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ANARCHY 35

2/-

30 cents

HOUSE AND HOME

[inside front cover]

Contents of No. 35

January 1964

House and home *C.W.* 1

Are council houses necessary? *Peter Neville* 2

Of course they are *Caleb Williams* 5

The multiple family housing unit *Teddy Gold* 8

In the urban jungle *J.E. & A.B.* 12

Self-help housing in South America 15

The Barriada: a case-history *William Mangin* 18

A revolutionary fable *Gene Sharp* 24

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1. Sex-and-Violence; Galbraith.

(out of print)

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1

ANARCHY 35 (Vol 4 No 1 January 1964)

HOUSE AND HOME

THE WORD ANARCHY MEANS “WITHOUT AUTHORITY”, and anarchism as a social theory implies an attempt to provide for social and personal needs from the bottom up, rather than from some government or other authority down, or for some-one else’s profit. It implies an extension of the idea of voluntary associations and autonomous groups to cover the whole field of human activity.

The anarchist thus has peculiar difficulties in formulating an approach to questions like housing, in which the initiative is so much in the hands of people with political, financial and economic power, and so little in those of people with none of these things, but simply the need for a roof over their heads. An older generation of anarchists, adopting a militant and revolutionary approach, would point out that the housing problem is a permanent feature of modern society which only a revolution would eradicate. They were right, no doubt; we still have a housing problem, and they didn’t get their revolution. But since we are today advocating anarchism as an *approach* and not simply as a hypothetical destination, we have to look around for those fields in which means which are in harmony with anarchist ends can be applied today. And the difficulty experienced in locating examples is a measure of the way in which so vital and basic a human need as housing has slipped out of the range of things which ordinary people can provide for themselves. Even such credit organisations as building societies which were originally instituted in the early 19th century as organs of working class mutual aid, have become vast money-lending organisations which most working-class people are not credit-worthy enough to employ. Ray Gosling pointed out recently in *New Society* that even since the years just before the war the range of people able to make use of building societies has “gone up a class.”

A year ago, in ANARCHY 23, we attempted to survey the possibilities of popular intervention in the field of housing, by discussing the potentialities of housing societies, including self-build societies, and by giving an account of the most significant example of direct action for housing, the “squatters’ movement” immediately after the last war.

In this issue another aspect of popular direct action for houses is described, thanks to the material, gathered in South America by John Turner, which formed a recent special issue of the journal *Architectural Design*, from which we reproduce William Mangin’s case history, which, apart from its intrinsic human interest, illustrates a similar pattern of evolution to that of previous examples. John Turner argues that the squatters’ settlements or *barriadas* of Peru, “far from being a problem are in fact the only feasible solution to the rapid urbanisation problem”, and *Architectural Design* notes that:

Although the 350,000 people who inhabit the *barriadas* of Lima are living outside the law, in that they have no legal right to the land they have settled on, their determination to remain has won them the tolerance of the public

2

authorities, who now, through the Junta Nacional de la Vivienda, allocate aid, at first experimental, but later more systematic, to the more permanent of the communities.

This is the same sequence of Initiative, Consolidation, Success and Official Action, which we noticed in all previous examples of direct action applied to the housing problem in a non-revolutionary situation. (The reader of William Mangin's article will notice that the *barriada* builders of Lima do not by any means consider themselves to be revolutionaries.)

Little has happened in the Housing Society movement since the article "What Hope for Housing Societies" in ANARCHY 23, to make them a feasible proposition for people of average earnings. The government promises further loans, but not at the kind of interest rates which would bring down the cost. (In this connection see the discussion in this issue, from two points of view both claiming to be anarchist, of local authority housing.)

A quite different approach to the housing question is raised by Teddy Gold in this issue. Even if we could all get houses, is the standardised solution of the one-family house or flat, the kind of housing we really want? He is campaigning to start a housing society to build Multiple-Family units, for the reasons which his article set out. This moves from the question of housing to that of the family: is the statistically standard family the kind we really want to belong to? How many happy families do you know?

