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NOTES ON WEEKEND XX, WITH
K. POLANYI, FEB. 15, 1958

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APPENDIX:

1984 - A DISCUSSION

- EXCERPT FROM "FIGHTING WORDS", C.B.C.
- TV. FEBRUARY 16, 1958. P. 16

Comments on My "Not By Organization
Alone", Draft No. 2.

In part III, there are valuable new formulations that shouldn't get lost and on some points the formulations are clearer and simpler.

There are two questions involved, to show that Whyte and Dudintsev deal with the same problem, and to present the answer to the problem of freedom.

P. doesn't know if I have found a way of dealing with both questions in one paper.

I kept to the second and P. doesn't know whether I gave sufficient consideration to the presentation of the basic parallelism. If I have done only the second it is certainly worthwhile.

It would be rash to imagine that this is the way to deal with the first question. The reaction would be that this is entirely superficial. To disregard a number of things like capitalism and socialism would argue for unsoundness. I can't imagine that I have convinced people that I have been just to the complexity of the question. The result of my piece would be to say that there is no difference between socialism and capitalism, and it is precisely the organization of the economy which carries the human values into the economic process.

My title helps the reader to see right away that I have a

strong point.

Myself: It is a question then, of protecting the position.

This can be done in two ways: to quote amply and then turn against the criticism.

One doesn't see whether Whyte has seen the need for a positive solution and D. surely has not.

No greater difference can be imagined than that between a state bureaucracy and that of the vague Organization. It is not even another bureaucracy in industry.

I should show that under entirely different organizations there can be a great congruence on certain points, which does not refer to the question of whether it is the state or private business.

The article is not introduced at all. I start with different planets but then I should say what they are. Also they have investment, factories, inventors and methods of putting inventions into effect.

After showing that it is possible to identify a situational set of problems there is the recognition of problems of a much wider character and you shouldn't be surprised it's the same problem. Only then something shines up in the recognition of problems of a much deeper and wider character that they don't formulate.

The main fear of my writing is that if I mention anything specific it will be trite. I have the false idea that depth or level consists in getting abstract all the time. To talk common sense isn't trite and I should read Edmund Wilson as a model. I have a great readiness to avoid difficulties by writing in a plausible way.

I must write this with concreteness and conviction and it is not an obvious thing. People have said that Russia and America are similar and give twenty-five points.

Although Whyte treats the Organization in general, Dudintsev is very specific and it falls to me to show that the D. problem is a Whyte problem. Taking this for granted is superficial, and if the work is done even I will be interested in it.

Whyte shows how industry and the managerial group are actually organized. He finds them everywhere but unless I center on industry I lose the Dudintsev.

Whyte underlines that this is a way of life and it is not the same thing as saying that both have monopolies. One must penetrate into the matter, otherwise it is only elegant bridges without any rivers having shown up.

I should find the hard core of the subject by showing in Whyte that these questions which the D. hero is fighting about come up. In both, inventions is the strong point and I shouldn't move off this.

D.'s hero's problem can be found as a subject in Whyte's book. He is caught up in something which is really a facet of Whyte's book.

There is no interest in ideology. One represents a crisis in communism, the other in capitalism.

If I do the first problem, it is doubtful I can get to the second. The two problems are either circumscribed or universal, and one can't start with the universal. The whole of it is illusionistic in a technological civilization.

We might draw conclusions for America from all this that only minor changes in institutions are necessary along New Deal lines.

Weber said that the problem of capitalism was the bureaucratization of industry. He died before 1921 and didn't see socialism. He thought this was a characteristic of capitalism and was very wretched about it.

In Russia D.'s book leads to a fight against bureaucracy but not in America.

Whyte raises the same questions which are the subject of D.'s novel. (I took it for granted but as soon as one takes it for granted the interest lapses.) D.'s collective is part of Whyte's Organization. The whole point is to show the problem exists: an invention is not recognized and the inventor is selfless and prepared to ^{make} this usable. This gives it a content. D.'s

novel is organized around a theme which fits into the Whyte book.

Whyte's point is the pressure of American conformity. It does limit the individual's expression and creativity. Whyte carries this theme through (e.g. the Bell Labs). My paper doesn't prove anything unless it is conformity. The book runs on the correctly-defined problem of conformity.

This would be sensational, that conformity which everybody regards as the problem turns out to be the same thing as the D. theme.

