

By COLIN CLARK

THE FUTURE OF THE PROLETARIAT

Professor Toynbee's definition of the proletariat is an unusual one. To him, 'proletarianism is a state of feeling rather than a matter of outward circumstance.' Still more allusively, a proletariat is 'any social element or group which in some way is "in" but not "of" any given society at any given stage of such society's history'. Marx defined the word to mean the urban wage workers in modern society. To Professor Toynbee, Marx's definition is what a mathematician would call 'a special case'; and although it is perhaps the largest, it is by no means the sole constituent of the proletariat by Professor Toynbee's definition. It is also possible on Professor Toynbee's definition—this is an essential aspect of the matter which he has not followed up and which is one of the principal subjects of the following article—that a man may be an urban wage worker without being a proletarian.

However, though Professor Toynbee's definition is valuable and is accepted by many, its acceptance is not a prior condition for the reading of this article which is addressed equally to those who regard the words 'proletarian' and 'urban wage worker' as synonyms. Consideration of

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the future of the urban wage-working population defines my subject-matter.

If we try to look at the question with all the experience of history before us, and on a world-wide basis, instead of confining ourselves in time and space to contemporary Europe and North America, we do begin to understand how the modern urban wage-earning population, though numerically far greater than any other proletariat of any other time or place, is still, nevertheless, only one case among many. At almost every stage in the history of civilisation, Professor Toynbee points out, we find large bands of political and religious exiles, rendered desperate and ruthless by their sufferings, earning a dangerous and destructive livelihood as professional soldiers in the armies of foreign powers—in Professor Toynbee's language, 'dispossessed members of the dominant minority'. We have the larger and unhappier groups who have been reduced to slavery or serfdom and forcibly removed from their homeland, under conditions ranging from the inhuman slave-trade of the Hellenistic period to the comparatively moderate captivity imposed upon the Hebrews in Babylonia. It was a combination of forcible slave-trading and of voluntary migration which produced in Imperial Rome the most outstanding example of a proletariat until modern times were reached, a *colluvies gentium*, in which the general debasement of standards was symbolised by the phrase that 'the Orontes had flowed into the Tiber'. But before we shake our heads over the evils of the ancient world, Professor Toynbee reminds us, we have in our own civilisation caused 'the Congo to flow into the Mississippi' and 'the Yang-tse-kiang to flow into the Straits of Malacca' on a still larger and more devastating scale. Though these migrations may now have stopped, their consequences have not; this is one of the cases where, by the inescapable necessities of history, the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. While the negro slave-trade ended in the early nineteenth century, something not very far removed from it in the shape of 'indentured labour' continued until comparatively recent times. It was principally in this manner that there was introduced into Malaya and Singapore a Chinese population threatening to outnumber the native Malays. What political and military dangers to the European community, what crises yet to come in future years, have been and will be the consequence of this action?

There are other examples of these forced, or virtually forced, migrations, to which Professor Toynbee does not refer in the passage quoted. Outstanding are the Hindu populations in Fiji, Mauritius, and East and

South Africa. In each of these places they have grown into a large minority, or even an actual majority, of the population, whose interests cannot be disregarded, but who do not mix with either the indigenous or white populations of the lands in which they live. Likewise, we have an immense number of Tamils from South India introduced into Ceylon, where their numbers are about becoming comparable with those of the native Sinhalese; we are sometimes inclined to think of India and Ceylon as one community, but in fact Hinduism and Buddhism are poles apart, in culture as well as in religious belief, and these migrations have caused permanent social tension.

It seems at first sight irrelevant to connect this question with British parliamentary politics. In the general election of 1906 the Liberals defeated the Conservatives in one of the most resounding victories of parliamentary history. As in every election, there was more than one issue; but it seems to be agreed (particularly by Conservative historians accounting for their party's defeat) that the outstanding issue in the minds of the electors was the proposal by the Conservative government to allow capitalists in the recently conquered South African territories to introduce on a very large scale indentured Chinese labourers to work in the gold mines. The words 'Chinese slavery' became the slogan which led the Liberal party to victory. It showed a real generosity in the British people, that they were willing to make one of their principal concerns the well-being of a strange people in a remote quarter of the world, threatened with transportation to another quarter almost equally remote.

