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FEED BACK

For Enthusiastic Readers

Dear Editor, It seemed to me that the most helpful thing would be to suggest that more enthusiastic readers like myself try to give a year's subscription to twelve of their friends and relations as Christmas presents. This would help to spread the ideas and also be a great help financially, and probably wouldn't cost the subscribers anything as they might spend at least as much on giving less useful Christmas presents to those people anyway.



Best wishes, Peggy Hemming, Flat 4,
62 Southwood Lane, London N6. 19.9.75.

Credibility Gap

The letter by Yehudi Menuhin in Resurgence Vol.6, No.3 craves reply. I am not here concerned with the Common Market debate, but with a classic defence of the 'moderate' (i.e. fabric conserving) standpoint in existing society. A statement made not with the easy words of a politician, but with the sincerity and conviction of a believer. A view which underlines a discrepancy between ecological and moral radicalism and social conservatism common to many Resurgence readers – and writers! (I have heard it referred to as Resurgence's credibility gap: "Eat brown bread and make Britain great").

Within the terms laid down I must count myself an 'extremist' (i.e. radical), though I do not identify with either the Left or the Right. So how true are the charges levelled at extremists? Do they all stand for dictatorship? Some gentle anarchists and pacifists of my acquaintance would deny it; so too did the anarchist practice of revolutionary Spain. Have they a monopoly on bureaucracy? The monster has been reliably sighted in societies controlled for many years by the 'moderate' centre.

A more serious question: why are they always so shrill, so tense, so one-sided, compared to 'the measured voice', the 'balanced' life-style of the moderate? In part it is the natural prerogative of the defence in any situation to make attack appear unreasonable aggression. In part the cloth-eared smugness of the moderate is itself a defence against uncomfortable thoughts: thus men in relation to women's liberation. All this is not to deny that the hate politics of many political extremists are a perfect mirror to the values of the society that spawns

them. Better than a mirror in fact, for in the general case the mutual distrust, the status rat-race, are concealed beneath a polite veil of formal behaviour.

Which brings us to the central question dividing 'moderate' and 'extremist': whether the image of society which the moderate holds – "the humane greatness of Britain, its tolerant yet disciplined civilisation, its socially unifying traditions" – is true or false. To me, it is so obviously false that I find it hard to enter the mind of one who thinks otherwise.

I suggest that the inability to see the true nature of society: the hostility of each against all and the fragmentation of life that results from it, stems from a missing concept – alienation (perhaps corresponding to a missing dimension of perception, as with colour blindness). Societies are judged only on the dimension of imposed authority (which becomes 'order' when the impositions are approved, and 'dictatorship' when they are not).

As the essay by Yehudi Menuhin in the same issue made clear, the total alienation of society is perceived only in fragments, e.g. the brilliant description of advertising on page 6, "trapping us like mice", or the understanding that competitive society has externalised the measure of satisfaction from authentic fulfilment to status success; or the recognition that we are increasingly "surrounded and inhabited by ugliness and brutality"; that sensitivity and brutality are polarised within us.

Can these glimpses of our real condition be squared with the moderate stance? – with "the humane greatness of Britain" under "the healthy leadership of balanced, enlightened human beings"? I think not.

I believe that our total sickness, our complete dehumanisation, is inextricably bound up with social structure. With a compulsory state, regulated by an elected oligarchy, that calls itself an enlightened democracy; with faceless decision makers, manipulated by both human lobbies and inhuman forces, declared civilised administration; with control of property, by ownership rather than use, described as freedom.

I would not like to suggest that a cure is possible by social change alone, without the reciprocal change in ourselves. But social change is a necessary part of the renewal of humanity which Yehudi Menuhin seeks. And it must be total – not just "semi-autonomous regional cultures" but the co-existence of fully autonomous voluntary states, where real democracy (government by the people) extends to the right of withdrawal, and property by ownership collapses without a single undisputed authority to give it title.

Would democracy be a recipe for carnage? Operated by the people we now are, with our mutual hostility and alienated values, it certainly would. For social structure and social values go hand in hand. Attempting to change one (either one!) without the other is futile. Which is why those of us seeking to practise "a change of heart, a change of mind, a new set of images" need a new social structure that will grow with us, sustain our values. We belong to Albion, not to Britain.

Resurgence, as the self-styled Journal of the Fourth World, has a special responsibility not to betray its trust. Woody, 161 Hinckley Road, Leicester. 11.8.75.