can play it as well as the next man. Personal ethics and social structures reinforce one another. There may be many sane and balanced people in an insane and unbalanced society, just as there may be many individuals who preserve their personal integrity in the organizational jungle of big business and big government. But in all kinds of ways the cards are stacked against them.

To sum up, then. Once we accept that the economy can be seen as a multiplicity of decision centres of different kinds, linked to one another by flows of money, and that the aim should now be to bring this interacting system into a state of dynamic equilibrium, it becomes clear that the need is to create effective mechanisms of balance and control at *all* the different points on the network of money flows. We should not look exclusively to financial responsibility in central government, or exclusively to honesty in the financial sector, or exclusively to social responsibility in business and industrial management, or exclusively to less materialistic attitudes in the hearts and minds of individual people, for the solutions to the problems of inflation, industrial unrest and economic breakdown. We should look to mutually supporting changes in the rules, the habits, the procedures and the attitudes that govern the behaviour of *all* these various sectors of society. We should redefine the functions, rights and duties of all the various participants in the industrial economy. We should put in hand a broad three-pronged programme of reforms, to create socially responsible business enterprise, honest money, and financially responsible government. We should thus create a social and economic environment in which sane and balanced human beings will have a better chance to flourish.

The first part of this programme will require us to recognize explicitly that the people in charge of large public companies have multiple responsibilities, to serve – and to balance – the interests of employees, investors, customers and the public. We shall need to develop employment law, company law, fair trading law and the law governing such matters of public concern as safety, health and pollution, into a coherent legal framework for business enterprise. Nationalized industries, consumer co-operatives, worker controlled firms, mutual societies, and shareholder companies are all alike in having these multiple responsibilities, and the law should make their responsibilities clear. More specifically, we should aim to evolve a corpus of *enterprise law*, which would be:

- (a) *comprehensive*, in the sense that it would regulate the relationships between an enterprise and all its main stakeholders (including employees, investors, creditors, customers and the public);
- (b) *universal*, in the sense that it would cover business enterprises of all kinds (companies, co-operatives, mutual societies, public enterprises, common ownership companies, etc.);
- (c) *permissive*, rather than prescriptive, in the sense that it would allow enterprises to experiment with a wide variety of ways of meeting the obligations laid upon them by law, rather than prescribe in rigid detail how those obligations should be met; and
- (d) *appropriate*, in the sense that it would enable the appropriate functional distinctions to be drawn between enterprises that are based on *proprietorship*, like private companies; *stewardship or trusteeship*, like co-operatives, mutual societies, and public companies; and *public service*, like public corporations and nationalized industries.

These legal developments will have to be accompanied

by the introduction of new procedures in such fields as participation, industrial democracy, profit-sharing, and social accounting, which will enable the performance of those in charge of large public companies to be monitored and influenced by the people most directly affected.

Second, we shall have to stop operating our monetary and financial system on the basis that financial institutions exist to make money for their shareholders, or that individuals work in the financial sector to make money for themselves, or that the monetary authorities rig the financial system in the government's favour and borrow cheaply for the government by exploiting the goodwill or ignorance of people who invest in government stocks and national savings. We shall have to insist that financial institutions accept explicit responsibility for serving the public interest and for balancing the interests of the various parties towards whom they have a responsibility, including their different kinds of customers. We shall have to see that a new regulatory framework is introduced which will meet that need. In Britain, for example, we shall have to require the Bank of England and the Treasury to submit to effective public and parliamentary scrutiny, and show that they are operating the money system straight and fair. And special emphasis may be needed on the importance of bringing financial institutions under the umbrella of a general enterprise law on the lines suggested above.

Third, we shall have to insist that governments manage their financial affairs with a strict sense of financial responsibility. We must require our public servants to develop procedures for planning and handling the flows of expenditure, taxation and borrowing under their charge so that the people whom these public servants are employed to serve can see whether resources are being allocated according to priorities democratically laid

down, and whether purchasing power is being distributed and redistributed among workers, investors, taxpayers, rate-payers, pensioners, sick people, poor people, rich people and other classes of citizens in ways that meet with general acceptance from the public. Where choices have to be made, and where conflicts arise, the public should be shown what these are and be given an opportunity to discuss the possibilities for resolving them.

It is sometimes said that we need a new Keynes to solve the world's present economic problems. I hope I have made it clear that we need to think more radically than that. Keynes' main contribution was to give an extra half-century of life to the capitalist/socialist economy, based on the metaphysic propagated by Adam Smith and his successors which says that economics is an autonomous department of human life and that material production and consumption are what matter most. In making this contribution, however, Keynes also provided the means by which that metaphysic and the social and economic institutions that are founded upon it are now being tested to destruction.

In this chapter I have been discussing an altogether different approach. I have outlined the kind of reforms that are needed to create socially responsible business enterprise, an honest money system, and financially responsible government. I discussed in greater detail in *Profit Or People?* the actual measures that will have to be pushed forward on a number of specific points. Here I have tried to do something rather different. I have tried to suggest that, by pushing forward in this way we could take the first steps towards bringing inflation under permanent control and towards creating equilibrium in the industrial economy. We should be constructing the for-

mal framework for an equilibrium economy in which individual organizations and individual people would find encouragement to develop a socially responsible corporate or personal ethic of their own. We should be making it possible to reverse the centralizing trend of recent years, and evolve a 'new look' economy on a decentralized basis for the future. We should be re-distributing the power of economic decision-making widely among society's members. We should be transforming our present economic institutions into mechanisms for making choices and balancing the interests of society's members. We should thus be equipping ourselves to achieve a better ecological balance between man and nature, a better social balance between man and man, and a saner mental and emotional balance in the minds and hearts of people. We should be helping to build the institutional foundations for a world society that can sustain itself in dynamic equilibrium.



### 3. EXORCIZING THE INSTITUTIONAL IMPERATIVE

**D**ISMANTLING the nation state will result in a redistribution of political power and the functions of government in a vertical dimension, so to speak, between the United Nations at one end of the scale and local communities at the other. Unscrambling the centralized national economy will do the same for economic power. It will also result in a redistribution of power in a horizontal dimension, a redefinition of the functions, rights and duties of all the various participants in economic activity, and a new concept of the social role of money. This dismantling and unscrambling of the present faulty structure of political and economic power will be the next step on the road towards One World, in the sense that it will clear the way for a new fabric of political and economic institutions to emerge which will enable the peoples of the world both to decentralize and to handle global decisions at the global level. Within such a framework, mankind collectively could reconcile the two principles 'Small Is Beautiful' and 'Only One Earth'. By creating it, we could bring into being the organizing substructure for what Teilhard de Chardin saw as the emerging organism of inter-thinking humanity.

All very nice, in theory. But, in practice, the vested interests of power politics and the interlocking inertia of institutionalized society appear to present insuperable obstacles to progress on these lines. One of the central

features of human society today is the institutional imperative. The big institutions that dominate the modern world have acquired a powerful momentum of their own, quite separate from the purposes which they supposedly exist to serve. Is this institutional imperative, like the technological imperative with which it is linked, now driving mankind relentlessly up an evolutionary cul-de-sac? Or is institutionalization only a temporary diversion from the broad highway of human evolution? Will it collapse of its own momentum? Is it programmed to self-destruct? If so, how shall we put ourselves back on track, when institutional self-destruction takes place?

It is Teilhard, of course, who more than anyone else has taught us to see humanity as the spearhead of evolution on earth. Man emerged out of the *biosphere* – ‘the living membrane composed of the fauna and flora of the globe’ – to create the *noosphere* or ‘thinking layer’, which now encircles the world with a web of shared consciousness and psycho-social energy. With the emergence of man, evolution became conscious of itself. However, as Max Nicholson has recently pointed out in his book, *The Big Change*, two great and cancerously growing organisms have been thrown up by the noosphere. They have proliferated on a global scale and now seem to be out of control by man who created them. One of these Nicholson calls the *technosphere*, and the other the *nomosphere*.

The technosphere has grown out of man’s incessant urge for tool-making. It now takes the form of a vast complex of processes for manipulating material resources. Most of these processes are incomprehensible to the great majority of human beings. In aggregate, they have achieved such a degree of complexity and so powerful a momentum of their own that even the people who are supposed to control them are unable to do so. Man, the mad tool-maker, as Nicholson puts it, is now

awakening like the sorcerer's apprentice to the horror of what he has let loose.

The nomosphere, on the other hand, consists of the system of laws, institutions and established practices which man has built up to regulate his own social behaviour. This too has now become a vast complex of political, governmental, legal, financial, administrative, managerial and bureaucratic processes. These processes, like those of the technosphere, have become totally incomprehensible to the great majority of people. They have also acquired so powerful a momentum of their own that even the people who are supposed to be in charge of them are unable to control them.

The technological imperative and the institutional imperative have thus become the dominating drives of modern society, and both are out of control.

In this book we are looking for new ways of balancing political and economic power, and the suggestions about government and money in the first two chapters were made with that purpose in view. So our discussion here is mainly concerned with institutions rather than with technology. But the link between the two is very close. Capital intensive technology is symbiotic with the highly geared political, economic and social power of big government, big business and other big institutions. Both are committed to growth; both create increasing social and economic inequality; both are alienating and dehumanizing. Thus both are opposed to the ideals of ecology, social responsibility and self-realization. So, although we shall be concentrating on institutions and not be saying much about big science and technology, let there be no doubt that the development of appropriate technologies must be an integral part of the transition to a democratically decentralized society.

Some preliminary questions should be posed at this point. Is the institutional problem basically a problem of

size? Do big organizations go wrong, simply because they are big? Is it better in principle, therefore, to have a large number of small organizations than a small number of large ones? Or is it a question of how institutions are organized, rather than a question of their actual size? Is it possible for big organizations to be so well structured and so well managed that they function well? Do the problems stem partly from the way organizations deal with one another, and from the disputes that arise between them? In any case, what is the essential difference between one big organization and a collection of small ones? Is the British Government one organization, or are all the ministries and departments like Health, Employment, Defence, and so on, separate organizations? Is Congress one organization, or are the Senate and the House of Representatives two separate organizations? How is an organization or an institution to be defined for these purposes?

There are no satisfactory answers to questions like these. For practical purposes, all we can say is that, by their nature, institutions and organizations are prone to malfunction. Large organizations in particular have always seemed to be less intelligent, less moral, less forward-looking and less civilized than many of the individuals employed in them. This is partly a question of how large organizations function, and partly a question of the kind of people who rise most successfully within them to positions of power and decision-making near the top. One has seen these failings at work in organizations within one's own personal experience. Historical evidence suggests that large organizations everywhere have suffered from them.

Recently, however, the self-serving, self-perpetuating tendencies of big institutions have become more obvious and more obtrusive. It has become increasingly apparent that people are required to serve the convenience of

organizations rather than vice versa. Internal pressures inside organizations have become stronger than the demands of the external world to which they are supposed to respond. Big business, big trade unions, the civil service, and public services like education, health and transport, nowadays give top priority all too clearly to the interests of the people who run them and work in them. Customers, savers, investors, citizens, students, patients and travellers are treated as the material upon which business tycoons, trade union leaders, politicians and top civil servants, teachers, doctors and public service administrators, can make their fortunes, build their empires, and express their personalities – the fodder, you might say, on which hungry organizations and hungry organization men can satisfy their aspirations – the rungs of the ladder up which ambitious men can climb to power.

To say all this is not to cast personal reflections on particular individuals. There are many civil servants, teachers and doctors, for example, with high professional skill and great integrity. But even they, to a greater or lesser extent, are prisoners of the system in which they find themselves. In *Platform For Change* Stafford Beer makes the following statement about the National Health Service in Britain: 'On the one hand is the ostensible reality: an introverted organization, pre-occupied with its own antecedents, its internal power struggles, its levels of status, its costs and wages, which solves its management problems in equations of political factors and psychological stress. On the other hand is the notion of a health service, to which surely in fact many people dedicate their lives, conceived as a national system for promoting healthiness.' The same diagnosis is widely applicable to institutions of all kinds. Human beings have not yet been able to devise effective ways of making large organizations socially responsible or

socially responsive.

Now growth. Think what it would be like if the eye, or the liver, or any other organ of the human body, had to go on growing and growing or otherwise to die. The big organizations of modern society are in precisely that predicament. Why the whole system is set up this way, and whence comes the psycho-social impetus that makes it so, takes us to the mainsprings of human motivation, and we shall come to that aspect in a later chapter. What is relevant here is that, because the big organizations are compelled to concentrate on growth, they have turned into powerful engines of self-perpetuating expansion.

As J. K. Galbraith has made us aware, for example in *The New Industrial State*, they persuade people by advertising, marketing, and various other forms of public relations and promotional activity, to want the products and services and satisfactions that they themselves purport to offer, thus creating a demand that is never satisfied. Industry makes people want more and more material goods. The medical profession, the health administrators and the drug companies make people want more and more health services and health products. The educational establishment creates a similar demand for education services and formalized learning. The political parties create a continually growing demand for goods and services and employment of all kinds. Economists measure economic activity with yardsticks like Gross National Product which reinforce this tendency. Taken separately, each element in today's industrial economy stimulates a growing demand for its own output, since that is how it will survive and grow. Taken together, the institutions of the public and commercial sectors stimulate a limitlessly growing demand for everything. We thus find ourselves trapped in a political and economic system that provides a built-in guarantee of social and economic disequilibrium,

including inflation, in the world of today. And in the limits-to-growth world of the future, it offers a sure prescription for the ultimate suicide of the human race.

Quite apart from their self-centredness and their commitment to growth, today's large organizations are socially divisive and damaging in a number of ways.

First, they pull people's lives apart, and leave an emptiness in their homes and the local communities where they live. Most of us go away from our homes every day to work in special work-places like factories and offices. We send our children out of the home to learn in special places called schools. We go to special places called hospitals when we are ill. We go out of the home to shops and supermarkets to satisfy all our needs for food, clothing, and the other material things of life. We seek most of our entertainment outside the home, or have it beamed in through the national television channels. We move about, and heat our homes, and cook our food, by courtesy of big organizations specializing in transport and energy.

This tendency for most important human activities, including education, health, mobility, energy, leisure, and – most importantly – work itself, to migrate from the home and fly apart into separate, specialized institutions, has been growing rapidly in recent years. In those institutions our needs are met by the provision of consumer goods and services – not only from manufacturing industries and shops, but also from the education industry, the health industry, the transport and energy industries, the leisure industry and the employment services industry. Many of these industries are run as public services by the state.