But the housing news of the year has undoubtedly been the revelations of racketeering landlordism known as *Rachmanism* which became "news" simply because the late Mr *Rachman* shared a mistress with people concerned in the *Profumo* scandal. Tenants have been discover-

TURN TO PAGE 14

PETER NEVILLE ASKS:

Are council houses necessary ?

RECENTLY, IN MANCHESTER, A GROUP OF COUNCIL HOUSE TENANTS demonstrated against the proposal by the local authority to increase rents and to meet the rising cost of repairs, etc. The Manchester tenants rebellion follows that of Glasgow tenants, where, according to a recent edition of *The Economist*, rents had remained static for years, in spite of rising costs and an increasing deficit between costs and rents actually paid. The last stage in the Manchester battle shows the local Labour Party in a very bad light. While admitting by their actions that these increases were necessary, they have passed a motion ensuring that any tenants who cannot pay the increase will have it paid out of the rates—not everybody's rates—only the rates of these people who are not fortunate enough to be council house tenants.

3

As an anarchist myself, and also as a student of economics and sociology, I feel it is time that someone should try and clear the air on this issue of local authority housing to enable us to see just what we are dealing with, and what we are not dealing with, for whenever I see articles or letters on "Housing" in this country I always get the impression that the writers are either very naive or very dishonest.

First, however, we must try and sketch in something of the historical background. Also we must constantly keep reminding ourselves that we are not living in an anarchist, nor a socialist, society, but a “free” capitalist society, and any discussion on a social and economic situation must be strongly related towards society as a whole, with a view to assessing correctly the historical truth of one’s findings, rather than the ideological truth based upon one’s political ideals, and such aspects of history as will support these, otherwise all one will get will be a largely unworkable set of political slogans, rather than, what we as anarchists really want, a well-thought-out blueprint for future actions, or trends of actions, to meet situations as they arise. I agree in advance with critics that it is very nice to have big-hearted moral ideas of what should, and we hope, will happen, but I would prefer to know just what I am dealing with, as my time is rather valuable and I don’t like wasting it.

Once upon a time, as they say, everyone was supposed to own their own house, or have some kind of housing adequate to the relevance of his needs. This may not have been always entirely true, but it is, in left-wing circles, usually held to be true (ideologically?). With the coming of the Industrial Revolution, and the decline of cottage industry because of centralisation in factories, etc., new problems arose. It was necessary for workers to live relatively near their work and many left their country villages and settled in the new industrial towns, many of which were without adequate governmental or social controls to prevent abuses of urbanisation. Consequently the building of houses and streets was largely unplanned. Houses were usually very badly built, often with no facilities for drainage and washing. This led to disease and very low standards of physical well-being in the industrial population.

As time went on the view of the Establishment was ameliorated somewhat from the stern utilitarian view that people were poor and ill-housed because of their own fault. It was realised that it was necessary for a local or central government authority to take a lead, and frankly, had they not, as in Russia, etc., a revolutionary situation would have been created. It was therefore decided, to a certain extent, that our towns and cities must be replanned, and as a first step, all the old disease-ridden jerry-built slums must be pulled down, and their occupants be rehoused in cheap local-authority-owned houses, until such time as they were financially able to obtain adequate private accommodation. It was also realised that certain people in the lower income groups, by virtue of their low wages, lack of ability and education, or physical handicaps, would never in our present economic set-up, obtain adequate housing, not only for themselves but their families, unless some outside body catered for them. Hence council houses—houses of poor design and inferior aspect, yet capable of providing “adequately” for the

4

needs of the poor, but with no frills, and definitely inferior to most private houses.

This was the picture until quite recent times, but at the conclusion of the Second World War, a third aspect came to the fore: need. There were a large number of people who, due to factors beyond their control, needed houses, and in many cases were prepared to buy them, but had no chance of obtaining them because of the post-war shortage—augmented, it is true by the effects of the bombing. It was necessary therefore, for the state, through its agent, the local authority, to step in and finance an adequate building programme. As building materials were in short supply and it was thought that economies would be made by centralisation of the building programme, private building was restricted, often by a quota system. All this got rather mixed up with political ideology. Many deterministic socialists felt that any ownership of private property was morally wrong, and as such the view was put forward that it was, in this country at least, a human right, to live in a council house, in fact some seemed to put forward the view that to live any other way was wrong and anti-socialist, etc. Yet the curious fact remained that, while the new ideas were accepted, the old idea that council house tenants were really the deserving poor, and as such, local authority housing should be subsidised, also remained. In fact both had been incorporated in the same ideology, yet are they consistent? Every man in this country is not a poor man, in fact many council house dwellers I have