Australia gives an example in this matter of a great wrong done, followed by a thorough act of reparation—one of the few examples of such acts in the modern world. The forcible transportation of British convicts to Australia ended in the 1850's, just at the time when the settlement of the tropical coast of Queensland was beginning. Under the sinister *sobriquet* of 'Blackbirders' certain sea captains began bringing large numbers of Polynesians and Melanesians to work on sugar-cane plantations, in what was, in effect, a slave trade, thinly disguised under a legal formality whereby a crowd of savages would have a legal contract of indenture read to them, and apparently give their assent to it. (One of Queensland's leading seaports, Townsville, acquired its name from one of these ruffianly sea captains of the 1860's.) The existence of an increasing coloured population in Queensland was one of the factors provoking Australian public opinion into forming a federation of the six separate Australian colonies in 1901. Though 'Blackbirding' had come to an end,

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a large coloured population remained. In 1907 the newly formed Federal Government embarked upon the bold and ingenious policy of repatriating the whole Polynesian and Melanesian population (except for a very small minority who elected to stay and have since become absorbed into the Australian community), at the same time offering a cash subsidy to all sugar producers who refrained from employing coloured labour. It was in the subsequent years that Queensland proved, what the world had hitherto thought impossible, namely, not only that white men could work in tropical heat without suffering ill effects, but also that they could work at anything up to six times the pace of coloured labour so that the costs per ton of sugar production were actually lower when employing white labour.

Of still greater interest is the fact that, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, Queensland also attracted a large number of Chinese immigrants whose movements were under no restriction at that time. These were not sugar-cane workers but predominantly gold miners, farmers, artisans, and shop-keepers. Most returned voluntarily to China once they had accumulated some money, and there was no serious attempt at general repatriation. Many of their descendants, however, have remained and have become completely assimilated to the Australian community. In some towns of North Queensland the majority of the traders bear Chinese names. Instead of forming a separate society, they are members—indeed in many cases the outstanding members—of the Australian community. (A well-known story in Queensland recounts how some Italians had offended against the strict Australian trade-union rule which forbids cutting sugar cane before a certain hour in the morning; the trade union inspector went out with a Chinese taxi-driver to confirm the allegation; and when they caught the offenders *in flagrante delicto*, the taxi-driver said to the inspector, ‘This looks bad for us Australians.’)

A similar story could now be told of the complete americanisation of the descendants of the Japanese indentured labourers settled in Hawaii and California.

The history of the Negroes in America has hitherto been a much less happy one; we look forward in hope to what action the next generation may bring.

The foregoing paragraphs, though under suspicion for the offence of digression, are not, I plead, really guilty of it. The findings of the historian,

and some facts of present-day social geography which we can assemble, are needed in order to remind us that forcible uprooting, *déracinement*, is generally the principal factor in creating a proletariat; and that there are possibilities (to this we shall return later) of repairing this evil, however infrequently, so far, mankind has succeeded in doing so.

We have confined ourselves, so far, to 'the internal proletariat' (again to use Professor Toynbee's language). The concept of an 'external proletariat' covers some fascinating speculations in a field into which I am not qualified to enter. The essential doctrine is that, while a civilisation is still in its expanding and creative stage, all its neighbours, who have contact with it, will seek to imitate, to the best of their ability, its achievements. As a result, expanding civilisations have no sharp boundaries; their neighbours shade off by stages, through partly civilised to predominantly barbarous people, before complete barbarism begins; but at some point there is a *limen* or threshold. But once the creative phase of a civilisation has ended and it has ceased to inspire respect and a desire to imitate it, the *limen* immediately is transformed into a *limes* or fortified military frontier for defence against attack. Those who were once willing, and indeed admiring, junior partners in the task of creating and spreading civilisation, have now become a hostile and suspicious external proletariat.

These concepts are doubtless of great importance in themselves; they are also important in drawing our attention to certain parallelisms with the internal proletariat which is our present concern; we may indeed go further and consider the circumstances under which there may be co-operation and even military and political alliances between elements in the internal and the external proletariat. But we must now return to our main theme.