Because all these industries have to be paid for, they pull individuals and families apart financially, as well as

geographically. As we saw in Chapter 2, the escalating claims on people's expenditure caused by rising prices and taxes and rates are a prime source of social and economic instability. They deprive people of autonomy and a sense of responsibility – of the feeling that they are in control of their own lives.

This process of institutionalization is cumulative and self-reinforcing. For example, it was the basic source of the economic and psychological pressures which impelled both men and, more recently, women to seek work outside the home. Their absence from the home created a demand for institutional facilities for looking after young children, old people, the sick and disabled – also outside the home. Thus one thing led to another. In this way, just as the autonomy of business enterprises has been steadily expropriated – in Ivan Illich's term – by the encroaching weight of big trade unions, big financial institutions, and big government, so our personal autonomy and our personal lives have been steadily expropriated by the institutions of the producer and consumer society. As people increasingly look to these outside institutions to meet their needs, including their need for work, they suffer increasing loss of capacity for self-help and self-fulfilment. The one-dimensional, alienated character of modern life has been extensively analysed and documented by such thinkers as Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm. It is a major cause of the social stresses and economic discontents that exist so widely today.

The large organizations and institutions of industrialized society are alienating and divisive in another way too. They gear up the power and the opportunities of an elite minority over their fellow citizens. The existence of big government means that comparatively few politicians and senior civil servants can, at least in principle, play a dominating role in the



decisions that shape the future. The growth of big banks and other big financial institutions means that the comparatively few people who run them play a preponderant part in deciding where the money goes. The growth of high technology means, as Illich has shown, that the small minority of people who benefit from air travel, for example, do so by exploiting the world's resources of natural materials and human skills at the expense of their fellows. In the sphere of information and communication, the growth of large newspapers and centralized broadcasting networks has enormously geared up the opportunity for self-expression and the power to communicate ideas, which is enjoyed by the small minority of journalists and other commentators who have easy access to the media. In these ways the growing size of institutions makes modern society more and more highly geared; and a highly geared society of this kind is bound to be unstable. It nourishes ambition beyond the human scale. It offers delusions of power to the people who get to the top. It sours the outlook of many of those who do not. It distorts our social value systems and misdirects our mechanisms of collective choice.

The growth of large organizations has had a more specifically damaging effect on the sense of perspective of people in positions of power, and on their perceptions of their own responsibilities. People at the top of big institutions easily get the impression that they stand outside society and above it – that it is their job to deal with members of society and their problems from on high. At the same time, organizational boundaries limit them to a fragmentary vision of the world and a strictly partial sense of responsibility for the people with whom their organizations deal – i.e. as customers, or taxpayers, or patients, or depositors, or travellers, or employees, as the case may be. In these ways institutionalized society

tends to create a conceptual model of itself not altogether unlike the male-orientated cosmology of ancient Greece, in which Zeus and his specialist colleagues surveyed the world from the lofty heights of Mount Olympus and darted down from time to time to help a favourite, spite an enemy, or simply to enjoy themselves.

This ancient Greek cosmology is no longer good enough. We need Einsteinian perceptions of society. These will go with the interacting, organic model of the economy outlined in Chapter 2, in which no member or section or class or profession is above the battle, but all have roles of their own to play in relation to one another. Just as man can no longer stand apart from nature, so governors – as in Mao Tse-tung's China – should no longer try to distinguish themselves from governed. It should no longer be permissible for politicians, civil servants, lawyers, bankers, accountants, scientists and other professional people to persuade themselves that their function is to deal with one particular facet of society's problems in an abstract manner from outside. They themselves are part of these problems; in fact it is they who constitute the most important problem that we have to tackle today. The idea that clever people, climbing to strategic peaks in the structure of society and thence surveying social and economic questions from a great height, can make objective assessments of costs and benefits, right and wrong, true and false, that will be valid for us all – that is one of the biggest lies in the soul of institutional man.

After reflecting on many years' experience of big organizations in government, business and the financial sector I am now convinced that large institutions cannot successfully reform themselves from within. What Donald Schon describes in *Beyond the Stable State* as the forces of 'dynamic conservatism' are far too strong. As Stafford Beer says in *Designing Freedom*, so long as the

existing bureaucracies 'remain cybernetically organized so as to produce themselves, our societary institutions remain set on courses that lead to catastrophic instability'. In *Platform For Change* he calls for revolution, because 'Acceptable Man in his Mediocrity Machine is entrenched in the face of a challenge to which he cannot rise. He will have to be shifted, and this will be a revolutionary move'. On the same note Ivan Illich uses the words 'A Call to Institutional Revolution' as the subtitle for his book *Celebration of Awareness*, stating in it that 'we must abandon our attempt to solve our problems through shifting power balances or attempting to create more efficient bureaucratic machines'.

I confess that on this point my own view has been slow to harden. Until quite recently, I still hoped that our economic institutions might be able to transform themselves into a system broadly on the lines set out in Chapter 2 above, and that thus we might avert a breakdown of the socio-economic system in the industrialized countries – muddled, crazy-mixed-up, mixed economies though they were. I now find it more realistic to assume that further serious breakdown will have to take place in the old system to bring about the conditions for a breakthrough to the new. Once a society is trapped in an escalating spiral of malfunction, where one thing leads to the next and every measure taken to rectify existing faults simply makes matters worse, it is difficult to see a way of avoiding breakdown. That society is like the individual who finds himself, in R. D. Laing's words, in an 'untenable position. He cannot make a move or make no move without being beset by contradictory and paradoxical pressures and demands, pushes and pulls, both internal from himself and external from those around him. He is, as it were, in a position of checkmate'. Further breakdown may be necessary, involving abandonment of the untenable position, before

recovery on a new basis can take place.

There are many signs that the big institutions are, in fact, set on a breakdown course. In Chapter 2 I described how in Britain the rise of big trade unions and powerful financial concerns, and the tug of war between them, undermined the authority of business managements and compelled them to raise their prices faster than their productivity; how, by permitting this, the lax monetary policies adopted by successive governments, in the futile hope of steering the economy by Keynesian 'demand management' techniques, encouraged self-generating inflation; how, in attempting to control this inflation, successive governments introduced centralized measures in greater and greater detail to hold back prices and incomes; how these measures distorted industrial efficiency and choked off industrial investment; how that, in turn, necessitated still more government intervention to stimulate investment in other ways; and how, finally, there seems to have been created an irreconcilable squeeze between incomes on the one hand and prices, taxes and rates on the other – a doomsday machine that holds individuals and companies alike in an ever tightening grip. These developments certainly look like the symptoms of advanced instability, moving rapidly into a state of chronic disequilibrium and ultimately towards collapse.

The compulsive corrections, counter-corrections and over-corrections to one another's policies that have been introduced in Britain by alternating Labour and Conservative Governments in recent years are also suggestive of a system in disequilibrium approaching the point of collapse. To take one small example, in 1962 a National Incomes Commission was created by the Conservatives, which was then replaced by Labour in 1965 with a Prices and Incomes Board, which was replaced in turn by the Conservatives in 1970 by a Prices

Commission and a Pay Board, the latter being subsequently replaced by Labour in 1974 by a Royal Commission on the Distribution of Incomes and Wealth. The Conservatives set up a Commission on Industrial Relations and Labour scrapped it; and Labour intend to set up a Companies Commission, which the Conservatives will no doubt scrap as soon as they are in government again. This kind of behaviour is called 'hunting' when it occurs in guided missiles and servo-systems. It can lead rapidly to total loss of control.

Another sign of impending institutional collapse is the evaporation of conventional leadership in countries like Britain today. Those who are ostensibly in leadership positions have in fact become prisoners of the system. They are themselves institutionalized. They are organization men by training, by personality and by social background. They assume they have to climb the institutional structures of power and money, and they assume they have to stay at the top, if they are to be able to achieve anything. And they find that climbing and staying are full-time jobs. Most of them fit neatly into their traditional roles and pigeon holes, which they defend stubbornly and from whose narrow windows they look out upon the world. Is something going wrong? Then it must be someone else's fault. You are an industrialist? Then you blame the financiers in the City of London and the politicians and the civil servants in Whitehall for what is wrong with Britain's industrial confidence. You are a banker or a financier from the City? Then you blame the industrialists for being too timid and unimaginative to run their companies successfully and to invest boldly in the future, and you blame the politicians and civil servants for creating conditions in which investors prefer to put their money elsewhere than in British industry. You are a politician or civil servant? Then you lament the sluggishness of

British industry and the complacency of the City, and blame them for the country's economic plight. And, of course, whoever you are, you blame the trade unions.

Ivan Illich has drawn our attention to another sign that institutionalized society is on a breakdown course. This is the failure of the big organizations to deliver the goods, even on their own terms. They are actually becoming counter-productive. Modern teaching institutions positively inculcate ignorance and deprive their students of the capacity to learn; modern medical institutions spread disease and deprive people of the capacity for good health; manufacturers and operators of institutionalized transport systems positively create congestion and immobility, and deprive people of the capacity and satisfaction of moving themselves; government bureaucracies hamper and harass the citizens whose liberties and welfare are supposed to be their concern; in today's inflationary conditions, financial and monetary institutions have become devices for actually impoverishing most of the people whose money they have in trust; and, finally, the big employers and big trade unions of the consumer society now create idleness and under-employment on a massive scale, though one of their main *raison-d'être* is to provide jobs for the job-consuming masses.

Even the traditional procedures for clarifying and discussing society's problems before decisions are taken, are now bankrupt and ineffective. Royal Commissions, departmental committees of enquiry, assignments carried out by consultants, and similar long drawn out intellectual preliminaries to making decisions, assume that what should be done can be identified by painstaking analyses carried out as a series of one-off studies. The theory is that politicians, civil servants, economists, lawyers, academics and other powerful and highly educated people – observing the problems of society one

by one from their Olympian height, and in each case calculating the pros and cons of all the possibilities dispassionately with the help of elaborate techniques like cost/benefit analysis and technology assessment – can reach objective answers, which will then be gratefully accepted as correct by the hoi polloi. In practice, these enquiries are often futile. They are sometimes simply a device for shelving leadership responsibility. They seldom contribute creatively to the decisions that have to be made. Where shall a third London airport be built? Shall a Channel Tunnel be built? What powers shall be devolved from Whitehall and Westminster to Scotland, Wales and the English regions? These are three British examples of the kind of questions on which millions of pounds and a very great deal of time, have been spent in recent years, and similar examples could be quoted for other countries too. Few people participate in these investigations, only organizations with vested interests, since most people find the methods of enquiry incomprehensible; and the eventual decisions are often contrary to those recommended by the investigators. The fact is that, in principle, this one-off method of studying, discussing and deciding things is obsolete. People's feelings about what is right and wrong, what they will stand for and what they won't, what should be done and how it should be done, now carry more weight than disembodied analysis.

However, making decisions by popular referenda on one-off questions whose significance to their own lives people find it hard to understand, will meet the need no better than one-off investigations by high powered pundits whose findings people cannot understand. Institutional reforms are badly overdue in this area. We need new methods of continuous social and economic planning which will attract the genuine participation of very large numbers of people. This is what Alvin Toffler

in *The Eco-spasm Report* calls 'anticipatory democracy'. By developing existing methods of futures research, attitude survey and opinion sampling, and public discussion and debate, into a continually developing system of open decision-making, we could create a situation in which important decisions about the future will emerge from a widely based collective learning process, in which the common sense of people will count for as much as the intellectual fantasies of the so-called experts.

So the big institutions of our modern materialist society are ecologically destructive and socially damaging. That gives urgency to the need for a radical transformation of political and economic structures, on lines suggested in Chapters 1 and 2. But the big institutions are also showing unmistakeable symptoms of impending collapse. That, added to their innate incapacity for self-reform, means that we cannot expect them to play a constructive part in transforming themselves. As realists, we shall conclude with comparative equanimity that further collapse in our governing assumptions and institutions is bound to occur. As idealists, we shall concentrate on preparing and clarifying the alternatives that will be needed to replace them, when the time comes.

That diagnosis does not provide us with a clear cut remedy. We cannot yet spell out, step by step, the measures to be taken to exorcize the institutional imperative. All we can do at this half way stage is to recapitulate in summary form a number of institutional insights which will contribute constructively to our understanding of how the eventual transformation could come about. The essential key to progress will, however, have to be found elsewhere – in the hearts and minds of men and women.



Among the insights that emerge from our discussion so far are the following.

1. The fundamental problems of modern institutionalized societies are constitutional, not economic. The prime need is to redefine the functions of government worldwide; and to redefine the functions, rights and obligations of the various participants in the economies of industrialized societies. When I talk thus about redefining the functions, rights and duties of all concerned in government and the economy, I am not suggesting that a blueprint for the future can be drawn up or that new definitions can be laid down by any single person or any single group of writers, economists and politicians. The process of redefinition must be operational. It must consist in starting out along the lines suggested in Chapters 2 and 3 above, with the deliberate aim of evolving and introducing new perceptions, new practices and new procedures in the spheres of government and business worldwide.
2. The institutional reformer should approach society as a *system* consisting of innumerable interacting centres of perception, decision and control. The reformer's aim should be to help to bring about conditions in which the complex interactions between these centres will create a continuing state of dynamic equilibrium. He will be the catalyst in an on-going process of collective learning and collective self-healing.
3. The reformer should thus adopt an Einsteinian model of a pluralist society in which the changing role of every member defines itself relatively to all the others, and in which the ethical outlook of

every member has its own subjective validity. There is no Olympian summit in this universe from which godlike beings can view the whole objectively and authoritatively. This prompts the question: can change simply be left to emerge from natural processes (i.e. unstructured and disorganized processes) of evolutionary interaction between the members of a pluralist society? Must it not be imposed by some powerful member or group of members of society, who can claim to be acting on behalf of all? The answer, as so often with choices *either/or* (either have democratic government or efficient government, either trust the heart or trust the head, either go for social revolution or for personal regeneration), is that neither alternative will do. Natural change will not be fast enough, while imposed change will be unacceptable. We need to develop appropriately structured processes of collective learning and collective change, at all levels and in all sectors of human decision-making, in which leaders will propose – not impose – their own view. Walter Bagehot, in his book *The English Constitution*, said of the 19th century Parliament that one of its most important functions was a teaching function. In today's less paternalistic climate, deliberative bodies like Parliament cannot teach in the old-fashioned sense. They must now become focal points for participative processes of collective learning and collective change.

4. The dominant conceptual model of an enterprise or an activity should be of a system with multiple objectives, the overriding aim being to maintain a balance between them. The co-operative ethic

underlying this model differs markedly from the aggrandizing ethic that underlies the dominant model in the minds of business people and economists today, which is to pursue a single objective – such as the maximization of profit or economic growth – subject to meeting various other constraints. It also differs from the competitive ethic underlying the adversary model prevalent in the minds of most politicians, trade unionists and lawyers – according to which the right conclusions will be reached in politics, collective bargaining and the law by a process of confrontation between two sides.