met claim to be taking in over £50 a week, if both wife and elder children are working. Not all, I admit, but many. The idea that tenants should remain only so long as they need to get more adequate private accommodation seems to have been forgotten, many tenants now come from families who have lived in council houses for three generations. Rather than look for better accommodation they seem to demand that council houses should be as good as, or better than, many private houses—outside as well as internal lavatories, fixed refrigerators, and other electrical fittings being the rule rather than the exception in many council houses. Also they feel that they should have all the social services provided on their doorstep, though in many cases these are not provided for the residents on private housing estates. When a number of local authorities recently suggested to their fixed tenants, that they would be willing to sell them their property, without deposit, at amounts in many cases, not greater than the rents already charged, they were surprised at the very poor response.

The thing that seems to me is, if we are going to have local authority housing for all, as an alternative to private housing, then the tenants cannot expect to be subsidised by the rest of the community. If on the other hand, we are going to have local authority housing for the physically or socially handicapped, then these can be subsidised—but by the whole community—not excluding the affluent council house tenants; but if we are to have both then it must be acknowledged, and all the tenants that are able, must pay the economic rent—in fact, if, as some socialists wish, everybody must soon be housed in council houses, since all private houses will be nationalised, if the subsidy was not paid by all, where

5

exactly would it come from?

I now have an alternative scheme to suggest, and that is that housing estates or precincts should be organised upon a communal basis, both privately-owned and communally owned, houses, and these could well, as they are at present, be separated. Each should be, as far as possible, a face-to-face community, responsible for its own affairs, and for providing, or at least paying for, its own social or community services. It should be entirely self-supporting and not dependant, as at present, upon a periodical hand-out or redistribution of social capital, once it had flogged its own to death. Where the property is all communally owned, the community as a whole should be responsible for all rents (i.e. bills for repairs, interest on and return of capital borrowed from a central credit-giving fund), rates (i.e. bills for community and social services, e.g. school and welfare services) and social insurance, this to be not only insurance against accident, old age, unemployment, etc., but against harm to community property and capital due to this (i.e. the rest of the community not to suffer a financial loss due to inability of an individual to meet rents, rates, etc.).

You might well criticise this by saying that some communities would have better facilities, social, education, etc. than others. This is true, but one feels that if a person wants something badly enough he should be willing to pay if he can. At present we have the situation in reverse. Many people are getting a far larger share of the national cake, in the name of egalitarianism, yet being unwilling to pay for it—a “means test” in council house rents is apparently wrong, though not so in income tax, death duties, and for some people super-tax. It seems to me that this is inconsistent especially as there are still large numbers of people who are in real need of more adequate housing which could be more quickly made available by “squeezing out” by a means test the more affluent tenants who can easily afford to buy or rent private housing, which is not really so expensive as one might imagine, and with an increase in demand might well become cheaper. I have always understood that one of the great means of preventing social injustice was to treat each case on its merits—why is subsidised local authority housing exempted from this?

Of course they are says CALEB WILLIAMS

MR NEVILLE'S OPINIONS SEEM TO ME INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM THOSE of the present government, whose Minister of Housing recently described Government policy as an attempt to move housing back into the free market (while recognising the need for aid to special groups). This does not seem to me a particularly anarchistic point of view. He isolates the fact that some tenants, who could afford to pay more, are subsidised. But why stop there? Quite apart from the general observation that the poor invariably subsidise the rich in our kind of society, millions of householders are "subsidised" in one way or another. In almost every country in Europe, governments have intervened in various ways to

6

reduce the price of housing to the consumer. Rent control is one means, improvement grants are another, and income tax allowances on repayment of loans are a third. This last form of "subsidy" grows bigger if you are richer. Thus Prof. D. V. Donnison remarked at the RIBA Housing Conference that:

I worked out the other day that on the house I am buying, it cost me about £3,000 when I started to buy it about six years ago. Then I worked out what I was in effect being given by other taxpayers in reduction of tax on the purchase of this house. Over the years it came each year to £66 1s. 0d. The odd thing about this is that if my income was so low that I did not pay any income tax but just paid the other 60 per cent of taxes but not the 40 per cent of income tax that I would have had to pay, I would have to pay £66 1s. 0d. a year more to live in the same house.