Just now we reminded ourselves that the modern world is certainly not entitled to point the finger of scorn at the ancient world for its crime of enslaving and transporting whole populations. Perhaps we repent the actions of our ancestors and will make genuine attempts at reparation. But, we ask ourselves, have we not, during the past century, effected such enormous improvements in social and economic conditions that we are entitled to stop and give ourselves credit, and to claim that the proletarianism of the past is no longer with us? No, Professor Toynbee replies, '*à la fin du compte*, the transfer of population from countryside to town has produced the same cancer in the Western as in the Hellenic body social; the cancer of an urban proletariat which has lost its roots in the country, and has struck no roots in the town.'

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In the discussion in the context, and in allusions scattered through the rest of his text, Professor Toynbee brings out that the defining conditions of this huge urban proletariat, which is our present-day subject-matter, are, firstly, this *déracinement*, both topographic and cultural; secondly, the sense of being deprived of one's rightful place in society, implying a memory of (or at least a belief in) a more honourable position held by one's ancestors; thirdly, economic and social insecurity—the real wage of a person at urban work may be far higher than that of his father, but much or all of this benefit is nullified if he lives his life in a state of perpetual anxiety and fear of unemployment.

We are beginning to see now that proletarianism is not easy to define; that the subjective elements may be more important than the objective; that it depends upon a combination of factors and not upon one or two which can be precisely specified.

May I restate one aspect of it in the words of the Australian philosopher Dennis Jackson:

It is the community of families which is required for the making of 'whole' men and women. Today, the life of that community has broken down almost entirely in the world of the great cities—the home, the neighbourly associations, the cultural traditions, no longer exist, but all has been resolved into a chaos without beauty, significance, or stability, through which 'the masses' move to and fro like leaves before the wind, each unit jostling an unknown, looking into strange faces which mean nothing in his life. In such a world the home life is held together almost by violence, and at great sacrifice: the framework of 'neighbourhood' in which it should exist is absent.

In the significant ceremony in 1946 in which the Pope created new Cardinalates throughout the world to raise the College of Cardinals to its full complement, His Holiness said, in the course of his address:

Man, as God wants him and as the Church accepts him, will never consider himself as firmly fixed in space and time if stripped of secure property and traditions. Herein the strong find the source of their ardent and fruitful vitality, and the weak, who are always the majority, are protected against pusillanimity and apathy, against slipping from their dignity as men.

'Secure property and traditions'—surely those are the key words.

We have spoken hitherto of proletarianism as a somewhat indefinite feeling of having been deprived of one's rightful place in society. This puts the concept in somewhat more definite form. Men may not have a

very accurate knowledge of the social conditions under which their grandparents lived; but they will understand fairly clearly that secure property and traditions were something which their ancestors had, and which they no longer have. It is true that Belloc in *The Servile State*, writing as early as 1912, thought that proletarianism had already lasted so long in England that all memory of the previous social order of peasant and artisan proprietorship had passed away. But he had vivid recollections, as a university student in the 1890's, of having spoken to old Englishmen who had faced imprisonment in resisting landlords' enclosure of common grazing lands.¹ But even if Belloc is right about the loss of the tradition of property, some of the other traditions of Merrie England still surely persist and, in any case, while 1912 may have been a comparatively late date in the calendar so far as the proletarianisation of England was concerned, it was still a very early date for most of the rest of the world. Much of what we must now regard as the world proletariat is of quite recent formation.

Once we have come to look upon proletarianism as definable, not by any objective conditions so much as by a strange subjective combination of atavistic memories, present insecurities, and a sense of being displaced from the position and deprived of the status in society to which one is rightfully entitled, we begin to understand its far-reaching consequences. A well-known recipe for the treatment of seasickness opens with the words that certain drastic treatments are required 'upon becoming indifferent to the fate of the ship . . .' It is true that the seasick traveller reaches a stage where he does not care whether the ship sinks or not. We are not far wrong in regarding this as the attitude of the proletarian towards the society of which he is a member.