5. Following from this, the public interest should not be conceived in terms of maximizing welfare, utility, social benefit or any similar construct in the minds of economists, philosophers and public officials. It should be concerned with helping to develop and maintain a framework of functions, rights and duties in society – a framework which will hold the balance between differing interests, from which social justice will emerge, and within which people will have scope to fulfil themselves – a framework which will itself be continually evolved by the participative processes of collective learning and collective change which I have outlined.
6. By the same token, we should accept that in a pluralist society it is pointless to seek single remedies for social and economic ills. We should ignore political parties and other pressure groups which put forward competing panaceas, and argue with one another about them. For example, the problems of the industrial economy will not be solved simply by nationalizing the so-called

private sector, as socialists tend to argue. Nor will they be solved simply by introducing sound monetary policies and a responsible attitude towards public finance in government, as right wing monetarists argue. A broader programme, incorporating *both* social responsibility in business and finance *and* financial responsibility in government, will be needed to bring the interdependent elements of a pluralist society into a new balance.

7. From a more scientific point of view, we should be thinking about the control mechanisms needed to keep in a state of dynamic equilibrium the innumerable interacting centres of perception and decision which constitute a pluralist society. We need to learn what kinds of changes in existing decision procedures at the various control points (e.g. in government, financial institutions and business enterprises) would bring a very complex, highly interactive system into such a state of equilibrium.
8. Another way to illuminate the problems, from a scientific and analytical point of view, is to explore further the idea of the laws as rules, money as the scoring system, and government as the administrator and umpire, for a game. This is not just an apt analogy, which may encourage the players – teams and individuals, companies and people – to play the game and deal with one another in a friendlier and more co-operative spirit. It suggests also that there could be much merit in insisting that the administrators, referees and linesmen should stick to the task of getting the rules of the game right and enforcing them, rather than themselves becoming heavily involved in the

game. In other words, it suggests that governments should concentrate on seeing that the laws and the money system provide the right kind of framework for keeping the industrial economy in balance, and intervene in it directly very much less than they do at present. (Stafford Beer, on p. 112 of *Platform For Change*, uses the same analogy, but from an explicitly managerial point of view. He suggests that, instead of intervening directly, a higher manager should change the rules of the game so that his side will win. But a government should have no side.)

9. This idea that laws and money should be seen as the rules and scoring system for a game also suggests a change in the emphasis of the work of intellectual analysts and expert commentators, such as economists and other social scientists. Much of their work at present can be seen as providing advice to the referee and the players about what the score should be, and about who should win and who should lose, if the game were played according to a hypothetical set of rules and a hypothetical scoring system quite different from those which actually apply. Cost-benefit analysis is one example of applying hypothetical rules and scoring systems in this way. The game analogy suggests that the expert commentators should concentrate on improving the rules and scoring system for the game itself rather than on working out what the results of the game would be or should be in hypothetical circumstances.
10. Consistently with this general approach, we should remind government officials, lawyers, and financial experts like bankers and accountants, of the trusteeship element in their work. They are

employed to draw up and administer the rules and the scoring system for the game. As members of an ineffective and parasitical bureaucracy, or as members of legal and financial professions which exploit the failings in the legal and financial systems for personal profit, they do less than justice to their own good name. The civil servants' ethic of political subordination and neutrality can decline all too easily into personal irresponsibility and lack of commitment. The money-making ethic of City lawyers and bankers, stockbrokers and accountants, can decline all too easily into excessive preoccupation with self-interest.

11. Fortunately, there are also dormant traditions of public service and professional integrity. The personal self-respect of the rising generation of bankers and financiers may make them increasingly reluctant to work in a financial system which is open to the charge – made by Lord Nelson against the naval victuallers in the Napoleonic Wars – that ‘the only emulation I can perceive is who could cheat the most’; a financial system which is biased in favour of those who operate it at the expense of those who use its services, in favour of big people at the expense of small, and in favour of borrowers at the expense of lenders. The new generation in the legal profession, likewise, may become increasingly uneasy about making a good living out of the fact that, in the words of a British Lord Chancellor, the ‘complexity of English law has, by now, reached a degree where the system is not only unknown to the community at large, but unknowable, save to the extent of a few departments, even to the professionals’.

12. This need to revive the tradition of genuine public service and genuine professional responsibility shades into the idea of leadership as service. The idea of the leader as the servant of the led – as a teacher who can show his fellows how better to develop their own lives – has important consequences for the way we think about power. It suggests a concept of power, not as the capacity to dominate or impose, but as the capacity to develop and draw out potential that is already there – like the power of Michelangelo to liberate the living forms imprisoned in the marble rock.
13. The same kind of power, directed inwards to ourselves rather than outwards to our fellows, is the source of personal initiative and self-help. By cultivating it, we can help to break the vicious spiral of escalating institutionalization in all areas of human activity. This is directly true of people's personal lives. But it also applies to their actions as employees of large organizations, where powers of initiative can be used according to personal judgement about what is right and what is wrong, even when those judgements go beyond what is officially required of a functionary.
14. We should also be prepared, as part of the same endeavour, to humanize the workings of modern society, to rely more on our hearts as a guide to action and less on our heads, more on common sense and less on the actions of other people who are supposed to be more expert and more knowledgeable than we are.
15. Finally, it will be helpful to think of political and economic institutions – including law and money – as providing the basic system of controls and

channels through which human energies find their outlet in society. How should we change this system of channels and controls, in order to encourage our energies to flow more harmoniously and creatively? Are our energies now set against one another? Are they blocked and sterile and destructive? If so, what changes in our institutions will improve the flow? In this context institutional reform can again be seen as a process of healing in the body politic.

At the beginning of this chapter we asked whether the institutional imperative is driving mankind relentlessly into an evolutionary dead end, or whether the present institutionalization of society will prove to be only a temporary diversion from the main path of human evolution. Can we foresee the possibility of a breakthrough to a new and higher plane of collective human consciousness and self-control?

We cannot yet claim to have found a satisfactory answer to those questions. We have crystallized a number of useful insights about the nature of the transformation needed in our political and economic institutions. But something more will be necessary – something closer to the mainsprings of human attitude and motivation – before we can be confident of exorcizing the institutional imperative. Can we develop a new human imperative, stemming from the inner well-springs of the human psyche, that will be strong enough to subdue the forces which our own external creations now impose so heavily upon us?



## 4. OVERRIDING THE INHERITED PROGRAM

THE first statement of the 'thesis' in Stafford Beer's *Platform For Change* begins as follows:

'Man is a prisoner of his own way of thinking  
and of his own stereotypes of himself.  
His machine for thinking  
the brain  
has been programmed to deal with a vanished world.'

The thesis goes on to discuss our concepts of organization.

I agree wholeheartedly with that statement of Stafford Beer's and I agree about the inadequacy of our existing concepts of organization as a tool for managing complexity. But I find that I no longer approach these questions from a managerial standpoint. I have come to the view that, if we are to exorcize the institutional imperative, we shall have to see it as the outcome of a psycho-social drive that stems from the deepest springs of human motivation. Man must, indeed, liberate himself from his own way of thinking. But this may be a more serious and difficult challenge, than institutional reformers and revolutionaries like Ivan Illich, E. F. Schumacher, and Stafford Beer himself have yet acknowledged. Man may be caught in a trap which, down the millenia and the centuries, he has been making

for himself. The trap is his own nature. The built-in program, inherited biologically and culturally from previous generations, which now governs the desires and the behaviour of the species, may be holding us firmly on a suicide course. The question is, can we find ways to override the program, much as a computer operator in an emergency might override the computer program currently in control?

In this chapter we look briefly at the sources of these deep springs of motivation. We remind ourselves that the roles of men and women in relation to each other have been very closely linked to prevailing concepts of power and wealth, including money. We trace the evolution of attitudes towards power and money. We touch on some of the changes that have taken place in the organization of power and money, and we suggest that their bureaucratization in modern society may soon precipitate a further radical transformation in the way we think about them. We suggest that further changes in sex relationships are likely to be closely connected with this future transformation of our attitudes to power and wealth. Finally, we suggest how these changes in roles and attitudes might contribute to the necessary breakthrough to a future in which the human species can survive.

Many writers and thinkers have discussed the characteristic features of the male and female roles in human society up to the present time. For example, according to Erich Fromm in *The Sane Society* a patriarchal society is characterized by respect for man-made law, by rational thought, and by sustained efforts to control and change the natural world; whereas a matriarchal society is characterized by the importance of blood ties, close links with the land, and acceptance of human dependence on nature. Patriarchy attaches high value to order and authority, obedience and hierarchy;

whereas matriarchy lays stress on love, unity and universal harmony.

In *The Imperial Animal* Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox describe the prevailing masculine characteristics less flatteringly. They say that human males have 'all the enthusiasms of the hunting primate, but few of the circumstances in which this reality can be reflected. So they create their own realities: they make up teams; they set up businesses and political parties; they form secret societies and cabals for and against the government; they set up regiments; they make up fantasies about honour and dignity; they turn their enemies into 'not men' – into prey. They generate forms of automatic loyalty and complete dedication that can spread the Jesuitical message of the Church Militant and also send screaming jets to a foreign country. All a country needs is a couple of dozen males who take their fantasies about their own omnipotence so seriously that they spend money, kill people, and even commit Abraham's presumptuous conceit of sacrificing their sons to voices of grandeur they think they hear.'

Meanwhile, as Virginia Woolf pointed out in *A Room of One's Own*, the human female aids and abets the human male in these dangerous fantasies: 'Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. Without that power, probably the earth would still be swamp and jungle. The glories of all our wars would be unknown . . . Mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action. That is why Napoleon and Mussolini insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of women, for if they were not inferior they would cease to enlarge . . . How is a man to go on giving judgement, civilizing natives, making law, writing books, dressing up and speechifying at banquets, unless he can see himself at breakfast and dinner at least twice the size he really is?'

... The looking-glass vision is of extreme importance because it charges the vitality; it stimulates the nervous system. Take it away and men may die, like the drug fiend deprived of his cocaine.'

These attitudes and behaviour patterns of men and women are an important part of the inherited program that we need to override. Are they biologically based and genetically imprinted, or are they merely due to a process of cultural conditioning transmitted through previous generations? Or are they both?

Male dominance can be observed in all human societies and also in the behaviour of baboons and other primates; men are physically more powerful than women; and in sexual intercourse men have a more active, initiating penetrative role, whereas women are more passive, expectant, and receptive. Male chauvinists maintain that for all these biological reasons men are bound to play the dominant role in society. As Ruskin put it, 'the man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy is for adventure, for war and for conquest . . . But the woman's power is for sweet ordering, arrangement and decision . . . by her office and place she is protected from all danger and all temptation.'

The protagonists of women's rights and women's liberation, on the other hand, argue that the roles of men and women in society today have been culturally conditioned. John Stuart Mill's *Subjection of Women* contains a forthright statement of this point of view: 'Standing on the ground of common sense and the constitution of the human mind, I deny that anyone knows or can know the nature of the two sexes, so long as they have only been seen in their present relation to one another . . . What is now called the nature of woman is an eminently artificial thing – the result of forced

repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others. It may be asserted without scruple that no other class of dependents have had their character so entirely distorted from its natural proportions by their relation with their masters.'

The argument between these two opposing points of view generates a great deal of heat and antagonism. But, it does not take us very far for practical purposes. Common sense suggests that biological and cultural factors together underlie the present attitudes and roles of the sexes in society; that if these now constitute a program that threatens the survival of the human species in the environment we have created for ourselves, we shall be unwise to underestimate the difficulties of overriding our biological and cultural inheritance; but that we are obliged to find a way of doing so, nonetheless.

Tiger and Fox have shown that the question of how the future is to be shaped and who is to participate in shaping it, which is right at the heart of the evolutionary process, is inextricably interwoven with questions about power, wealth and sex. They discuss the critical difference between ant societies and human societies. Ant societies are apolitical in the sense that the roles of queens, drones, workers, soldiers and so on are genetically programmed and therefore fixed. Human societies are political. 'Politics involves the possibility of changing the distribution of resources in a society – one of which is the control over the future that breeding allows. The political process – the process of redistributing control over resources among the individuals of a group – is, in evolutionary terms, a breeding process. The political system is a breeding system. When we apply the word "lust" to both power and sex,\* we are nearer the truth than we imagine. In the struggle for reproductive advantage, some do better than

\* and money. JHR

others. It is this that changes the distribution of genes in a population and affects its genetic future . . . Power equals self-perpetuation'. At a later stage in human evolution 'power became divorced from the control of the genetic future of the population, and fastened instead on to the control of material goods and the symbolic future. The leaders could not ensure that they controlled the future merely by peopling it with their own offspring; they had to ensure that their offspring controlled the future by having the monopoly of wealth and power.' Social and cultural evolution largely replaced genetic evolution. Social and cultural qualities became more important than purely physical qualities in the Darwinian selection process.

Thus the crude concept of power as domination and the crude concept of wealth as property are closely related to sex. They are rooted in primeval relationships between the two sexes: males controlled females for sex, for service and for exchanging with females from other tribes; and females looked to males for impregnation and protection. As Kate Millett puts it in *Sexual Politics*, traditional forms of patriarchy 'granted the father nearly total ownership over wife or wives and children, including the powers of physical abuse and often even those of murder and sale. Classically, as head of the family the father is both begetter and owner in a system in which kinship is property.' She goes on to quote Sir Henry Maine's view, in *Ancient Law*, that in the archaic patriarchal family 'the group consists of animate and inanimate property, of wife, children, slaves, land and goods, all held together by subjection to the despotic authority of the oldest male', who is 'absolutely supreme in his household. His dominion extends to life and death and is as unqualified over his children and their houses as over his slaves.' Even in modern societies there are survivals of the chattel status of women, in their 'loss of

name, their obligation to adopt the husband's domicile, and the general legal assumption that marriage involves an exchange of the female's domestic service and (sexual) consortium in return for financial support.'

This concept of power as domination is still widely prevalent. It involves the ability to exercise one's will upon other people, including the ability to inflict pain upon them. It still has strong sexual connotations of a crude, even brutal kind. This is humorously illustrated in many bawdy verses and songs, such as

'My husband's a sergeant, a sergeant, a sergeant,  
A very fine sergeant is he.  
All day he fucks men about, fucks men about,  
fucks men about,  
And at night he comes home and fucks me.'