P.'s thesis that totalitarianism is the product of industrial society runs on conformity. This is the beginning of a subject. In two societies worlds apart etc., they have industry and various problems in common, and this leads to identification of conformity as a totalitarian phenomenon.

Whyte says he isn't interested in the instruments of conformity (ranch houses etc.) but he shows in the whole book that the problem is conformity.

In Russia they believe in the same ideology, the collective, and it runs over the invention being stopped.

The ideology is absolute nonsense and P. finds in his project that he gets nothing.

While we acknowledge that individualism is built into

America, and in Russia it is crushed out, we have the same problem.

The conclusion is that there are elements which in here in an industrial society which transcend the differences.

The reality of society appears on the horizon but not beyond the predominance of organization. The matter of ultimate freedom is different from Whyte's problem of the individual's attempt to express and maintain himself.

P. believes he is on the right tack. Our irrelevant postulates come from our refusal to admit the reality of society in a technological civilization and from supererogatory attitudes (to do more than your duty)..

PAUL MEDOW AND THE EAST

I should get in touch with Medow and meet him. He is a Russian in spite of everything and these are more real people than the ones we have to deal with.

He takes his stand on Fromm's philosophy, The Great Transformation and Marion Levy, who supposedly has brought under one roof psychoanalysis and sociology. This makes the G.T. a more important thing than it was.

Medow's field is Japan and China and he knows little Western economic history.

M. is more interested in the moral message than the economic. He regards Fromm as being near P.'s position. He says that the individualism which Fromm represents (and in a moral line P. represents) is being used against the industrialization of the Far East. He sympathizes greatly with the rising nationalism and this links us for the G.T. is radically in favour of nationalism.

His view is that the really important thing would be to take part in the discussions going on in Japan, India and the Far East and contribute something really helpful to these discussions. What they need is direction to bring nationalism under control. Nationalist and socialist planning is of course, inevitable in these places. He believes in every regard these people should be informed not to follow a market economy line, leaving out their national roots. They should use socialist methods and not market methods.

The peculiarity of his outlook is that he thinks the national foundations of communities are the ones which most clearly lead to personal and human community. This is very deeply ingrained in him. He thinks the Russians are not reliable from this point of view.

He thinks one should take part in live discussions. He would have influenced P. to take up the moral mission. But in P.'s view he should take up economic history.

M. wants P. to lecture at International House or on the other hand to lecture to a select group at his place.

From his talk with Medow a thought arose: why shouldn't there be some influence on the East, but not on the lines of hypocrisy, lies and poisons held to be nourishing, but by positive contributions of leadership.

This isn't being done because no one has the ideas. Discussions on feudalism and mercantilism are run on marxist and anti-marxist lines and this on lines one step away from idiocy. But there isn't anything else. For anthropology the Marxists have Lewis Morgan and for economic history less than nothing.

Medow takes no share in all these discussions. That would be fatal.

P. thinks that contribution of the West can include Fromm but he is counted out as an influence because Fromm supporters are using this as an argument against industrialization and the loss of freedom.

P. is not interested in these discussions at all, but thinks our discussion of the market infinitely more relevant to the Eastern mind.

P. thinks M. is entirely determined to do something, and once he is a professor, he can go anywhere in the East and Russia. M. knows his Asiatic economic history and reads Russian fluently and can lecture etc. if he is invited. He is not a communist and didn't ever have any contacts with any kind of communists. He would be therefore just a bourgeois professor.

This is an account of the experience and late friendship and P. wants him to join the project since he is an economic historian.

M. thinks P.'s thoughts ought to be broadcast and he even persuaded P. to buy two small books of Fromm's, "Psychology and Religion" and "The Art of Love". Both are very good books and Fromm has made great progress since P. last read "Escape From Freedom".

He also had P. buy the Suzuki book on Zen Buddhism which is now read all over America. P. has now read one-third of the book but this did not persuade him he must have it.

P. formulated a basis for a world outlook on which one could agree to go ahead without all the sectarian philosophies. There is on this planet a revolution of Asian and African nations in progress. This has to be accepted and helped to be creative for reasons of their own. All these people start out to some extent

planning the economy and we should help them know the problematic nature. We must warn them that they can't go out on this as an unlimited undertaking with no problems, but how, why and where they stop and make them conscious of the problems of a technological civilization.

This is as far as P. agrees on a general proposition but on the market P. doesn't go beyond the G.T. Also that nationalism is the outcome of world industrialization and to use it as a protective instrument to gain influence on the process and give it direction. But we should stand for the recognition that the problem of our age is related to the technological civilization.