It is, incidentally, these anomalies of taxation which inhibit the growth of the Housing Society movement. A man earning enough to benefit from the official stimulus to housing societies, would find that a loan from a building society and the tax reliefs it would bring, would benefit him more. But it would hardly be an anarchist strategy to advocate the ending of tax reliefs.

Plainly the situation to which Mr. Neville draws our attention is inequitable, but so are most other aspects of housing. If, as anarchists, we have any point to make about them it is that of the limitations of reformism. Stanley Alderson, in his Penguin book on housing, sees the widespread opposition to the "means test" which differential renting of council housing implies, as being due to the paternalistic relationship of councils with their tenants:

The protests against a means test were not merely rationalisations of a reluctance to pay higher rents. Differential rent schemes were resented because they foisted on the local authorities the ultimate paternalistic responsibility of deciding how much pocket money their tenants should be allowed to keep. Local authorities deserve sympathy for their reluctance to exercise this responsibility. It is as imperative that they should be relieved of it as that council tenants who can afford to should pay economic rents. The council tenant who needs financial assistance should receive it through some other organ of the State, established to assist private tenants and owner-occupiers as well. He could then claim his assistance without loss of dignity, and he would always pay his full rent to his landlord.

It is on this question of paternalism that we can as anarchists, break into the argument, by pointing out once more, as was done in ANARCHY 23, the moral of the story from Norway, told by Lewis Waddilove in his PEP report on housing associations:

A pre-war municipal estate near Oslo was transferred over a period from the ownership of the local authority to the ownership of associations of the tenants themselves. It had been one of the most difficult problems to the local authority; its standards were low, its appearance unpleasant, and there was great resistance to increases in rents to a reasonable level. A series of meetings patiently arranged by the housing manager ultimately resulted in the acceptance by the tenants of membership in co-operatives which, on favourable terms, took over the ownership of the property from the local authority. Today it is transformed. The members have cared for their own property and by corporate action have ensured that others have done so in a way that they failed to do when it was in public ownership; they have charged themselves "fees for occupation" higher than the rents proposed by the municipality at

7

which they protested so vigorously. This experience so impressed the authority that it decided in principle to transfer all its post-war estates similarly to the ownership of tenant co-operatives and to base its housing policy on this principle.

If we are going to agitate over municipal housing, it is this kind of change we should be agitating for. As ANARCHY 4 declared: "One quarter of the population of England and Wales live in the three-and-a-quarter million dwellings owned by local authorities. But is there *one* municipal

housing estate in this country in which the tenants have any control over and any responsibility for the administration of their estate, their physical environment?"

One thing we should agitate against, I am sure, is the notion that if the householder's income rises above a certain level, he should be *obliged* to move out of his municipal dwelling. We have plenty of evidence from the United States of the disastrous social effect of this kind of policy. Its personal effect is also bad, as you can see from the various hardluck stories in the press from places in this country where it is applied. It is an incentive to dishonesty in the tenant, and to the nastiest kind of petty dictatorship by the council.

We must also keep the whole question in perspective. It is an aspect of a world-wide difficulty—what the Coventry City Treasurer recently called “the discrepancy between the rent paying capacity of the less well off section of the population and the cost of providing the housing accommodation currently thought to be desirable.” I, as an anarchist, am a critic of the economic system in which this is true, but am I going to admit meanwhile, that my poorer neighbour's children *deserve* to be worse-housed than mine? I know that buying a house costing more than £2,000 is beyond the means of a third of the population. I know that new housing for rent is only being built for the rich. I know that privately rented housing is the poorest, oldest and most inadequately equipped of all kinds of housing even assuming you can get it. Am I to say that municipal housing, the one large-scale public affirmation that people have a right to a roof over their head and a civilised standard of comfort under it, is unnecessary?