But, as Kate Millett has exhaustively shown in *Sexual Politics*, the connection between power, violence and sex becomes pathological in the works of writers such as Henry Miller and Norman Mailer, and there is no doubt that this kind of sadism is not far below the surface of much of the violence and terrorism in modern societies today. Miller, incidentally, in *Tropic of Capricorn*, describes the first rule of business in capitalist America as 'fuck or be fucked'.

The goal of political and economic power has had sexual overtones for many modern revolutionary movements. To take a particular example to which Shulamith Firestone – among others – has drawn attention, racial revolutionaries and their opponents tend to be obsessed with the idea of sexual power and sexual property: '... then came Black Power. A rumble of I-told-you-so issued from the nation, especially from the working class who were closest to the blacks; what they really want is our power – they're after our women. Eldridge Cleaver's honesty in *Soul on Ice* clinched it. The

heavily sexual nature of the racial issue spilled out. Internally, as well, the Black Power movement was increasingly involved in a special kind of machismo, as busy proclaiming manhood as protesting race and class injustice.' But more generally, the Lady Chatterley syndrome has been one of the basic motivators in class war, race war and sex war – challenging the lower class (black) male to take possession of the upper class (white) female, and the upper class (white) female to repudiate her subjection to the upper class (white) male. It is even possible to interpret Mao Tse-tung's famous admonition to every communist that 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun' as an expression of the male drive for sexual dominance. The phallic symbolism is clear.

From early times human beings have had an urge to quantify power, wealth and sex. 'Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred three score and six talents of gold . . . So King Solomon exceeded all the Kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom . . . And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines'. This quantification of wealth eventually gives a special significance to money.

Quantification also prompts us to ask of power, money and sex, 'how much is enough?', and we can answer: with the ascetic, 'too little is enough'; with the moderate, 'enough is enough'; and with the glutton, the power seeker, the miser, and the Don Juan, 'too much is enough'. The idea then gets around that the sky's the limit: grab as much power as you can; grab as much money as you can; grab as much sex as you can. This leads men to feel that power, money and women give them status. In his *Theory of the Leisure Class* Thorstein Veblen explained the attractions of conspicuous consumption: the rich and the powerful display their power and wealth through their women, whose idleness and decoration (and, in some societies, fatness)



demonstrate the success of their menfolk. In *The Big Spenders* Lucius Beebe tells us about Potter Palmer, 'the Chicago hotelman who kept his wife so loaded with jewels that observers following her progress through the restaurant of the Paris Ritz thought that she staggered visibly from sheer weight of diamonds. "There she stands with half a million on her back," Potter Palmer used to say admiringly.'

Even in the past there has always been a snag about trying to assuage personal anxieties and insecurities by conspicuous consumption: you can't take power, money and sex with you when you die. In the limits-to-growth world of the future in which more and more people are becoming more self-aware, conspicuous consumption could well come to be widely regarded as an anti-social symptom of personal maladjustment – an outward and visible sign of psychological insecurity.

We have already noted the sexual significance of many violent revolutionary movements. But the very idea of revolution (or reform) – in the normal sense of those terms as the forcible transfer (or peaceful redistribution) of power and wealth from one person, or one group of people, or one sector of society, to others – is based on a concept of power and wealth as the kind of things that can belong to some people and not to others. Such political objectives as the dictatorship of the proletariat, an irreversible shift of power to the working class, and a more egalitarian distribution of wealth and income, are based on the assumption that power and wealth are things of that kind. Those objectives are all to be contrasted with Gandhi's view in *Non-Violence in Peace and War* that 'a non-violent revolution is not a programme for the seizure of power, but it is a programme for the transformation of relationships.'

A further development of the idea that power is something possessed by particular people, which can be

taken from them by others, is the idea that power is to be found in certain positions in society. This idea that power belongs to positions and roles rather than personally to the people occupying those positions and carrying out those roles, is an important feature of the bureaucracies that dominate our highly institutionalized modern societies. Many a career man, especially among politicians, public officials, business managers and professional trade unionists, is inspired by the hope of possessing power if only he can achieve a place where power resides.

This idea that power has its location in certain places in society is connected with two other ideas of historical importance. The first is the notion that all power ultimately derives from one particular source; this is the idea which underlies the concept of sovereignty, and from which are developed such metaphysical constructions as the British constitutional fiction that sovereignty resides with 'the Queen in Parliament'. The second is the idea that power can be split up into defined parcels, each of which are then given to certain positions and roles in society; this notion underlies many of the complexities of constitutional law. There is an obvious artificiality about ideas like these, and no doubt their operational importance will continue to fade with time.

A comparable notion in the economic sphere, i.e. as applied to wealth instead of political power, is that everything has to be *owned* by somebody. This idea that the possessor/possessed relationship is fundamental to human activity underlies statements like the following. 'It is all very well to say that the shareholders will not be owners of the company. Who then does own it? There are evident legal difficulties if assets are owned by no one.' But these legal difficulties arise, surely, from the continuing existence of a system of law based on an absurdly wide extension of the metaphysical concept of

personal property. They cannot be attributed to any underlying feature of the real world according to which the assets of every undertaking are an aggregation of a multitude of little pieces, each of which belongs to somebody in the same way that an eye, or a hat, or a house belongs. Indeed, there is an obvious artificiality about the fiction that big companies or big financial institutions like General Motors and ICI or Chase Manhattan and Barclays banks are *owned* by their shareholders, and that British Railways or the US Navy are *owned* by the British or US taxpayers. For practical purposes we find it necessary to define this kind of ownership as a set of rights and duties. If we are realistic we also have to recognize that the rights of shareholders to control the businesses they are supposed to own have been heavily eroded in the last half century.

Thus the economic concept of ownership is becoming less and less useful for practical purposes, as the concept of sovereignty has become less and less useful in the political sphere. It is true that constitutional and commercial lawyers – not to mention politicians – continue to preserve for sovereignty and ownership a metaphysical significance far above their practical value as means of clarifying the operational rights and duties of the individuals and organizations concerned. But this only confirms that the masculine mind will go to great lengths to preserve the fictions and fantasies of Erich Fromm's 'man-made world of ideas, principles and man-made things' that replaces nature as the ground of existence and security for the human male. Clever men can be very silly indeed when their feet are a long way off the ground.

However, it is not just the constitutional and commercial lawyers who reify the concepts of power and wealth, and think of them as commodities or substances to be possessed. Conventional thinking in the academic

fields of political science and economics also assumes that power and wealth are, first and foremost, things of the kind that can be possessed by the particular people who acquire them, or who occupy positions where they reside. Political scientists think that politics and government are basically about the processes of seeking, acquiring, exercising and distributing something called power. Who has got it? How do they use it? How did they get it? How long will they keep it? Who may take it from them? Economists ask and try to answer similar questions about something called wealth, as represented in quantified money terms. How can we make more of it? and how should it be distributed? Now of course people need to fulfil themselves by exercising their powers, and of course they have material needs to satisfy. But these political and economic thinkers are guilty of a grave heresy. They encourage politicians, business leaders and other public men to believe that they can do very little without acquiring and keeping these things called power and wealth. They may think of power and wealth as means to other ends. But the pursuit of power and wealth inevitably tends to become the dominating end itself.

At this point the reader might be tempted to ask, 'What do you mean, then, when you talk of power and wealth? would it not help if you defined their meaning before discussing them further?'. Let me explain, therefore, why this misses the point I am trying to make, and why I do not propose to define at all rigorously what I mean by power and wealth. Concepts like power and wealth, sovereignty and ownership, embody the structure and the categories of our thinking, much as the institutions of government and the economy embody the structure and categories of our social decision-making. Concepts evolve, much as institutions do, to meet the changing needs of the times – though, since there is always a time-lag, they are always to some extent behind

the times. As philosophers and reformers come to understand these evolutionary processes better and become able to influence them more constructively, human beings will come to acquire a greater degree of conscious control over the evolving destiny of the species. It is the proper task of the philosopher and the reformer to involve themselves in the evolutionary processes of collective learning which results in conceptual evolution and institutional change, to try to improve them, and to participate in them with other people. The philosopher who tries to define a concept once for all, like the reformer who tries to lay down a blueprint for an institution that will last for ever, is engaged on a misconceived task. No object would be served by a writer such as myself trying to impose a new definition of power and wealth, or a blueprint for a new government organization, on my readers.

The important point is that our concepts of power and wealth are evolving. They have evolved, as the concept of God has evolved, from the crudely primitive to the metaphysically complex. They will continue to evolve in the future. The institutionalization of power and wealth in modern bureaucratic society has led to an astonishing complexification of the decision jungle in government and of the money jungle in the financial sector of advanced countries, and to huge self-generating volumes of paper and other information which overload those working within the government and the money system. As this goes on, the recently dominant notions of power and wealth are beginning to lose their attractiveness and credibility. Even the power wielded by a President or a Prime Minister and the wealth controlled by the chairman of a big bank seem unattractive goals to which to dedicate one's life today. As this kind of power and this kind of wealth continue to lose their magic, it seems likely that the people who live in modern societies will

increasingly think about power and wealth in a different way. The formulation of new concepts of power and wealth – and also, no doubt, new formulations of such concepts as God, work, health, and learning – will increasingly exercise our minds.

Some of these new concepts will be framed in institutional terms – for example, they will be about new patterns of decision-making and a new role for money in our political, economic and social institutions – on the lines which I sketched in Chapters 1 and 2. Others will be framed in non-institutional terms – power as the internal capacity of a person to contribute creatively to the lives of his fellow men and women, wealth as the internal capacity of a person to deploy physical resources and psychic energies constructively for himself and his fellows. In both cases, institutional and non-institutional, the new concepts will be ones that seem attractive from a practical point of view, because they make sense, because we know how to use them in an operational context, because they seem to work, because they represent liberation rather than imprisonment, and because the credibility of the old concepts of power and wealth is evaporating fast in the highly bureaucratized societies of the present time.

I want to say a brief word here about power and fear. The crude and primitive exercise of personal physical or political power by bullies, kings, dictators and barons, of personal economic power by rich land owners and factory owners, and of personal sexual power by domineering and sadistic males, all create fear and depend upon it. In a more institutionalized society – or in a more regulated situation – government and the law provide a measure of protection against the fear of political, economic or sexual oppression arising from the personal malevolence or personal whims of powerful, rich and sexually dominating men. But an

institutionalized society also seems to bring with it impersonal, more institutionalized forms of restriction and injustice. Hence the call for a de-institutionalized society which, to be feasible, must imply liberation and the end of oppression and fear. Benevolence and creativity, not malevolence and destructiveness, will have to be the universal rule among those possessed of personal powers to affect their fellow men and women in the political, economic and sexual spheres.

We now turn to the question of bureaucracy, and in this case some discussion of meaning is necessary before we proceed. In one sense, the word 'bureaucracy' can be used simply to indicate the mode of government in a particular society. The assumption is still made that power resides somewhere in that society rather than somewhere else. As Martin Albrow says in *Bureaucracy*, 'If the question being asked is simply 'who has power?' . . . , then the concepts of bureaucracy, monarchy or aristocracy can be seen as specifications of the nature of the group or individual who at any time holds power.' In another sense, however, the process of bureaucratization is to be seen as parallel to industrialization. In this sense of the word, bureaucracy reflects the institutionalization of *decision-making* in government, industry and all other sectors of social and economic activity; while industrialization reflects the institutionalization of *manufacture and production*. In this sense, bureaucratization is a change that comes over society, together with industrialization. To use the terms we borrowed from Max Nicholson in Chapter 3, the proliferation of bureaucracy and the managerial mode of decision-making reflects the growth of the *nomosphere*, while industrialization reflects the growth of the *technosphere*. The suggestion in Chapter 3 was that this

growth has, in both cases, become cancerous and self-perpetuating. The suggestion here is that it will inevitably lead to fundamental changes in our ideas about power and wealth. This is because bureaucracy represents the alienation of personal power and personal wealth; because bureaucracy makes impossible the transfer of power and wealth from one group of people to another, either by revolution or reform; and because the continuing growth of bureaucracy is a self-destroying process, which is bound to undermine the credibility and authority, and the power and wealth, including the money system, which are vested in bureaucracy itself. These points are crucially important. We need to explore them now a little further.

The alienation of personal power and responsibility under bureaucracy may, of course, be seen as preferable to the unbridled, irresponsible exercise of personal authoritarianism. Officials and managers and clerks are given defined duties to perform on behalf of agencies other than themselves, for example government departments or business corporations. Those agencies pay them for performing their duties; those agencies provide them with the necessary facilities; those agencies give them the necessary authority to act on their behalf. The individual official, manager or clerk in an office is thus alienated from the exercise of decision-making power, in the same way as the individual factory worker is alienated from the production and manufacturing process. The power to make decisions in a bureaucracy does not belong to the officials, managers or clerks themselves, but to the positions they occupy. This applies not only in government offices and departments; it applies also to officials, managers and clerks in banks and other financial institutions whose handling of monetary transactions helps to determine the spending power of their customers; and it applies to managers and



clerks in big businesses of all kinds.

This alienation of individuals in large organizations from the power of making decisions gives the organizations a corporate momentum and a corporate personality of their own. What happens is something like this.

Formally, the behaviour of officials, managers and clerks is governed, as Max Weber pointed out in his studies of bureaucracy, by the code of rules laid down by their organization, by the policies it adopts, by the definition of each person's task within the organization, and by the instructions he receives from his superiors. The activity of the organization is structured into compartments (departments, divisions, branches, sections), reflecting partly the pattern of its past growth, and partly the prevailing view about how best to divide up its work. Communication of information and instructions travels serially within the organization from one person (or department) to another, and then to another, and so on. To organize activity and communication in this way fosters specialism and detachment, just as – according to the message of Marshall McLuhan – specialism and detachment are fostered by the serialism of the alphabet, the written word and print technology. This mode of work and thought and action is one which seems to reflect and satisfy the tendencies and inclinations of the masculine mind. Logical, analytical, reductive – it is the mode of operation one would expect to find in a world constructed by men.

So far so good. However, as organizations grow in size, chains of command and lines of communication grow longer. Information and instructions take longer to travel through them, and are much more likely to be distorted when (and if) they reach their destination. Policy becomes more difficult to make, and to communicate.