This is the outcome of these long talks with Medow and it's not remote from our 'economic modus vivendi' project.

Comments on K.P.'s "A Note" on "ROUSSEAU'S PARADOX"

There is an important answer here where P. intimates that any strict approach may miss the point in removing from the tension between the societal and the individual, i.e. the inevitable border zone, the transition. This may well be the home of human life and it may be that all our human disciplines are wrongly organized because they leave out the thing where matters happen because they fall between the disciplines. This is specifically applicable to economics as a border phenomenon. There is the adjustment of means to ends and ends to means.

This is the kind of thing that Parsons talks about and justly although P. doesn't think he followed it up.

Comments of My Letter of Jan. 31, 1958.

P. liked the letter with the four points and thought all were valid.

In point 1), the second paragraph (moralizing a premature resignation to the r. of s.) is the operative one .

Point 2), is the same thing and gives it content.

Point 3), the formulation should be on the illusion of freedom (which is clearer than ultimate freedom). What do we mean by native freedom? It needs an answer. The continuum of compromise is no answer.

Point 4), certainly there is the freedom of women, children and the working-class, but it is quite true that they are only freedoms. It is not a satisfactory answer.

"FREEDOM AND TECHNOLOGY"

P. read Hegel (Phenomenologie) and half of Lukacs and he could now easily write the Marx.

The real difficulty is then the Shaw. "Back to Methuselah" etc. proves that Shaw was the only thinker who starts from the reality of society and the individual who doesn't feel this limitation is funny.

On existentialism P. doesn't know where to put his foot. He read Camus (also a recent story in Partisan Review) and he is a tremendous writer.

COMMENTS ON ADAMS' REVIEW
OF "TRADE AND MARKET"

With reference to Adams comments on proof (i.e. American Sociological Review, Robert M. Adams) the Cappadocian material is the only full-scale material on trading. There are no other cases. The Sumerian is all socialist.

It shows, without realizing it, an abysmal prejudice. He doesn't see there are two meanings of market: market-place and supply-demand-price mechanism. He overlooked the market "system" because he is not an expert. If there is no market place and no supply-demand-price mechanism then for P. there is no basis for market. The usual sense of the term is e.g. that you can sell socks.

This is an attack and shouldn't be given as a one-sided argument. As regards Chapter 12 this was all commercialism and the gods in temples were making profits.

The one place where Adams could have offered an opinion, on Babylonia, he didn't offer it. (Also mentioned that Adams was an archaeologist in the Oriental Institute).

NOTES

ARENDR

Arendt maintains that a totalitarian regime cannot restore itself. There is no way to develop and mend its ways.

P.'s point against Hannah Arendt and her downright pessimism is that these are the starting points of modern thought and P. subsumes it under the reality of society.

There is a very interesting review of two books in either Commentary or the New Statesman that in the concentration camp all showed some weaknesses and powers of resistance but the real courage and help came from the criminal.

ADLER AND KELSO BOOK

(My comment on new volume attempting to introduce the question of ethics in the economy).

In Germany 70 - 100 years ago there was the "ethical school" and today the Catholic school.

1984 - A DISCUSSION

Excerpt From "Fighting Words", C.B.C. - TV. Feb. 16, 1958.

PARTICIPANTS: HANNAH ARENDT
IRVING HOWE
JOHN MEISL
KARL POLANYI
NATHAN COHEN, MODERATOR

Cohen: Let us proceed to our first quotation... "1984 is not a rational attempt to imagine a probable future"... Any idea of the author? A vagabond for four years against his distinguished mother's wishes, however he had no use for bohemian life. A novelist of little success, more celebrated as a reviewer of a famous American magazine... No? His latest novel...

Howe: Anthony West.

Cohen: Anthony West indeed! It was the remark about the magazine that did it, eh, the "New Yorker", that gave it away. Mr. Coker, one longplaying record to you sir. Mr. Anthony West said... and since you identified it Mr. Howe I'll throw it out to you: "1984 is not a rational attempt to imagine a probable future".

Howe: I think it's a rather inane remark, 1984 is not an attempt to give a literal portrait of an imaginable

future. It is rather an effort to extend current political and social tendencies by driving them to an extreme, but by driving the tendencies to an extreme for the purposes of rational analysis, this seems to me a very sensible kind of procedure.