I know also that, on the average, tenants of the less recent municipal housing are paying more than an economic rent. In a paper read to this year's conference of the Society of Housing Managers, Mr. A. L. Strachan supplied figures showing that the economic rent of local authority housing built between 1927 and 1936 was 9s. 6d. Similar houses built in 1949 had an economic rent of 26s. 6d., and in 1962 of 64s. 5d. The current rents of these houses were 21s. 4d., 31s. 2d. and 28s. 6d., respectively. “Thus pre-war houses had had their rents raised to compare with post-war economic rents, and even 1949 rents showed a surplus for the local authority after all charges had been met.” Most local authorities have a stock of pre-war and early post-war houses financed at low rates of interest, the present day rent of which is more than is necessary to meet the costs on these houses. Thus as their rents rise they yield an increasing “profit” to the local authority, which can be used to meet deficits on newer houses. This of course is not a permanent solution to the local authorities' house finance problems, but it

8

does draw attention to the effect of interest rates on the cost of housebuilding. The rate at which loans are made by the Public Works Loans Board is fixed by the Bank Rate, which was kept at (by present standards) a low level, until with the coming of the Conservative government to power in 1951, the manipulation of Bank Rate became an instrument of economic policy.

Twice this year we have been given figures to show that by far the heaviest costs in building, are not in construction but in servicing the loans. Norman Wates illustrated this at the International Construction Conference, and at the RIBA Conference, Mr. Womersley, the City Architect for Sheffield produced figures to show that the economic rent of a house was made up of 17 per cent for the cost of building, 3 per cent for the cost of land, 15 per cent on rates, 12 per cent on maintenance, and 53 percent on servicing the loans. The way to bring down the cost of housing is not, to reduce standards, which, (in spite of Mr. Neville) are already too low, but to make cheap money available for housing purposes. The government which has lent a private company £17½ million at 4½ per cent fixed interest, to build a new luxury liner, cannot bring itself to lend money for housing below 6 per cent.

The multiple family

housing unit

TEDDY GOLD

FOR ELEVEN YEARS I WORKED AS A YOUTH 513?1x and enjoyed my work tremendously, but later, realised that most of it was in vain, as the family is often unable to carry out its duties satisfactorily and the wider community does not encourage many of the precepts practiced within the youth club, i.e. mutual help, voluntary service, participation in local affairs, etc. I realised that if human beings were to be given a fair chance of a healthy development, vast changes would have to be made in order to improve the social structure and a living pioneering project would have to be set up so that this could be done.

It is most disturbing that there are far too many people in all spheres of life, who have lost their confidence and trust in each other and believe that human beings are basically selfish and have no fundamental regard for each other.

TEDDY GOLD, born 1928, who describes here his proposal for a "Multiple Family Housing Unit" is warden of Harold House, Liverpool (89-93 Chatham Street, Liverpool 7).

9

We have yet to give man a fair chance of proving that he was created with the greatest potentialities of love and freedom of action.

The security and mutual assistance which were given by the large family is being lost and with it, the stability of belonging to a group that accepted social patterns of behaviour and was able to impart these to their children.

It is now generally accepted in developed countries that responsibilities which have traditionally belonged to the family, can now be handed over to other bodies that are maintained by the public collectively. However, Social Welfare Services continually require expansion and are at the best, a "patching" service. It is recognised that a good family atmosphere where there is real affection cannot be replaced by social welfare.

Statistics on anti-social behaviour by all age groups, point clearly to an unstable society based upon a weak family unit. The increasing number of mental health patients, points to the increasing number of people who are unable to find sufficient aid in their private lives to help them to overcome their problems. There are tens of thousands of people who realise that they are not normal in their sexual feelings and suffer continuously because of it. We know that this defect is often due to an unstable and unhappy home life.

In our society, the aged and the young children are the main sufferers. They both need each other. The aged are often left to suffer loneliness. The children lose the benefit of a full family life, and the love and guidance of grandparents. Many of the aged no longer belong, to a family unit and many children are having an un-satisfactory family life, as the small family is unable to give the children a full family life. Later the parents also suffer, especially when one dies.