The rules and the departmentalization of activity become more complex, creating more confusion and greater risk of internal conflict and overlapping. Meanwhile, the behaviour and attitudes of people working in this environment develop in ways well documented in the literature of social psychology and organization theory. Informal procedures, informal communication networks, and informal organizational groupings come into existence alongside the formal structure of the organization. Individual departments and groups acquire an identity and a territorial imperative of their own. Half-consciously, and sometimes explicitly, they give a higher priority to their own internal goals than to the social purposes of the organization itself. An internal power game develops, the main features of which include, first, the urge to grow, to build empires, and to climb to positions of greater power, higher status and bigger monetary reward; and, second, a defensive inertia and obstructionism against the possibility of changes which might threaten existing positions, existing territory and existing status. Thus the man-made world automatically generates its own malfunctions. The organization turns in upon itself.

As institutionalization and bureaucracy continue to spread more and more widely through modern societies, the successful people in politics, government, business, finance, the professions, and public services tend increasingly to be the kind of people who can master and manipulate the complex rules, procedures, organizational quirks and power games that characterize the big institutions. These people are likely to be men, not women; and, because those complexities acquire a life of their own based on goals and values generated internally in the big institutions, these men are likely to be the kind of men who are capable of bringing to their working lives a high degree of detachment from normal

personal values. They will have the capacity to suspend their moral faculties in accordance with the conventions of organizational life, as many people find it possible to suspend disbelief in accordance with the conventions of the theatre or the cinema when watching a good play or a good film. A stock figure in modern society is the diligent, well-meaning functionary who conscientiously carries out his instructions according to the rules, even when the results are manifestly unsatisfactory, ridiculous or unfair. At its worst this line of conduct leads to Auschwitz, the Gulag Archipelago, or Vietnam. More generally, it means that large organizations take on an ethic and a set of objectives of their own, which tend to conflict with those of individual people.

The emergence of bureaucratic man is significant in a number of ways from the point of view of personal psychology. Do individuals become successful bureaucrats in government, industry, commerce, the professions or the public services because they have, or because they do not have, a developed sense of personal responsibility towards other people and the world in which they live? because they want to take on, or because they want to avoid, personal responsibility towards other people? Are unsuccessful bureaucrats unsuccessful because they are too conscientious or because they are not conscientious enough? As bureaucrats become older and more experienced, do their powers of introspection and self-questioning grow keener? or do these powers tend to atrophy until the people in question lose the ability to assess the value of how they are spending their lives, except against artificial secondary yardsticks such as the rapidity of their promotion and the esteem of their own colleagues? Are bureaucrats perhaps the counterparts in modern institutionalized societies of the schoolmen of the late middle ages, immersed in an artificial world of intellectual complexity created by

themselves, into which they are able to escape with unimpaired self-respect from the genuine problems and the real facts of life. In a psychological sense, is it the bureaucrats – including most lawyers, accountants, economists and academics – who are the real drop outs and escapist of modern society?

The importance of psychological questions of this kind is that the answers to them will help to determine how the decline and eventual collapse of our present form of institutionalized society will take place when it comes about, and the way in which it will be replaced by the new form of society which succeeds it. We shall touch on some of these questions again later. Meanwhile, we need to consider how the growth of bureaucratized society in recent decades has called in question currently accepted views about the nature of political and economic power.

Take two-party parliamentary government, for example. Two-party parliamentary government is based on the assumption that if two main parties – say, Labour and Conservative, or Democrats and Republicans – compete with one another and take it in turns to form the government of the day, power will rest sometimes with people who represent one approach to society's problems and sometimes with people who oppose it. This, it is assumed, will give a healthy balance over a period of time; moreover, the processes of political conflict will provide the engine to drive the wheels of social and economic change. These assumptions clearly become unreal, once we recognize that the diffusion of power and the institutional distortion of values in bureaucratized society means that power is no longer the kind of thing that shifts, or can be transferred, neatly from one group of people to another. As I said in *Reform of British Central Government*: 'Those who live in the so-called corridors of power do, in point of fact, have very little power, certainly very little power of positive action. What power

they do have is mainly the power of obstruction, inertia and delay. In 1945 the Labour Party naively welcomed its election victory with a cheer of 'We are the masters now!', expecting to find something called power in the corridors of Downing Street and Great George Street – the efficient counterpart, as Bagehot might have put it, to the dignified aspects of ministerial life, such as official cars, red despatch boxes, and attentive secretaries. But, alas! they were deceived. Just as Pompey and his soldiers found no god in the Holy of Holies when they stormed the Temple of Jerusalem, so an incoming government finds the Cabinet Room empty of any tangible source of power. All they find are decisions to be made.'

The prevailing view among most thinkers who have been worried by the growth of bureaucracy has been that the bureaucrats have grown into a strong interest group in society and have taken over power for themselves. For example, as Martin Albrow reminds us, Rosa Luxemburg accused Lenin of wanting to subject a young labour movement to an intellectual elite by means of a bureaucratic strait-jacket. She criticized the lack of freedom of speech, the absence of elections and the right of free assembly, and claimed that only the bureaucracy remained an active element in the state. Other Russian Communists accepting the inevitability of bureaucratic organization, have wished to redirect the existing state machinery in the interests of the workers. Mao Tse-tung has faced the dangers of bureaucracy in the Chinese Communist Party, though he regards it as a correctable malady. Castro has attacked the socialist bureaucrats in Cuba, though he seems to regard bureaucratic tendencies as a mysterious disease of which the cause is unknown; while the more romantic 'Che' Guevara thought such issues were merely 'quantitative' and ultimately of little importance. The New Left has recognized the pervasiveness of bureaucracy and

organizational structure in modern society. As Albrow himself says, 'The growth of organizations involves the bureaucratization of society, and that is tantamount to society becoming bureaucracy'. But even they believe that the basic dilemma is that no special group in society can reflect the interests of all because it has interests of its own; and so the sectional interest of the bureaucracy will always be expressed in public policy making.

The argument of the Marxists and political scientists is thus that in modern society two-party government – and even a revolutionary takeover – cannot succeed because the bureaucrats will exercise the substance of power regardless of who is formally in charge. There is certainly some force in that. But in my experience, as I have said, the problem is more fundamental: power, as the constructive capacity to take positive action successfully, tends to evaporate altogether in a bureaucratized society; it is only the shadow of power, not the substance, that rests with the bureaucrats. The bureaucrats are just as much prisoners of the system as everybody else, if not more. Trying to find where real power lies in a bureaucracy is like searching for the Holy Grail; it always lies somewhere else. This evaporation of power is a symptom of the impending breakdown of bureaucratized society.

The breakdown will come about partly from within the bureaucracies, by the gradual collapse of the personal morale of the people imprisoned within the institutionalized system – the bureaucrats and managers themselves. The psycho-social problems of industrial and service workers in modern society, as shown by industrial unrest, absenteeism, and similar indicators, need no further description here. The impact of institutionalization on government officials and business managers is very similar. I described it in *Reform of British Central Government* as follows:

The cumulative effect of these changes had been very debilitating. As the vertical chain of command had lengthened, the work had been down-graded right down the line. As the work had become more and more fragmented horizontally, responsibility had further diminished. As it happened, the Colonial Office and the Cabinet Office (the two departments in which I had the good fortune to spend most of my time as a civil servant) had been largely unaffected. A young man in the Colonial Office in the 1950's, as the desk officer in charge of one of the colonial territories (or two small ones such as Mauritius and the Seychelles) still had a clear responsibility of his own. In the Cabinet Office in the early 1960's he could still carry well-defined responsibility for useful work not far from the centre of the action. During that spell I had heard about the 'soggy middle layer' as one of the personnel problems of the civil service, but it was only when I went to the Ministry of Defence in 1963 that I met it personally.

It was a profound shock to discover after ten years of rewarding – indeed exciting – work in Whitehall that so many of the stock criticisms of it were justified. There appeared to be literally thousands of people – real, live, individual people like oneself, many of them potentially able or once able – whose energies were being wasted on non-jobs (most of which would be done all over again by someone else and most of which would in any case make no difference whatsoever to anything of importance in the real world), whose capabilities and aspirations were being stunted, and who were gradually reconciling themselves to the prospect of pointless work until retirement.

Shulamith Firestone speaks of 'the peculiar contempt women so universally feel for men ("men are so dumb"),

for they can see their men posturing in the outside world'. If she had known it, she would no doubt have added that more and more men in the big institutions of the 'outside world' feel a growing sense of dissatisfaction with themselves.

This process of internal breakdown is paralleled and reinforced by the declining credibility and authority of the big institutions in the minds of people outside them. Their compartmentalized structure, their serial mode of reaching decisions and communicating information, and the built-in tendency of the corporate ethic and the morality of organization men to diverge from personal ethical values and moral perceptions, all combine to accelerate this decline. It is not the people who are becoming ungovernable; the governing institutions are failing to keep up with the processes of communication and learning now becoming universal in the world outside. Formalized education in schools and universities finds it hard to compete in a society accustomed to the instantaneous, highly professional communication of the electronic media. The presentation of economic information to workers by the companies in which they work, lags far behind the information they receive daily through their newspapers, their radios and their television sets. The big organizations are becoming clumsy dinosaurs in a world whose awareness is outstripping them fast. Their power to obstruct, and even to trample, still exists. Their power to create, to contribute constructively to the societies which they dominate, and to help to shape the future, is waning.

Thus the big organizations of institutionalized society seem bound to collapse, as the self-respect and sense of self-fulfilment of those who work in them continues to wither, and as their credibility and authority continues to decline in society as a whole. Their collapse will make it increasingly necessary – as I said in Chapter 3 – for



people to help themselves, rather than rely on big outside institutions to do things for them. This will apply specifically to food, clothing, housing, mobility, education, health, entertainment, and countless other aspects of life. But, in a deeper sense, it will require people to take power to themselves and create wealth for themselves – to look within themselves for the power and the resources to do what they feel is right. Thus our ideas about the nature of power and wealth will change. We shall come to think of power as Erich Fromm was thinking of it in *Man For Himself* when he said, 'With his power of reason, man can penetrate the surface of phenomena and understand their essence. With his power of love he can break through the wall that separates one person from another. With his power of imagination he can visualize things not yet existing; he can plan and thus begin to create'. We shall come to think of wealth similarly, as the personal capacity for realizing oneself and discharging one's responsibilities to others.

In previous chapters we have discussed the foreseeable breakdown of the nation state, of the centralized capitalist/socialist economy, and of industrialized consumer society. In this chapter we have seen that power and wealth, as we used to think of them, are evaporating out of the bureaucratized modern world. New concepts of power and wealth, as personal capabilities and endowments, seem likely to replace them. The breakdown of patriarchal society will help. In the next chapter we consider what may take its place. Meanwhile, a picture is beginning to emerge that gives a glimmer of hope.

Mankind has inherited a program governing the behaviour of the species. Principal elements in the

program are our ideas and attitudes and desires about power, wealth (including money) and sex. The program is biologically imprinted and culturally transmitted. Unfortunately, it creates a deep conflict between, on the one hand, the psychological and behavioural needs of most men and women and, on the other hand, the environmental conditions which mankind has now created for itself and in which the human species has to survive and pursue the path of further evolution in the future. In other words, mankind's genetic and cultural inheritance as a primate, as a hunter, and more recently as post-Reformation and industrial man, has left us with drives and skills which, though well adapted to a frontier economy, are not well fitted for survival on Spaceship Earth.

Our traditional ideas about power and wealth, together with our traditional sex roles, crystallized as part of a way of life in which humans could exploit the resources provided by the environment without thought of replenishing them, and in which they could move on (or turn their attention) from one patch of territory to another when their interest in the first was exhausted. The male role was to thrust outward into the big world, to hunt and to kill, to open up new frontiers, to launch expeditions to the far corners of the earth, to set up new companies and start new mining operations, to make a fortune in the big city, to lead armies into foreign countries, to fly to the moon, to develop new theories and probe the secrets of the world and the universe. The female role was to concentrate inwards on the home, to look after the offspring, to be receptive and supportive to the male, to provide him with the comfort and security of a firm base from which he could make his forays into the outer world and to which he could return to be physically and emotionally restored.

But now the environment for human beings is no

longer outside ourselves; with billions of us spread over the surface of the earth, we now environ one another. We no longer live in a frontier economy; there are no new frontiers left to be opened up. We live in a world of limited resources which have to be recycled – a world which we can all too easily pollute. As a species, we can look outwards no longer; at least for the time being, we have to turn inwards on ourselves.

Fortunately, this is becoming more and more widely understood. The breakdown of the kind of politics, economy and society that human beings have developed according to the instructions of their inherited program is becoming clearly apparent. Our ideas, including especially our ideas about power and money and sex, are now evolving fast. And it is precisely here – in our growing understanding of how ideas evolve – that we may find the means to override the inherited program.

In *Chance and Necessity* Jacques Monod, the Nobel prize-winning biologist, compares the evolution of ideas to the evolution of organisms. He describes how ideas, like biological systems 'tend to perpetuate their structures and to multiply them; they too can fuse, recombine, segregate their content; in short, they too can evolve, and in this evolution selection certainly plays an important role.' He then identifies performance value as a crucial factor in the selection of ideas, according to which the fittest tend to survive and flourish. 'The performance value of an idea depends on the change it brings to the behaviour of the person or the group that adopts it. The human group upon which a given idea confers greater cohesiveness, greater ambition and greater self-confidence thereby receives from it an added power to expand which will ensure the promotion of the idea itself.'

As more and more people come to see that conventionally accepted ideas about power, money and

sex have a negative performance value, in the sense that they do not enable us to go forward as a species into the future cohesively and with confidence in our survival, the pressures to replace them with ideas better fitted to the new environment will grow stronger and stronger. As this transformation of ideas proceeds, it is likely to gather momentum in just the way that Monod describes.

Monod, as it happens, is strongly opposed to the Teilhardian view that evolution is noogenetic, or consciousness-creating. But it is difficult to dismiss the possibility that our growing understanding of the influence of ideas, and our growing understanding of how they evolve, may be leading us towards a new level of collective consciousness and collective self-control. For some thousands of years cultural evolution has been increasing in importance, relatively to genetic evolution; processes of cultural selection, including the selection of ideas, have replaced the processes of genetic selection as the dominant forces shaping the future. We are now beginning to see that, as ideas evolve under their own survival-of-the-fittest selection pressures, they will either guide mankind along the path of further evolutionary progress or, alternatively, along the road towards our extinction as a species. We are also beginning to develop various ways, admittedly crude, short-sighted and misused at present, of consciously influencing the evolution of people's ideas by advertising and propaganda. In those ways, and – more importantly – in our growing understanding of educational and learning processes, the human race has very nearly reached the point where it can intervene consciously and purposefully to shape the future course of its cultural evolution. In Teilhardian terms, the noosphere is on the point of folding in upon itself to create a new dimension of conscious purpose.