Let us contrast the Toynbee doctrine with the Marxian. The Marxian doctrine, if I understand it right, is that we define feudal society by the existence of a predominantly serf population; that in any postfeudal society, unless all the implements of production are owned by public authority, there will be a proletariat, rapidly increasing in numbers to engulf what is left of the farm and artisan population, and no less

¹It is perhaps appropriate to quote the old English verse—

They put in jail the man or woman

Who steals the goose from off the common—

But let the greater felon loose

Who steals the common from the goose.

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inexorably subject, through the working of the Marxian laws of economics, to increasing unemployment and to decreasing standards of living.

In Professor Toynbee's doctrine we must draw a sharp distinction, both from the point of view of the internal and the external proletariat, between civilisations in their creative and their postcreative phases. The change of the attitude of the external proletariat from respectful imitation to contemptuous hatred has been noted above. But it is the same internally. The original achievements of any civilisation are generally the work of a small 'creative minority'; but so long as they can create beauty, order, and wealth (in that order of importance—reversing the Marxian scale which puts economics first, politics second, and culture last), the creative minority will be respected and, so far as is possible, imitated by all other sections of society. When they have ceased to create, they transform themselves by an inevitable process into a 'dominant minority', grasping, oppressive, and violent. A proletariat may be created by deportations and political exile; but even without these, the mere alienation of the mass of the people from the dominant minority may serve, before long, to produce the same effect. This 'secession of the proletariat', it is implied in several passages, is irrevocable; at any rate, every civilisation known to history has reached a point, fairly sharply defined in time, at which a secession of the internal and external proletariat has occurred; and this has been a point of no return, from which the civilisation has never recovered but has gone into an irrevocable decline. At the same time, there are certain other passages in Professor Toynbee's writings which hold out some hope that this secession may be rectified in the future even if it never has been in the past.

Enough has been said, surely, to give us all the feeling of extreme concern about the world in which we are now living. 'In our civilisation', wrote Mr. Harold Nicolson, 'the secession of the proletariat, both internal and external, has already begun.' Mr. Nicolson, and some of his fellow thinkers in England, have already applied these doctrines to the interpretation of our present position a little more boldly than Professor Toynbee has been willing to do himself. If their interpretation is correct, there is no need to dwell upon the consequences.

But now we can, and should, refresh ourselves with a draught of hope. What examples, if any, does history show of a reversal of the process of proletarianisation? Professor Toynbee quotes many examples of those 'whose response to the challenge of having their roots plucked up has been to strike fresh root in virgin soil overseas . . . French Protestants . . .

Irish Catholics . . . American Loyalists . . . German Liberals . . . American and Australian descendants of English indentured servants and deported convicts . . . Negro populations as self-supporting peasants in the Black Belt of the New World . . .’ all of them ‘refusing to join the proletariat, or at any rate refusing to remain in it’.

These diverse examples surely give a lead to our thoughts. Migration, in itself, is not condemned. (We can be thankful for this; otherwise there would have been a headlong clash between the historian and the economist; for the economist is almost bound to reach the conclusion that large-scale migration is needed in the modern world, and will probably become even more necessary in future epochs.) Indeed, we seem to be tending towards the paradoxical result that migration over great distances, or into a foreign community, may be much more beneficial for all concerned than short distance migration, from country to town, within one’s own state. Paradoxical, but very probably true. Turn back to our key phrase, ‘secure property and traditions’. Men migrating over great distances do their best to bring their traditions with them, even if they cannot bring their property; and at any rate, conditions in a new country generally enable them to re-accumulate some property within a generation. *Caelum non animam mutant qui trans mare currunt* and *sidere mutato mens eadem* have served as mottoes for Australian universities. But it is the hasty absorption of a country population into the huge industrial cities which destroys property and traditions alike, without giving any opportunity to re-create them.

Just as we cannot unreservedly condemn migration, and in certain circumstances may indeed commend it, likewise also with urbanisation. Without cities, indeed, there can be no civilisation. But the cities which have made the greatest contribution to European culture have grown slowly and naturally with a strong element of tradition in their structure. They have been, basically, cities of independent, property-owning artisans, traders, and political leaders. The first appearance of a proletariat in European civilisation is placed in the fourteenth century by Professor Pirenne, who traces its origin in a masterly manner.