Members of a small family are unable to carry out their responsibilities to each other, especially in times of distress. Small housing units provide independence and privacy, but do not encourage neighbourliness and largely contribute to causing loneliness and boredom. The improved financial position of the family has increased independence and self reliance, but has not encouraged neighbourliness.

The loneliness of the young mother too, living in a flat on a housing estate or in suburbia has to be experienced to be believed. Often she is completely cut off from her family and the people she has grown up with. Young couples, even with adequate housing often do not have a fair chance of developing a healthy relationship because of the sometimes overbearing burdens and total

responsibility that is placed on their shoulders, without having any family or friends to turn to, when a crisis occurs.

One of our greatest problems today, is loneliness. We must be forever grateful to the television that has proved a means of forgetting loneliness, even if it's only for a few hours a day. For so many who have little chance of making vital human contact, the television has become their best friend and after the bed and gas cooker, is possibly the most important asset in the house. Yes, it is escapism, but is there at present, an alternative?

10

We have yet to plan houses and towns that will encourage neighbourliness and the development of real communities. Our present structure *encourages* many of our social problems to develop.

This is why I am launching a campaign for the "Multiple Family Housing Unit" which aims to provide a method of housing which, while catering for the needs of privacy on the part of the occupants, will, at the same time, create the opportunity for inter-action and mutual care among people of all ages in a family-like manner; to encourage a sense of care and responsibility from childhood onwards, toward personal, private and communally owned property; and to provide an alternative form of social machinery that will encourage more people to participate in improving their own way of life and that of their neighbours.

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Initially we need twenty-five people, each prepared to take out £5 shares to start a Housing Association affiliated to the National Federation of Housing Societies, and qualifying for assistance under the special terms for Housing Associations.

A City Council will be approached and asked for their co-operation and sympathy towards the project. It is to be emphasised that the project does not intend to give any quick answers to present housing problems, but endeavours to find a way within its framework, to provide answers to some of the urgent social problems, e.g. loneliness, care of the aged, mental ill-health, care of the widow and orphan and the general problems that are an outcome of anti-social behaviour and a lack of neighbourliness.

The City Council will be asked to provide a suitable site for the building of this particular kind of housing and asked to allow space for a limited development, so that this pilot project will be given a reasonable chance to prove some aspects of its potentiality.

We aim to create a housing unit of about 15 flats providing accommodation for between 30 and 40 people. These flats will represent the private lives of the individuals or families occupying them. But in addition, there will be communal facilities—lounge, launderette, indoor workroom, recreation room. This is the sort of community where you select your neighbours and they pick you, too.

The housing remains the property of the society. If a member wishes to move, they simply withdraw the money that they have put in. Each member of the Society will purchase an agreed

number of shares. The agreed sum being the member's share liability, representing the deposit required from each person to bridge the gap between the loan and the total cost of buying the housing.

The members will pay an inclusive rent that will cover the cost of rates, repayments on loans, administrative costs, a sum put to reserve against the day when the freehold may be bought and the cost of other items as agreed, such as electricity, gas, etc.

A system of mutual aid would be organised so that if one person or family is in financial trouble because of illness, death or unemployment, the position could be alleviated.

All apartments will contain bedroom, living room, and kitchenette. This will ensure the maximum usage of accommodation in any changing

11

family pattern and allow the users to retain their accommodation in all changing circumstances, e.g. the family decreasing in size due to death or marriage. This will also mean that it will be necessary to have children's apartments arranged at the discretion of the parents and that these apartments be able to be switched for other usage if required. It is believed that this system of children's apartments will alleviate many of the problems that often occur with an only child or first born. The children will also have the opportunity to develop a sense of care, one for the other, from an early age.

It is believed that sound proofing of apartments will be of vital importance in such a housing unit. Equipment will be installed in the housing unit that will enable parents to maintain contact with their children at night, as is necessary.

Accepting that family life is of value to the individual and that a healthy inter-action between third, second and first generation is also of value, it is necessary when arranging housing accommodation, to so arrange it that this inter-action becomes possible.