It is impossible to know in advance what impact these

cultural changes could have upon our biologically inherited behaviour patterns and attitudes in the spheres of power, money and sex. Will they create impossible contradictions and conflicts in society? Or will we find it possible to override the inherited program quite easily, once it becomes apparent that this is a matter of survival?

Tiger and Fox suggest that 'basic realities' of male/female interaction will make the necessary changes difficult. For example, they point out that 'the business of politics, absurd as much of its posturing, threat, display, cunning, chicanery, bonhomie, and pomposity, with its almost ludicrous tolerance of boredom, must seem to the intelligent or cynical woman, is a business that requires skills and attitudes that are peculiarly male . . . To make women equal participants in the political process, we will have to change the very process itself, which means changing a pattern bred into our behaviour over the millenia. It may well be possible, but it will not be easy. And it will certainly not be made easier by pretending that all men really want to be equal or that women are simply men who happen occasionally to take time off to have babies.' But no-one is, in fact, suggesting that it will be possible to change our traditional ideas about power, money and sex *within* the framework of the political, economic and social system that now exists in the industrialized countries of the world. That too will have to change, and it is in fact already changing beyond recognition.

As we now know beyond doubt, truly radical changes are going to be needed in government, the economy and society as a whole, as well as in the hearts and minds and personalities of individual people, if our species is to survive. Among other things, a big leap forward will be needed if we are to exchange our present ways of shaping the future for new ways that can already be envisaged. For example, from the present form of political conflict

between capitalism and socialism in a country like Britain, in which opposing sets of dominant males – businessmen, financiers, politicians, civil servants, and trade unionists – dispute the political and economic power to shape the future, it is a long step to the view expressed in the Swedish Government's 1972 report *To Choose A Future*, that the first objective of futures studies and government planning should be to prevent the colonizing of the future by *any* of today's powerful national or international interest groups.

Survival of the species, then, is going to require a fundamental re-orientation of our political, economic and social organization. There is every reason to suppose that this will involve a radical change in sex roles. This will not be easy to accomplish. But the patriarchal society is already breaking down, as we shall now discuss.

## 5. PHASING OUT THE PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

**I**N Chapters 1 and 2 we discussed the need to dismantle the congested apparatus of the nation state and to unscramble the mixed up economies of modern industrialized societies. We suggested that, in fact, the nation state, as the primary unit of government in the societies of the world, is already beginning to break down – outwards to global and continental levels, for example in the United Nations and the European Economic Community, and inwards in the direction of greater autonomy at sub-national and local levels. We suggested similarly that the centralizing trend in the management and the institutional structure of national economies has also reached its limit, at least in the so-called developed countries, and that signs of a reversal are already apparent. We argued that in both spheres – government and the economy – a redefinition of functions, rights and duties is now needed for all the participants. This would transform the institutions of government, business and finance into mechanisms of social self-control, through which the peoples of the whole world and the members of every society could balance their competing interests, take decisions and make choices about matters of common concern, and steer a survival course into the future. Then, in Chapters 3 and 4 we considered the very serious obstacles to progress in this direction, arising from the distortions of institutionalized society and the

institutional imperative, and from the inherited program that governs the behaviour and attitudes of men and women to power and money and to the whole process of making decisions about the future.

In all four cases we found symptoms of breakdown. The nation state, the centralized economy, the credibility of institutions, and the concepts of power and money that humans have inherited from the past, are all being eroded by the evolutionary pressures of the present time. Yet in none of these areas, as it seems, does there exist the creative capability for self-reform. The broad outline of what might replace the present system is beginning to emerge. But how to make the transition is not at all clear.

In this chapter we look at the breakdown of patriarchal society. We find that it is closely linked to the breakdown of the nation state, the centralized economy, the institutions of society, and our traditional notions of power and money. There is thus some reason for supposing that a new social balance between the sexes could play a focal part in the transformation of institutionalized society – and thus in securing the survival of the human species. This redefinition of sex roles can be seen as a counterpart to the redefinition of the roles of the various participants in government and the economy. In both cases, flexibility, scope for experiment, and the possibility of choosing between a variety of sustainable relationships, should be sought.

Patriarchy has been one of the main features of the era which began with the Renaissance and the Reformation. As Erich Fromm puts it 'The renaissance of the patriarchal spirit since the sixteenth century, especially in Protestant countries, shows both the positive and the negative aspect of patriarchism. The negative aspect manifested itself in a new submission to the state and



temporal power, to the ever-increasing importance of man-made laws and secular hierarchies. The positive aspect showed itself in the increasing spirit of rationality and objectivity, and in the growth of individual and social conscience.' Fromm also says that 'where potency is lacking, man's relatedness to the world is perverted into a desire to dominate, to exert power over others as though they were things. Domination is coupled with death, potency with life.'

Nazi Germany showed all too clearly the nature of the link between nationalism and male chauvinism. Goebbels put it thus: 'The National Socialist movement is in its nature a masculine movement . . . The realms of directing and shaping are not hard to find in public life. To such realms belong for one thing the tremendously great sphere of politics. This sphere without qualification must be claimed by man.' And Hitler himself said: 'We do not find it right when the woman presses into the world of men. To one belongs the power of feeling, the power of the soul . . . to the other belongs the strength of vision, the strength of hardness. The man upholds the nation, as the woman upholds the family.' Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own*, put the point differently: 'Imperceptibly, I found myself adopting a new attitude towards the other half of the human race . . . They too, the patriarchs, the professors, had endless difficulties, terrible drawbacks to contend with. Their education had been in some ways as faulty as my own. True, they had money and power, but only at the cost of harbouring in their breasts an eagle, a vulture, for ever tearing the liver out and plucking at the lungs – the instinct for possession, the rage for acquisition which drives them to desire other people's fields and goods perpetually; to make frontiers and flags; battleships and poison gas; to offer up their own lives and their children's lives . . . Watch in the spring sunshine the stockbroker and the

great barrister going indoors to make money and more money and more money . . . These are unpleasant instincts to harbour, I reflected. They are bred of conditions of life; of the lack of civilization . . .’.

That patriarchy goes with capitalism as well as nationalism, and that all three are connected with the Reformation, is well documented by historians and scholars. Max Weber, R. H. Tawney and Christopher Hill are among those who have spelled out the connection between the Protestant religion, the work ethic and the rise of capitalism. Erich Fromm, discussing the psychological connection between patriarchy and Protestantism, has pointed out that Freud, by elevating the father into the central figure of the universe and by eliminating the mother figure, did precisely for psychology what Luther did for religion. Equally significant is the judgement of Sri Aurobindo, the Hindu philosopher and mystic from whom the international community of Auroville near Pondicherry in India has taken its inspiration and its name. Referring to Protestantism, Aurobindo says that ‘the intellect, having denied so much, cast out so much, has found ample room and opportunity to deny more until it denies all, to negate spiritual experience and cast out spirituality and religion, leaving only intellect itself as the sole surviving power. But intellect void of the spirit can only pile up external knowledge and machinery and efficiency, and ends in a drying up of the secret springs of vitality and a decadence without any inner power to save life or create a new life or any other way out than death and disintegration.’

This is one of the reasons why the complex of ideologies and institutions that embraces patriarchy, nationalism and capitalism, including state capitalism, is breaking down. The power of these ideologies and institutions is waning. So is their credibility. The male

chauvinist, the Colonel Blimp, and the domineering captain of industry, all seem somewhat ridiculous figures from an age that is fast disappearing. As circumstances have changed, so have our intuitive perceptions of the kind of people, ideas, and institutions that are suited to them, so have our perceptions of the kind of people we want to be, and so have our moral and cultural values. These currents of change have been moving for a long time, often below the surface of events. With hindsight we can now see that, while modern patriarchy was reaching its peak in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the forces which would ultimately erode it were gathering momentum.

When we turn to the directly sexual aspects of the erosion of the patriarchal society that is now taking place, we find two main trends at work. There is a general trend towards greater sexual permissiveness; and there is a more specific trend towards greater equality between the sexes. The two trends are related, but they do not always work in precisely the same direction. Both will help to shape the future, but precisely how they will be combined and reconciled will have to work itself out.

A patriarchal society is sexually repressive. Not only does it treat women as inferior, in that males tend to dominate females. The most powerful, usually older males also dominate the weaker and younger males. In primate groups, such as baboon troops, the dominant males reserve to themselves much of the power to control the genetic future of their species, by mating. In human patriarchal societies, the dominant males reserve to themselves much of the political and economic power to send the other males to war and to make them work. Sexual repression thus goes with the spirit of nationalism and the work ethic.

As a more permissive society has emerged in recent years, we can detect three separate strands in its

development. The first is intellectual: the sexual radicalism developed by Freud's successors, often but not always in association with political views of a radical nature. The second is the exploitation of sex and the deliberate cultivation of sex-consciousness on a massive scale, both to market the products and to manage and motivate the employees of big business and the other large organizations of modern society. The third is technical: the development and widespread dissemination of contraceptive methods which have made it possible to separate sexual activity from the procreation of children.

The main importance of the intellectual strand in these developments, apart from the contribution it has made to therapy in individual cases, is that we now understand that sexual repression can be psychologically damaging. In the most general way, the man in the street probably now thinks that sex should not only be fun, it should also be good for you. More specifically, the view now accepted by the medical and psychological professions is that a well-adjusted sex life enables the individual to organize the release of psychic energies creatively. It can be said similarly of a well-structured corporate enterprise in which the various interests and drives are held in balance, that it provides conditions in which the collective energies of the participants can be productively released. In both cases – person and corporate enterprise alike – repression, maladjustment and faulty structuring lead to stress, internal strife, and malfunction.

That kind of analogy between persons and organizations may be illuminating, but the sexual radicals have never made clear what practical consequences, in terms of social and political actions and policies, should actually follow from their thinking. It is true that Wilhelm Reich was very conscious of the

connection between social, economic, political and sexual repression. As a member of the Austrian Communist Party in the late nineteen-twenties, he established a number of socialist sex-hygiene clinics. Their purpose was both to provide psycho-analytic advice to the people, and to make them aware of the sexual reforms that must be part of a wider programme of social and political change. But Reich never made it very clear what patterns of sexual behaviour he was recommending for society as a whole; and towards the end of his life, as Paul A. Robinson says in *The Sexual Radicals*, Reich was haunted by the thought that men with dirty minds would misuse his authority to unleash 'a free-for-all fucking epidemic'. Similarly, as Alasdair MacIntyre argues in a recent critical assessment of Herbert Marcuse, it is all very well for Marcuse to say in *Eros and Civilization* that sexuality must be liberated, if man is to be liberated. But 'what would be the differences in the character of sexual behaviour if sexuality was to be liberated? . . . What will we actually do in this sexually liberated state?' Marcuse does not tell us, and it is not very clear what he has in mind.

We turn now to the widespread cultivation of sex-consciousness as a deliberate policy of commercial exploitation. This is a prominent feature of the institutionalized societies of the late capitalist era. As consumers, men and women are bombarded overtly and subliminally with a continuing stream of advertisements and promotional campaigns based on fantasies of male virility and female sex appeal. As employees, male executives are at least partly motivated by fantasies of sexual power and privilege; these 'latterday bureaucratic polygamists', as Tiger and Fox call them, are offered increasing access to the services of typists, research assistants, secretaries, receptionists and other varieties of 'office wives', as they climb the ladder of a successful

career. Conversely, women at work are offered opportunities to develop traditionally feminine roles – to provide a glamorous status symbol that will mirror the power and virility of their boss, to refresh him and soothe his ego after the battles and forays of business life, to keep a comfortable home base for him and meet his daily needs. A typical recruiting advertisement – in the *London Times*, June 1975 – reads as follows: ‘Longing to be the centre of attention? Here’s your opportunity. Fifty super guys and their boss in expanding insurance group need your help to organize them and their day.’

Thus, while the intellectual thinkers leave us in doubt about the practical conclusions – in terms of new sex roles, new sex relationships, and new sexual behaviour – to be drawn from their sexual radicalism, there is no doubt about the direction in which the commercial and managerial exploitation of sexual consciousness is leading us. It directly reinforces, on a massive scale and using all the resources of institutionalized society, the inherited perceptions of sex roles, together with the inherited concepts of power and wealth, that constitute a major threat to the survival of the human species. It does this with as little hesitation as it encourages us to consume more and more of everything, in a finite world whose resources are severely limited and already very unfairly shared.

The technical and scientific developments, particularly in the spheres of contraception and abortion, that are making it easier now than ever before for people to be active sexually without having children, are – like the sexual radicalism of the intellectuals – equivocal in their effect on the balance of power between the sexes. Because, in the past, the degree of biological commitment and responsibility in this sphere has been so unfairly shared between men and women, it is possible to argue that these technical developments have by

themselves helped to redress the old imbalance between men and women. But it is equally possible to argue that one of their main results has been to make men feel even less responsible and sympathetic than before in both their personal and their working relationships with women, and to make women even more vulnerable than they were. The fact that working women need not now have children unless they so choose, may discourage employers from making special provisions for the possibility that they may. In the sphere of personal relationships the permissive society may easily be interpreted as a Casanova's charter. As Shulamith Firestone says, under the guise of the sexual revolution that is presumed to have occurred ('Oh, c'mon Baby, where have you *been*? Haven't you heard of the sexual revolution?'), women have been persuaded to shed their armour. Again, therefore, we find that the decline of sexual repression and the rise of the permissive society does not necessarily lead to a redefinition of the roles of men and women and the relationships between them, or to a fairer balance between the sexes. A free-for-all sexual philosophy like a free-for-all economic philosophy may simply be a recipe for grabbing what you can get. It may lead to a disorderly situation in which sexual relations, like economic relations, take the form of a power struggle in which the strongest come out on top and the weakest go to the wall.

Since John Stuart Mill published *The Subjection of Women* rather more than a hundred years ago, campaigns for women's emancipation, campaigns for women's rights, campaigns against sex discrimination, and the movement for women's liberation, have resulted in great changes. Politically, women now have the vote; they have the right to hold public office; in some countries women have even become Prime Minister. Economically, a woman's property – and, more importantly, the woman

herself – no longer becomes the property of her husband on marriage, as was the case in Victorian England. Legislation to outlaw further aspects of discrimination against women, at work, in the home, as consumers, as owners of property, and as regards their rights as citizens, has recently been introduced or will shortly be introduced in many countries of the world. Women's education has helped to reduce the cultural gap between men and women. The pill has helped to reduce their biological disadvantage.

At the same time, many examples of discrimination and disadvantage still remain. Just as the legislation to protect the rights of investors, employees and customers of business enterprise has grown up piecemeal and tends to be negative (or prohibitive) in character, so the legal basis governing sexual matters is patchy and negative. In both cases what is now required is a comprehensive re-appraisal of the conventional roles, which will provide a new framework for relationships between men and women, as for the activities of business enterprises.