Polanyi: Well, I think it's a utopia, a negative utopia of terrific consequences and I should like to say that in my lifetime I would range three books together, that is Mein Kampf, Stalin's History of the Communist Party of Russia which falsified history for a long time to come and Orwell's 1984.

Howe: Why this conjunction, Dr. Polanyi?

Polanyi: For the following reason. If today, we are fairly all agreed, well we are well on the way to a return to sanity, and all good wishes in this regard, well if there is one obstacle which is a literary obstacle, one which comes from a book, then I should say that the consequences of 1984 have not yet been fully realized.

Meisl: I wonder whether we're not misinterpreting 1984 a good deal. We tend to apply it to the Soviet Union whereas in fact, I think, Orwell was much more concerned with universal tendencies in Western society, and I think the book has really been misjudged on that basis, has it not?

Polanyi: Yes, but so thoroughly that I am prepared to take up the argument of the effect of the book.

Cohen: Let's give Miss Arendt a chance to get in here, Miss Arendt?

Arendt: I think there is no rational way to talk about the future because the future is that thing which we all don't know. I think the real merit of 1984 is, that it brought out in extreme form, certain tendencies, and not even tendencies but things which really existed already, put it into a fictional framework to think about that and talk of the future, to think that this is something which is going to happen in 1984. This I think is the one great... the one... disadvantage of the whole book. I would have wanted Orwell to write exactly the same thing but without 1984.

Polanyi: Well I think that you shouldn't say this, because one of the strong points in your book which I have just reread is that a disastrous idea has been implanted by the totalitarians, and it is that everything is possible, meaning, there's no limit to the distortion of man. But the person who actually drove this thought home, was Orwell through 1984.

Howe: I don't see how you can say that...

Cohen: I'm sorry Mr. Howe, Miss Arendt.

Arendt: I am not objecting to the content of Orwell's book, though I wonder whether it's a very good novel. I'm not objecting at all, and I think that every... for political consciousness he did a marvellous job. I only am objecting to believing that we can know anything rationally about the future. I think that's one of the most irrational things you can utter or think about.

Howe: Whether you can know about the future or not, I think Mr. Polanyi makes a very grave error here. I mean, Stalin's book and Hitler's book, those so to speak are the patients while Orwell tried to function as a doctor. Orwell tried to diagnose the malady and was violently opposed to the malady, so that I really don't see how you can put these two together, except insofar as they are absolutely in clash and contradiction to one another.

Polanyi: Well, I am really taking my stand on the effects. And I should say that if today we considerably can say any shred of confidence in the world would be today a boon. Anything, rational basis of hope in the residual strength of human nature would be a hope. Now if anybody actually tried to argue that out of the world because he overdid his negative utopia, he simply overdid the case, it was his work which convinced millions of people that it is really possible to do anything to human beings.

Howe: It's very hard to argue effects of a book, but it's much easier to argue the meaning of a book, and the meaning of the book seems to me to come through at those moments, for example, when Winston, rather Smith, remembers the moments, when an English mother, even though she had nothing to offer her child, still loved the child, gave it chocolate when she had chocolate, and then loved it anyway and what Orwell was trying to suggest there was just what you're saying, namely the residual human feeling, which cannot, we hope at least, be destroyed by any kind of total state.

Cohen: Mr..... I'm sorry, Miss Arendt.

Arendt: I wonder, if I read the book correctly, then one of the things which came out most clearly especially, - I don't remember the book so well any longer - but especially in the love story, what really came out, was that you can, you can make it possible for people for instance, to have a love affair.

Meisl: Yes but surely really, the danger of the book, and I disagree with Dr. Polanyi on this point, I think the danger of the book is that it tries to make a number of these points but always tying it so closely to the experience of the Soviet Union, it deflects the attention of the reader, I think, by making him think this is what happens in a Communist country, whereas I think we in

the West, should perhaps ask ourselves to what extent these same forces are actually at work say, in the United States during the McCarthy period or, I think, more generally, perhaps without any specific political person.

Arendt: I think we touch there on a very basic question, and the question is this: is it possible to arrive at the same state of affairs which we have in a totalitarian state, under totalitarian government where everything is done by terror, by this curious combination of terror and ideology. Is it possible to arrive at the same state of affairs just by chance? Just because - certainly it's very easy for all of us to point out certain trends in every modern society which are totalitarian or which have this totalitarian tendency, or which can be interpreted in a totalitarian way and it's also very easy to point out that people will conform or will behave in a way which we know...