Between the master-craftsmen and the apprentices or journeymen whom they employed goodwill had lasted so long as it was easy for the latter to rise to the position of masters. But from the moment that population ceased to grow and the crafts were faced with the necessity of stabilising production, the acquisition of mastership had become more and more difficult . . . long terms of apprenticeship . . . raising of

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fees . . . each corporation of artisans was gradually transformed into a selfish clique of employers, determined to bequeath to their sons or sons-in-law the fixed clientele of their small workshops.

By the fourteenth century in Flanders (considerably later in most parts of Europe) 'the nature of the "great commerce" and of the capitalistic industry inevitably condemned them to the insecurity of a wage-earning class and to all the misery of crises and stoppages.'

We have now reached the stage where we can pause and recapitulate. The existence of a proletariat, using the word as we have defined it, is an unmitigated evil. The only reasonable prospect for the proletariat is somehow or other to cease to be a proletariat. This means a conscious and sustained effort to create a society in which every man enjoys not only material wealth—the production and distribution of wealth is a problem which we are in sight of solving—but also, and this is the harder problem, his secure property and traditions, his sense of belonging, his feeling that he is enjoying his rightful place in society. And there is no earthly prospect, however much some may wish to do it, of re-creating the society of the past. Our society must be one of the future, sharing, perhaps, some features of older societies but in other respects radically different. It must be a society in which men can feel secure, without the authoritarian rigidity which was often the price of economic security in the past. It must be an urban society, in the sense that only a minority of its members earn their living by agriculture, but it must avoid the ruthless impersonality of the modern large city by dispersing people in small communities in which the ordinary man will feel that he counts. It must have traditions without rigidity, and mobility without restlessness. Economic and social mobility, in the sense that men must be ready and able to change their job when circumstances demand it, and must be able to seek employment of a different nature from that of their fathers, is a necessary condition of economic progress. There can be no argument about that.

But an important factor contributing to proletarianism is excessive mobility. To any man, the work which he does should not merely be the means of obtaining a livelihood. It should also be looked upon and respected as his vocation, the due performance of which is one of his most important duties in this world. To be attached to his craft, to strive to attain perfection in it, to meet and form organisations with his fellow craftsmen—these are all things which give a sense of 'belonging', and are antidotes to proletarianism. Still more is this the case where a man follows the same craft as his father, and a tradition begins to be built up. These

considerations do not forbid a man to change his employment or to follow a different occupation from his father; but they certainly do point out the danger to society of excessive mobility. The task of the statesman is to promote mobility just to the degree required for economic progress, without overstimulating it.

A little study,² based on interviews with as many as possible of the younger men of a small town in California, throws a great deal of light on the processes of social and economic mobility as they now prevail in California, one of the most mobile and restless of all districts in our modern civilisation. The average man, by the time he reached the age of thirty-five, was found to have followed more than *four different occupations*. (Take note that this is the average, not the maximum.) The great majority of these citizens must have felt devoid of any attachment whatever to any occupation or craft, let alone to any occupation traditional in their family.

But in spite of this intense superficial mobility, most movements, when further analysed, were found to be in a narrow social range. Entry into the professions is confined (by law or by custom) to those with three or more years of college education, with the result that 71 per cent of the professional men are sons of business or professional men. Of the proprietors and managers of business, 75 per cent are recruited from the sons of professional and businessmen. At the other end of the scale, the unskilled manual workers are themselves almost all the sons of unskilled men or of the least successful farmers.

If this picture is in any way typical, the U.S. seems to be getting the worst of both worlds. Every man keeps on changing his occupation but generally seems to end up at something not very different from his father's position. The classes are showing distinct signs of becoming stratified. To have largely a hereditary class of professional men, of farmers, of business proprietors, with some moderate degree of movement into and out of these classes, might be defensible, if men following other occupations also had certain hereditary prospects and traditions. *Per contra*, a society of intense mobility might be defensible, if the best paid and most honoured posts were equally open to children of whatever parentage. But to have a society which is beginning to stratify into hereditary classes, in which individual members suffer a restless up-and-down movement without any great prospect of ending up

² Anderson and Davidson, *Occupational Mobility in an American Community*. Stanford University: Stanford University Press, 1936.