In the sexual and the business sphere alike it is often alleged that, in fact, the disadvantaged class is content with the situation as it is: most women don't want to play an influential part or to pursue career ambitions in what E. M. Forster in *Howard's End* called the male world of 'telegrams and anger'; most working people don't want to share responsibility for controlling the fortunes and the future of the enterprise for which they work. But in both cases the allegation is irrelevant to the real issue, even if it does to some extent reflect the situation as it is today. What is important is that those women and those working people who do want to participate fully, should have the opportunity of doing so on fair and equal terms. What is even more important for the future survival of the species is to encourage as many of them as possible to take part in the decisions that will shape the future. The



common sense of working people and the common sense of women are needed to counteract and control the fantasies of patriarchal males. Once again, a new world must be brought in to redress the balance of the old.

What new framework, then, may be expected to emerge for relationships between men and women in the society of the future? In what form will the trends towards greater sexual permissiveness and greater sexual equality eventually combine to replace the patriarchal society of the past? Should women relax and wait upon events, confident that the future is moving their way? Should they redouble their efforts to compete on equal terms with men in a man's world? Or should they aim to transform the man's world into a world of a different kind? And what about men? Are they also looking for liberation? What form will Men's Lib take?

These questions go together with an even more basic question about the direction in which human society will develop. Do we envisage 'more and better of the same', i.e. a post-industrial society of the kind envisaged by Daniel Bell, in which the institutions, technologies and knowledge industry of the industrialized societies will be developed further as the basis for a rational, organized and orderly world of tertiary and quaternary industries providing services to service industries which ultimately – at the far end of the institutional chain – provide services to people? Or do we envisage 'something completely different', i.e. a post-industrial society in which the whole direction of industrialization, institutionalization, and big technology will have been radically changed?

It is not difficult to envisage developments in reproductive technology, such as test-tube babies, which, together with contraception, would relieve women wholly of their traditional biological role in child bearing. Nor is it difficult to envisage forms of social

organization in which the responsibility for child rearing would be altogether removed from parents of either sex. This combination of technological and institutional developments would, at least in theory, allow for total sexual permissiveness and total equality between the sexes.

This is the scenario for the future envisaged by sexual revolutionaries like Shulamith Firestone. She looks forward to a form of cybernetic communism, in which each person could choose his lifestyle freely, changing it to suit his tastes without seriously inconveniencing anyone else; no one would be bound into any social structure against his will, for each person would be totally self-governing as soon as he or she was physically able. There would be nothing restricting love and sexual freedom. Even the incest taboo would fade away, and people would develop a natural polymorphous sexuality. All close relationships would include a physical element, and our present concept of exclusive physical partnerships would disappear from our psychic structure. Wealth would be distributed and services of all kinds would be provided by the institutions of society, on the basis of need, independent of the social value of the individual's contribution to his fellows.

The diagrams in Figures 7 and 8 suggest what this technologically based scenario could imply.

Model 1 in Figure 7 refers to a society in which the dividing line between home and community is difficult to define. Such a society is warm and organic. The home is open to extended family and friends and neighbours. In it and around it take place all the important activities of our lives. It contains, in the able-bodied members of the household community, male and female alike, the providers of goods and services and care; and it contains – in the young, the sick, the elderly, and in guests and travellers – those who depend upon the able bodied.

Model 2 in Figure 8 suggests a society in which all the important activities of our lives have moved out of the home. This society is cold and clinical. Children are born in laboratories, brought up in public nurseries, and educated in schools and universities; old people go to old folks' homes for geriatric care; sick people and dying people go to hospitals; able-bodied people go to factories and offices to work; travellers are expected to go to hotels and boarding houses. Unrestricted sexual freedom in an institutionalized society would presumably even mean that people normally go out for sex, to specially organized meeting places, clubs and brothels.

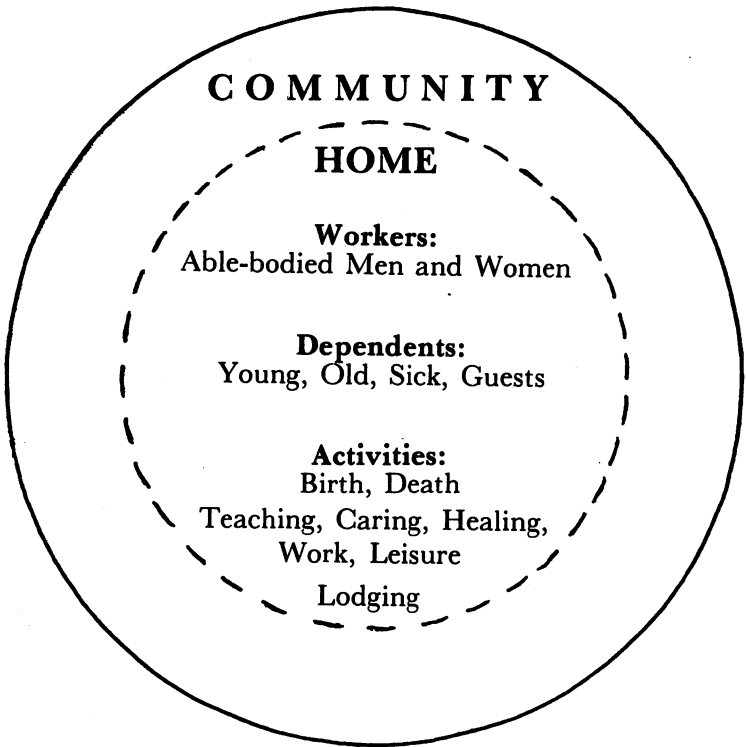
In the last four or five hundred years human societies, especially in Europe, North America and other parts of the developed world, have been moving continually away from Model 1 towards Model 2. So much do we tend to take this for granted, that economists now assume that only the institutionalized activities of the kind of society shown in Model 2 should be given any value. Only activities of that kind should count as contributing towards such things as 'national product', 'national income', and 'national wealth'. For example, if we all stopped buying vegetables from shops and supermarkets and grew them ourselves instead, the economists would detect a fall in national product and national income, and worry even more than they do already about the unsatisfactory rate of economic growth. Among the facts of life for economists is that growth requires us to grow less food, and indeed to do less of everything for ourselves. The Daniel Bell/Shulamith Firestone scenario implies that, taking the courage of these convictions in both hands, we should deliberately accelerate the transition away from a Model 1 society and complete its transformation into Model 2.

Shulamith Firestone avoids explaining precisely how we would move from the transitional form of society that

*Figure 7*

Model 1: Integration

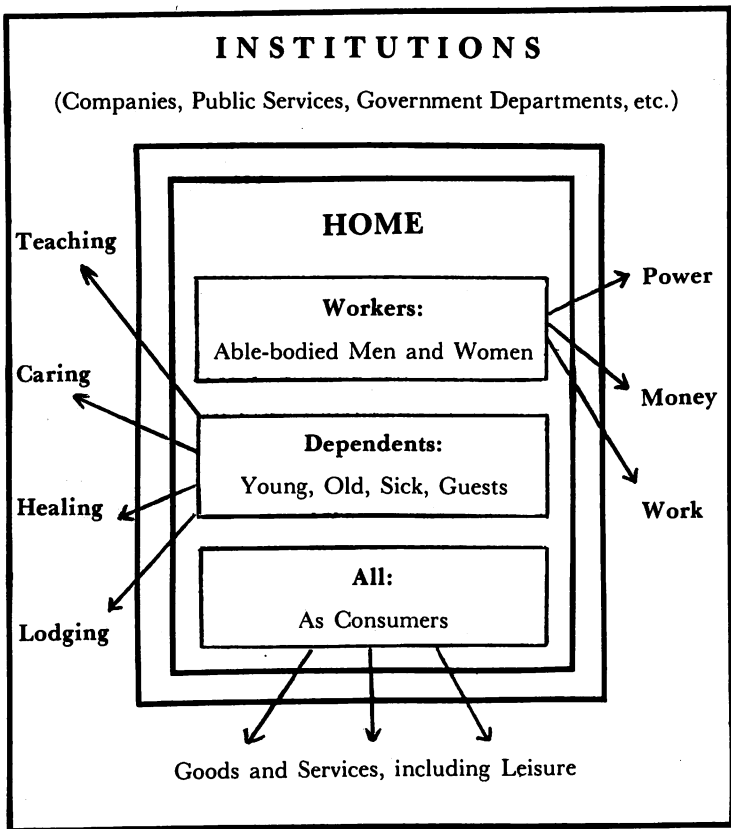
**THE HOME IN THE COMMUNITY**



*Figure 8*

Model 2: Fragmentation

# THE HOME IN INSTITUTIONALIZED SOCIETY



exists today into the kind of cybernetic communism she envisages for the future; 'the specifics need not concern us here', she says. In this she is very wise. In the well known words of the Irishman in the story, 'I wouldn't start from here' if I were hoping to reach her destination. There are so many built-in features of present day culture and society, including the inherited attitudes and behaviour of men and women, that will block the social arrangements she has in mind.

The same could, perhaps, be said about all radical proposals for change. However, there are more important arguments against this kind of cybernetic communism. In the first place, there would be little room in it for the special qualities of men and women – logic and tenderness, reason and love, the head and the heart – which, in the right balance can constitute a fabric of civilized personal relationships in a sane society. Moreover, bringing in technology to deal with the task of reproducing the species, in order to create a completely free society, would in fact involve society's final institutionalization and the final atomization of the individual. All his functions, all the contributions he or she can make to the well-being of himself and his fellows and to the future destiny of his species – the future of the world he lives in – would have been stripped from him, expropriated. This would be the logical conclusion – the *reductio ad absurdum* – of the view, put forward by Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* but later rejected by him in *One Dimensional Man*, that automation and production technology can relieve human beings of all their tasks and that, being thus relieved, people will then be free to realize themselves and to create happiness for themselves and each other. It fails entirely to take account of the fact that self-realization and happiness grow out of creativity and caring relationships with other people. A Model 2 society may aim to relieve people of their burdens; in

fact, it would deprive them of their capacities. It may aim to make them free; in fact, it would make their alienation complete.

The scenario put forward by Shulamith Firestone and those who think as she does implies that the aim of the women's movements should be to enable women to compete on equal terms in a man's world. This is an understandable viewpoint when the burning questions of the day about the two sexes focus on the injustices of existing relations between them. Equally understandable in the business sphere is the aim to make workers equal in every way with managers and shareholders. Indeed, one should not thoughtlessly reject the even more aggressive version of these aims: that women should aim to take over from men, and that workers should aim to take control of industry. But, in both cases, the saner view is that a new balance of power is needed, and a new definition of roles, which will liberate and reconcile the deep-seated aspirations and capabilities of different kinds of participants in the industrial economy, and of men and women in society as a whole.

So far as women are concerned, Dr. Prudence Tunnadine of the Institute of Psycho-Sexual Medicine is one of those who have pointed out (*Times*, 9.4.75) that, in seeking equality or more than equality with men, women are wrong to see their emotions, not as talents that enrich choices, but as shameful weaknesses in a materialist society. She states that psychosomatic medicine conclusively shows that this is a mistake. 'Sexually, a woman achieves joyful relationships not through brains or athletics or trying to be a better man than a man, but by valuing her body and its emotional desires in their own right. Thus she becomes a whole woman and her own person, truly free in herself, truly creative in the part she plays in the society in which she lives.'

So far as men are concerned, it is now becoming more

and more widely recognized that men, as well as women, are seeking liberation. Men do not want to go on living in the arid, institutional world of business, bureaucracy and the intellect. They do not want to be excluded from the warmer world of people and children and families. They do not see why, if women are to be given the right either to work or to stay at home, men should not also have the freedom to choose. Discussing a recent Swedish report, *The Right to be Human* (outlined in *The Guardian*, 22.5.75), the report's author describes how she became convinced after interviewing fifty men about their lives that 'the only time it is better to be a man than a woman is in the winter when one wants to pee . . . They were all so lonely. They had no one with whom they could discuss their fears and frustrations, and because they rarely or never discussed their feelings they did not have the vocabulary to talk about them . . . Boys do not cultivate togetherness. From early days they are out in large groups playing football or whatever, while girls are in groups of two or three talking about themselves and getting to know each other and learning how to develop deeper relationships . . . Ideally, men should concentrate on developing more intimate relationships, and women should talk less about themselves and concentrate more on building secondary relationships. If women would learn to talk about politics and public affairs, then we would eventually get away from the situation where in Sweden and other countries 85 per cent of the decision-makers are men.'

Increasingly, men are in fact looking for ways to drop out of the rat-race, and to drop back into something that seems more like real life. At the same time, as women compete more successfully in the world of men, they become increasingly subject to its effects – its ulcers, its coronaries, its stresses and its anxieties. These are significant pointers to an alternative future – a future



that will not be 'more and better of the same', but 'something completely different.'

This alternative future will involve questioning many of the present trends – the trend towards bigger and remoter institutions, the trend towards more capital intensive technology and more capital intensive use of the land, the trend away from self-help and self-reliance, and the spreading assumption that everything should be somebody else's – usually the government's – responsibility. It will involve rejecting the idea that revolution consists in the transfer of things called power and wealth from one political, social or economic group to another, from one sex to another, or from one race to another. It will involve re-thinking the aim of women's liberation, so that instead of striving to compete with men in the vanishing patriarchal world of the past women will concentrate on transforming that world into something quite different. It will involve taking power and wealth back from the big institutions and recreating them in the minds and hearts and hands of real people in their own homes and localities. It will involve reversing the present trend from Model 1 to Model 2 in Diagrams 7 and 8, thereby re-integrating people with one another in the fabric of the society in which they live.

As I said in the Foreword, many different kinds of people are now working actively to create this alternative future. The people who have gone to live in small communities in a more self-sufficient way; the intermediate technologists; those who are developing methods of self-help in fields like housing, education and health; the conservationist movements; radical economists who are seeking to replace the traditional methods of economic calculation with new methods that better reflect alternative social values; religious and quasi-religious thinkers who are searching for new relationships between men, nature and the universe – all

these and many others are already beginning to outflank the conventional discussions and debates of traditionally minded politicians, government officials, economists, scientists, academics, businessmen, financiers, trade unionists and professional people, who are still obsessed with how to achieve 'more and better of the same'.