The question which I would like to ask is, is it possible that this monster comes really into being so to speak out of society itself, or, do you need political power, do you need terror, do you need police, in short do you need a number of very tangible institutions in order to really bring it about, no matter what the trends or the tendencies may have been before?

Meisl: It seems to me that in showing that in the end both

Winston and Julia - Julia - betray their love in the face not of totalitarianism, but perhaps in the face of terrible pain which happens to be produced by... or the danger of something, some terrible experience which is induced by totalitarians and this is an experience which is universal and is not necessarily confined to a totalitarian state although the state may use it.

Arendt: You mean the experience of pain?

Meisl: Well, of betraying some one whom you really don't want to betray in the face of some terrible experience.

Howe: Yes, but the point that...

Cohen: Mr. Howe and then Dr. Polanyi.

Howe: But the point that Orwell was getting at, I think, is, that there are certain kinds of extreme pain which force us to the position where we really have no more choice in our behaviour, that is to say where we are reduced to the level simply of a... mass of nervous tissue which can be manipulated. Now it seems to me that there is at least some warrant for this, first, and secondly, that it is a kind of literalistic fallacy to take Orwell's book and to treat it as if it were a document in political theory rather than an imaginative projection concerning certain fears that of course we all share.

Polanyi: Well, I go further. I think that it was a force in the political situation. Now I think very highly of Orwell so to speak, in every regard. But the objectivity would now demand that so to speak, that book which is almost on a pié d^e stal, even today, should disappear of human imagination in the way Mein Kampf disappeared and in the way Stalinism disappeared, and I am prepared to say, that the views there put, as the views of the totalitarian Bolsheviks, were put with a power and force that they became widely spread in England as a valid sociology and I speak of very serious people who thought that the whole Russian event is really completely explained by the so-called bible book in it, which puts a kind of crazy Marxism, entirely crazy Marxism, with three classes and so on, all on a deterministic mechanism, and then arguing that no society could keep unless terror, in some way, is actually present. If ⁱIt's not present, it must be maintained by well, simulacrum of war, pretended wars, and so on, and I am quite prepared to argue, now here is the point where the thing becomes serious, that Orwell himself had no clear understanding of life, of society. That that is why in the book there is no intimation at all where does the right way lead to, in what way... He is not a religious person, he is not a Christian, he has no element of this thought. All he did was, now there I agree with all of you who spoke, that he drew

attention to a tremendous danger which was real and therefore mankind was grateful to him and I agree with all of you. But incidentally he just committed the tragic mistake of overstating the case to such an extent that after his death he is just an obstacle on the way out.

Cohen: You all want to speak. Miss Arendt goes first.

Arendt: As far as overstating the case is concerned, I do not believe this. You cannot - on the contrary, when today somebody, a writer, who writes fiction, comes along and tries to overstate this case, then we historians come and tell him "my poor fellow, unfortunately you can no longer overstate anything because reality constantly outwits us and is more than any center we could imagine. But as far as the other point goes, I am against forgetting. I am a historian. I'm not even in favour of forgetting Stalin, or Hitler, let alone Orwell. I think if there's any hope, or if there's any way of overcoming this monster, it will certainly not be by forgetting who Hitler was, who Stalin was, and not even the books they have written. But only by knowing it because, since this business once came into the world it will always be possible. Even if tomorrow we wouldn't have any Soviet regime any longer, we still should - should! We wouldn't but we should - should be afraid.

Meisl: That's true, but there is one of the dangers again, in

this book, that I think Orwell misleads this case a bit by ascribing to the ruling group, ascribing the following motive to the ruling group, a quest for power as such. And I think Mr. Howe, you make that point in your...

Cohen: Mr. Howe, I think I'm going to give you the last word on this particular quotation.

Howe: It's a very precious last word. Yes, he does say that there's a quest for power for its own sake and this is a very hard thing for us to understand, but it's even harder to find any other motive. Clearly the ruling group in Soviet Russia is not concerned with power for the sake of profit or any other such motivation. There does seem to be - I say it's hard for us to understand but we have to face it as a reality - there does seem to be an interest in power for power's sake. Until we can dissolve this motivation into some ultimate deeper motivation, it seems to me we have to give at least tentative credit to what Orwell said.

(Gong)

Cohen: Fighting Words, George Orwell and a possible or impossible future. Very well!