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in a different class, really does seem to be having the worst of both worlds.

The growth of proletarianism in the U.S. during recent decades has been one of the most alarming features of the modern world. Those who owned their businesses, or had hopes of doing so, used to be sufficiently numerous to give the whole tone to American society not very long ago:

OCCUPIED POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION

	1890	1920	1950
Professional Men	4.9	5.0	7.2
Farmers	23.6	15.5	7.0
Other Proprietors and Managers of Businesses	5.9	6.7	10.4
Clerks and Salesmen	4.3	13.8	19.0
Farm Labourers	13.2	9.4	5.1
Other Manual Workers	48.1	49.6	51.3

This change in outlook has shown itself during the last two decades in the extremely rapid growth of an entirely new kind of unionism. The old American Federation of Labor type of trade-unionism before 1930 had defects and abuses in abundance, but it did remain essentially a loose federation of unions of skilled men, organised in their crafts. The Congress of Industrial Organizations, with the American Federation of Labor now largely following suit, almost ignores craft and is concerned only to build up powerful and ruthless organisations of large masses of men, with the intention of creating a power sufficient to match that of the great capitalist groups with whom it has to negotiate.

As with occupational mobility, so with geographical. In this case, it is not so easy to prove that economic progress requires such movements, except when we are considering the settlement of hitherto undeveloped territories—and this type of settlement, as Professor Toynbee has pointed out, often has most beneficial effects in de-proletarianising what might otherwise have been a proletarian population. Excepting this case, we have an important recent theoretical demonstration by Professor Samuelson to the effect that, broadly speaking, all the beneficial effects to be

expected from migration of population can be obtained by doing nothing more than permitting an unimpeded movement of goods and capital between the areas in question. Even if this proposition be not entirely accepted, there are few who would wish to subject it to more than a moderate degree of qualification. Thus there is no very compelling economic reason for most of the concentration of population in large industrial cities. It is not to be denied that manufacturers generally prefer them, and in many countries a large proportion of manufacturers try to get their works located in the capital city. This process generally goes on until either land values, or wages, or both, in the capital city rise to a height which begins to drive industry away.

Many theoretical works have been written, following Weber's original work in Germany, showing by elaborate diagrams how a manufacturer will tend to locate his business at points accessible to his supply of raw materials and to his market. This line of thought has paid too much attention to the special conditions prevailing in German and American heavy industry, and the theoretical results are very remote from the facts in describing the location of the general run of industries throughout the world. The heavy industries, which are 'materials-oriented' (i.e., compelled to a location not too far distant from their source of raw materials), represent only a minor part of industry as a whole, and a part of decreasing relative importance; and in any case, as the efficiency of transport improves, even in heavy industry, these considerations are becoming of somewhat less significance. The vast majority of industries are 'market-oriented'. Transport costs are not the only consideration involved, though they are important. Physical proximity to the market, a multitude of contacts (formal or informal) with potential buyers, all these are greatly valued by the modern businessman.

These results can, if we like, be stated in a more precise and scientific form as the 'law of economic potential'. The word 'potential' will immediately convey a clear meaning to a physicist. To one unaware of the use of this word in the theory of electricity, a considerable amount of explanation will unfortunately be necessary. The electrical potential at any point will depend upon all electric charges which may affect it, but their distance from the point must also be taken into account. The economic potential of any point may be defined as the sum of the purchasing power of all markets within its reach, each purchasing power being divided by the transport cost of reaching it. The world's points of highest economic potential are the American Middle West, the English Midlands, and South

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Western Germany. Manufacture is attracted to a remarkable degree to points of high potential and repelled from points of low potential.

In most issues of economic theory there is, eventually, some equilibrium at which this situation is at any rate theoretically capable of resting, numerous though the impediments may be in the way of reaching such equilibrium. But on the question of the location of industry, there is no equilibrium. Once a dense urban population has grown up, it provides a market which attracts further industries towards it. If we leave things to themselves, there seems to be nothing to stop this process going on to the point where all the manufactures in the world are attracted into the one small district. After all, a century ago, our ancestors were seriously considering whether Lancashire and Yorkshire and the English Midlands would not serve as the workshop of the entire world. If transport costs had been lower, and if other countries had not decided to build up their manufactures under the shelter of tariff protection, something like this might have happened.