No one can spell out in detail a blueprint for this alternative future. But, in broad outline, we can envisage an evolving world society in which the functions of government have been re-distributed to various levels right down from the United Nations to the local street association or village council. We can envisage an evolving system of economic and social activity in which the functions, rights and duties of the various participants have been redefined and brought into a new balance. We can envisage a new social role for money as an honest calculus of value. We can envisage new concepts of power and wealth, as the capacity to take (or take part in) the decisions that matter, and as the capacity for self-realization. We can envisage a reversal of the process of institutionalization whose slogans have been 'biggest is best' and 'economies of scale' – a counter-movement whose motto is 'small is beautiful', and which will aim to reintegrate work and homes and the various facets of people's lives in the communities and localities where they live. Finally, as the patriarchal society continues to decline, we can envisage a new balance between the sexes, in which the heart will be rated as highly as the head, female as highly as male, people's personal lives and relationships as highly as their career ambitions and prospects, nature as highly as the artificial man-made world, emotion and intuition as highly as logic and reason.

It is not possible to define in advance the detailed structure of this new balance between the sexes. The new structure should possess a high degree of flexibility, to

permit a balance to be struck between whatever particular mix of masculine and feminine characteristics and capacities arises in any particular relationship or set of relationships between men and women. It should reflect the fact that creating a home, a community, a society and a world in which the human species can survive, are all tasks that require a joint effort, harnessing the creative abilities to be found in both the sexes, and to be found in individual people with a wide variety of heterosexual, homosexual and bi-sexual characteristics. At the same time, given the particular nature of the present turning point in the evolution of mankind, it will be realistic to recognize that the characteristics and capacities normally regarded as feminine are likely to have a specially important part to play in the hoped-for breakthrough to a sustainable future.

## 6. FOCUSSING ON THE FUTURE

**I**N *Evolution in Religion* R. C. Zaehner compared the thinking of Sri Aurobindo with the thinking of Teilhard de Chardin. He pointed out that Aurobindo, the Hindu, unlike Teilhard, the Christian, had been politically active, and that Aurobindo was more directly interested than Teilhard in the processes of political and social evolution.

Aurobindo had been attracted to the Marxist idea that ultimately the dictatorship of the proletariat would be inevitably transformed into a free society in which the state would have withered away – a society in which ‘the free development of each would be the condition for the free development of all’. But he realised that men – so long as they are slaves to their own egoism – will not relinquish power once they have it in their grasp. The classless society, prophesied by Marx and Engels could, on purely rational grounds alone, scarcely come into being so long as men remained egoists. Hence as Aurobindo said, ‘it is not likely that any living Socialist State machine once in power would let go its prey or allow itself to be abolished without a struggle’. How, Aurobindo asked, is the human race to emerge from this ‘perpetual cycle of failure’?

That, in essence, is the question we have been considering in this book. It is not too difficult to envisage, in general outline, a balanced pattern of political and

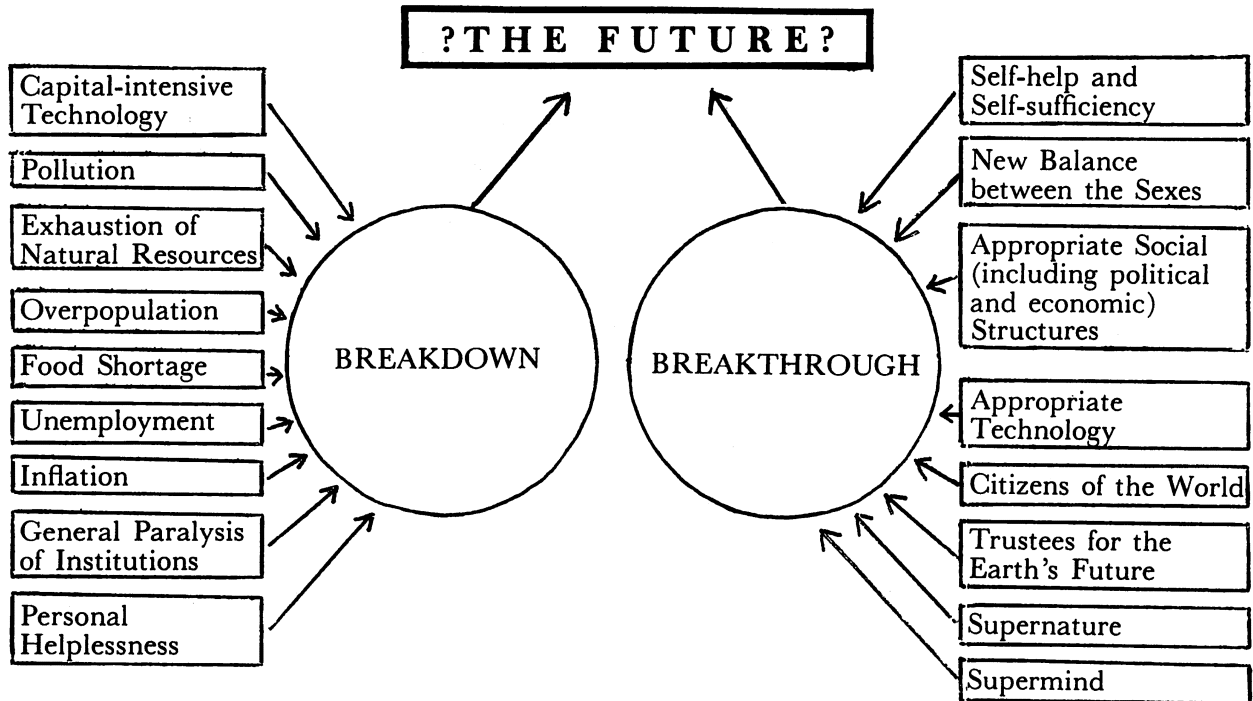
economic institutions which would enable members of the human race to take decisions about competing interests, make choices from among conflicting possibilities, and steer a survival course into the future. It is not difficult to imagine the new concept of power or the new role of money that such a transformation would imply. But it is impossible to envisage the new institutional pattern actually coming into existence, until we have learned how to exorcize the institutional imperative that demands 'more, more, more', to override the inherited program that governs the behaviour of men and women, and to replace the motivations of the patriarchal society with something very different. And how is all that to come about?

Clearly, we are looking for some kind of breakthrough to a new future. The solution to the present crisis of mankind will not be found in the more effective implementation of conventional remedies and policies – higher economic growth, more capital intensive technology, more elaborate analysis of the problems by more sophisticated economists and social scientists with bigger and better computers. Nor, obviously, will the solution be found by simply trying to reverse the present trends – by trying to put the clock back to the kind of society that existed before the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Industrial Revolution and the development of modern technologies. We must go forward, but into a future quite different from a simple extrapolation of the present.

The possible nature of the necessary mutation becomes a little clearer if we focus on two contrasting sets of convergent trends. These are shown, schematically, in Figure 9.

The first set of trends converges towards breakdown. In the year 1975 it became widely accepted that the human race was on a disaster course. For example, to

Figure 9: Breakdown or Breakthrough



quote Mesarovic and Pestel again in *Mankind at the Turning Point*, 'drastic unprecedented changes in the world system' are needed; the conclusion is inescapable that 'mankind's options for avoiding catastrophe are decreasing, while delays in implementing the options are, quite literally, deadly.' Alvin Toffler's *The Eco-Spasm Report*, also published in 1975, makes the point explicitly that 'what is happening is the breakdown of industrial civilization on the planet'. While, earlier in 1975, in an *Observer* newspaper feature called *The Seventh Enemy* which stimulated a huge response from readers, Ronald Higgins stated, 'We and our children are approaching a world of mounting confusion and horror. The next 25 years, possibly the next decade, will bring starvation to hundreds of millions, and hardship, disorder or war to most of the rest of us. Democracy, where it exists, has little chance of survival, nor in the longer run has our industrial way of life. There will not be a better tomorrow beyond our present troubles.'

The second set of trends shown in Figure 9 runs counter to the first. Already, in earlier parts of this book, I have suggested that those of us who are working on one or another of these new frontiers will eventually find that we share a common cause and a common ideology. With vision it is already possible to see that these trends could converge to create the breakthrough to a new and sustainable future. By an act of faith we could now commit ourselves to developing them towards that convergence point. As these trends went forward, people might be expected to develop a closer and more organic relationship with the natural world; reason and love, the male principle and the female principle, might be expected to harmonize in a more creative balance; a fruitful union might be expected to arise from combining the logical processes typical of the Western world with the more mystical and intuitive mode of understanding

typical of the East; increasing emphasis would be placed on developing the personal capacities of perception and will, described by Lyall Watson in *Supernature*, which have been regarded as supernatural or paranormal in a narrowly and mechanically scientific culture; we might expect to come nearer to that state of cosmic consciousness that Aurobindo and Teilhard thought of as Supermind; and we might expect to move firmly in the direction of a more sane and balanced human society than that which we are leaving behind us – a new kind of society which would equip the human species with better prospects of survival on spaceship Earth.

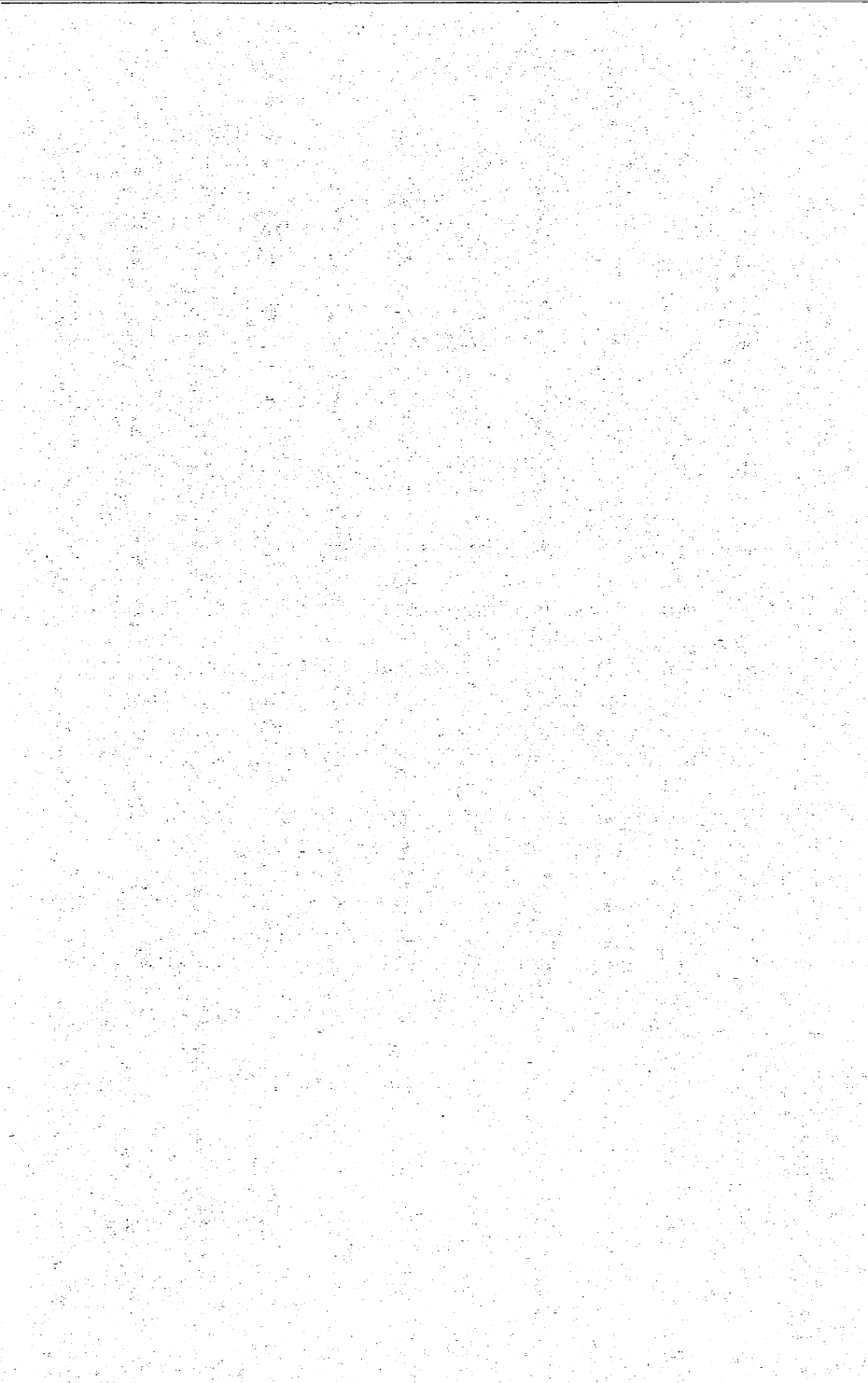
The first need therefore is to strengthen the efforts already being made in each of these fields: more self-help in housing, health and education; greater self-sufficiency in people-intensive agricultural communities working the land; more technologies for transportation, for generating energy, for building and construction work, for agriculture, for manufacturing, and for communication, which will be small enough and flexible enough to be used by individual people and households and small communities; further reform of political, economic and social institutions, and their deliberate redesign to serve the needs of people; greater efforts to establish recognition of the fact that every member of the human race is a citizen of the world community, and that every citizen of the world community – including especially those who live in the poorer countries – should be respected and treated as such; redoubled efforts to create in the heart and mind of every man and woman the sense that the human species, as the leading shoot on the tree of evolution, is in a special position of trust towards the rest of nature and the universe; much greater readiness to discuss the whole range of ways in which human society might be transformed by a fundamental re-appraisal of sex roles and relationships; and, finally, a



sustained attempt to explore and develop the psychic capacities of human perception and will which have traditionally been regarded as paranormal, and therefore beyond the scope of rational people to understand and train.

The second need is to cultivate convergence between these trends – not by any attempt to impose a common framework of action or thought, but rather by providing ourselves as thinkers and activists in each of these spheres with opportunities for discussion and communication so that common ground and common goals may increasingly emerge. This deliberate cultivation of convergence will cut right across today's proliferation of specialisms in action and knowledge; and, with good fortune, it will eventually cut the ground from under the masculine fantasy world of institutional empires and intellectual fairylands, in which tasks and knowledge alike are split and split and split again in an ever-increasing agglomeration of cellular compartments until the 'transaction costs' of everything become prohibitive and nothing useful can be achieved or learned or understood.

In these ways, and by replacing our traditional concepts of power, money and sex with concepts that are more valid for present needs, we can equip ourselves to create a better balance between people, and a better balance in the minds and hearts of men and women. We can help mankind to find the way back to the broad highway of evolution. We can start out on the next stage of the long ascent.



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Formerly a high ranking civil servant in the economic sector, James Robertson now works as a consultant for a number of businesses and financial organizations and lectures at the London School of Economics.

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