Excessive concentration of population in large cities, with all its terrible social consequences, can thus hardly be described as the consequence of the working out of some beneficial economic law. It is rather a process which will never regulate itself in the way that other economic processes do, but imperatively calls for regulation by political authority.

The fact that in most countries political authorities are themselves wedded to the interests of the capital city and the big-city type of civilisation and tend to encourage rather than to control the further development of big cities, does, of course, make matters infinitely worse.

In our task of de-proletarianisation we must expect bitter opposition from both Marxists and capitalists. The existence of a proletariat, to a Marxist, is of the very essence of his being. In the proletariat resides that mysterious Force to whose service he devotes his life, from which will come, eventually, revolution and the creation of a new society. The Marxist claims that all this is a matter of historical necessity. If he really believed that, he would be less disturbed in mind about it. He is in fact very upset and annoyed when he hears any suggestion that a proletariat might be de-proletarianised.

The capitalist (defining this word not as anybody possessing capital, but confining its meaning to the large employer of labour) also generally prefers to see a proletarian population, preferably one subject to some degree of unemployment and economic insecurity, waiting outside his factory gates until he may find it convenient to employ it. Capitalists

and Communists often tacitly work hand in hand to proletarianise their country (Australia is a good example of a country where this has happened), each thinking that he is going to benefit from it. We must give the Communist the credit for being far-sighted; the manufacturer's myopia is incredible. Dr. Johnson's ideas may be a little too Tory for present-day tastes, but he certainly laid his finger on the weakness of businessmen:

Those who look but little into futurity have, perhaps, the quickest sensation of the present. A merchant's desire is not of glory, but of gain, not of public wealth, but of private emolument; he is, therefore, rarely to be consulted on questions of war or peace, or any designs of wide extent and distant consequence.

It need hardly be pointed out that Dr. Johnson and Americans did not see eye to eye, even in those early days.

Let us, therefore, not underrate the difficulties with which any programme of de-proletarianisation will be confronted.

Nevertheless, such a programme is perfectly practicable. There are three lines of action by which we can proceed, but the whole programme is summed up in a single word—dispersal. Firstly, dispersal of property, so that in place of a few enormous capitalistic concerns or nationalised industries (they look remarkably alike from the workers' point of view), we have a host of working proprietors, family businesses and small employers. Impracticable under modern industrial conditions? Not a bit of it; have a look at the facts as set out below.

Secondly, dispersal of political power. The motive force creating the huge modern city with its proletarian population is often little more than the desire to pander to the vain-glory of a sovereign prince, or of the politicians who speak in the name of a sovereign people, who are generally worse still. Most modern European communities show a quite excessive concentration of political power. Switzerland and those communities outside Europe which have genuinely accepted the federal system have managed to secure its dispersal. But in these communities it is even truer than elsewhere, that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. The tendency for power, if unchecked, to concentrate on one point, must for ever be watched and guarded against.

Thirdly, geographical dispersal of population. Increasing concentration of population in large industrial cities is partly a consequence of the concentration of economic power, partly a consequence of the concentration of political power, partly a phenomenon in its own right, if we may so put it (or, should we say, in its own wrong?).

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To what extent is it necessary to have concentrations of economic power, whether capitalistic enterprises or nationalised industries (whose similarities are much more important than their divergencies)? Only where the technical conditions of production require it. And where does this happen? *Par excellence*, in certain forms of transport (railways, shipping, and airlines), in heavy industry, and in forms of manufacture requiring very extensive equipment; in other forms of manufacture, to a more moderate degree; in banking and insurance; in armies and navies, and other activities organised by central rather than by local governments.

Having enumerated these, our list is complete. In other fields the large-scale organisation is not only unnecessary but is generally at a positive disadvantage, which it sometimes counteracts through its financial power or political influence; it is not needed in agriculture, in road transport, in wholesaling, in retailing, in education, in building, in hotels, cafes, laundries, and other personal service industries. Unlike manufacture, these industries are not dealing with a steady routine of production. As soon as the organisation becomes at all large, the supervision and co-ordination of the work of a number of employees becomes both difficult and costly.

Many will be surprised to learn what a small proportion of the labour force in a modern community need be occupied in industries requiring large-scale organisation; and not only a small proportion, but a diminishing one. In an advanced community, the demand for manufacture tends to settle down at a level of only some 20 per cent of the entire national income; and the proportion of the labour force required, at an ever lower percentage (because productivity in manufacture tends to rise faster than in other activities). The proportion of the labour force required for transport in a modern community may fall as low as 6 per cent, and an increasing proportion of these are road transport workers who can work in small units. A large part of the remainder are those transport workers who are required in every big city merely to move the inhabitants to and fro; with the disappearance of big cities, the proportion of the labour force required for transportation would fall very low.

If banking and insurance occupy 2 per cent of the labour force that is a high figure.

We are left with government departments, and one is almost tempted to say that, so strong is the itch for large-scale organisation in the modern world, that, finding we have soon run out of useful economic objectives for it, we set to work to create useless government departments, in order

to have as many people as possible engaged in large-scale organisations, instead of working more naturally in small businesses.

On the concentration of political power there is little more to be said. The desire to get close to the foundation of authority is undoubtedly one of the factors attracting manufacturers and other businessmen into capital cities. We should consider ourselves bound by the principle of subsidiarity, whereby all public authorities should be organised on a small scale until the need for larger-scale organisation can be proved, and placing the *onus probandi* always upon the would-be centraliser. Services such as schools and hospitals will probably be run better by a multiplicity of small organisations than by attempting to concentrate.

Much of the case for political concentration in the past has arisen from the shortage of educated men capable of administering public services and the consequent need for concentrated authority and uniform policy over wide areas. This reason is, or we hope soon will be, obsolete. In the future we should expect an abundance, perhaps even an embarrassing abundance, of such men.

Geographical dispersal to small communities is something which will not come at all of its own accord. It must be planned from above and must be carried through by a strong, indeed almost ruthless, political authority. We could, if we wished, build in the modern world communities with populations as small as 2,500. These would be able to have a shopping centre, medical service, municipal government, more than one primary school, and an active social life. (Any community smaller than this, however, seems destined to slow extinction in the modern world.)

It is not suggested that population be entirely dispersed into such small groups. The populations of these points could be treated as basic units and given the highest possible measure of municipal authority. Economically, such a community would be able to find employment for a considerable portion of its labour force in the local retailing and service activities. But it would need, in addition, either agricultural land or some industry or other large-scale activity, deliberately placed in its midst, in order to provide employment for the remainder of the labour force. Such communities would have to be grouped, of course, for higher educational, cultural, and commercial services. A grouping in triads with populations of 7,000–8,000 would enable many of these needs to be supplied. For some purposes, such as universities, specialist medical services, and the more specialised forms of commercial activity, a population up to 250,000 would

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be required. But with modern methods and transport and communication there is certainly no need to have all these living in a single city.

It may in the end turn out to be the case that the invention of the atom bomb was a blessing in disguise because, for the first time, it has really made people think hard of the dispersal of our overgrown industrial cities.

There is no doubt that dispersal, in all three senses of the word, is the necessary line of action to take to retard the increased schism in our social order and to put an end to proletarianism. But can we hope that any political authority will have the vigour to carry such a programme through against the numerous and almost insuperable obstacles?

This study opened with Professor Toynbee's definition of 'proletariat' and a commentary on his account of how it came to be formed. Perhaps we can conclude with a quotation from the same source:

In our generation, in which the lately brilliant prospects of a neopagan dominant minority have been rapidly growing dim, the sap of life is visibly flowing once again through all the branches of our Western Christendom. . . . We may yet live to see a civilisation which has tried and failed to stand alone, being saved, in spite of itself, from a fatal fall by being caught in the arms of an ancestral church which it has vainly striven to push away and keep at arm's length. . . . An apostate Western Christendom may be given grace to be born again as the *Respublica Christiana* which is its own earlier and better ideal of what it should strive to be.

Is such spiritual re-birth possible? If we put Nicodemus's question, we may take his instructor's answer.