Because of the standard size of the apartments, it will be possible to provide communal facilities, such as a comfortable lounge to accommodate all the members, plus their friends. A general purpose room will be available for small craft work, repairs, ironing and washing and the storage of spare equipment. A large kitchen will be available for the preparing of any main meals that it is desired to have together. This takes into consideration that the aged and un-married especially, might want to join together for some meals. Each unit will have its own House Committee, comprised of all the adult members. The Committee will provide the means for settling domestic issues and encouraging its members to take part in the affairs of the outside community. They will appoint their own Housekeeper. The active aged will have excellent opportunity to assist in the full life of this small community. Mutual aid will be possible in all fields, e.g. baby sitting, care of children during the hospitalisation of a parent, care of the aged, etc.

If mothers with young children decide to take a part time job or wish to take part in an educational course, it will be possible to make adequate arrangements for the care of their children for a few hours in the hands of people that are well known and loved by their children.

The distress caused to many people by having to move to other accommodation due to a death of a husband or due to problems of ageing, is immeasurable. People not only lose their loved ones, but have to leave neighbours and the neighbourhood that they knew. Roots have to be started again, at a time when they are in a distressed condition. Children not only lose a parent, but also lose their friends at school, in their neighbourhood and perhaps the advice of a friendly teacher or the help that could be gained from a good club.

Such stresses call for strong action, and any project that sets out to alter the conditions which aggravate an already un-settled situation, needs a fair chance to prove its value.

12

In the urban jungle ...

UP THE JUNCTION

by Nell Dunn (MacGibbon and Kee 12s 6d)

In last month's ANARCHY, Catherine Gibson touched upon the significance of patches of "unmake" in the urban environment. On a larger scale, every city has such pockets which have got left behind in successive waves of redevelopment and remain, physically, much as they were when in the nineteenth century the railway builders left them as islands between converging tracks—pockets of allotment gardens, later scrap merchants' yards or old car dumps, with little terraces of run-down cottages, corner shops and improvised factories.

Nell Dunn's book is an evocation of one such area in Battersea, in a collection of prose sketches, half fiction and half social reporting. The same characters recur throughout the

One of Susan Benson's illustrations to Nell Dunn's "Up the Junction". [not reproduced here]

book, told in the first person singular, by, it appears, a rich girl from Chelsea on the other side of the river.

This is a risky genre, the author might very well be accused (she probably has been) of sensationalism by the citizens of respectable Battersea, or of slumming for kicks, or of patronising her social inferiors, and so on. She manages to avoid this, partly through abstaining from the luxury of making moral judgments, partly because she evidently has a very accurate ear for racy spoken dialogue, and partly because, as we learn from the jacket, Nell Dunn really loves Battersea: "We went to live in Battersea mainly because it was the most beautiful place I had ever been to. A grapevine grew wild over the outdoor lavatory and the garden was full of sunflowers six feet high with faces as wide as dinnerplates ..."

She is one of those writers with a feeling for places, which she manages to communicate to us, whether it is standing in the dusk on the concrete balcony of a municipal flat in Fulham, looking out over Stamford Bridge Stadium and over the rows of little houses clustered round the gasworks, or back in Battersea with a boy in a deserted house surrounded by grass and rubble. "This is where we lived till it got demolished—slum clearance. They moved us out to lousy Roehampton." We accompany her narrator to the saloon bar on Saturday night, the Pay-As-You-Wear Shop, among the girls in a grubby sweet-factory, to a clip-joint, an abortionist's in Wimbledon, the washhouse in the public baths, a night ride on motor-bikes that ends in death, a visit to the London Sessions, a prison visit, Bertie's Club where she meets a tally-man who takes her on his rounds swindling the housewives, especially immigrants, and we listen with her to the conversation of the children playing in the mud by the river-side.

She writes so well that her characters, the boastful boys, and tarted-up girls, with their randy talk and their determination to make the most of a

13

. . two new books about London

fleeting youth, seem pathetic and uncertain, rather than sordid or vicious. Her immensely enjoyable book gives us the feeling we associate with 18th century stories of "low life" or with accounts of 20th century Sophiatown, rather than with a neighbouring borough of our own city. If we must draw the moral which the author scrupulously refrains from uttering, it is that people are going to try to enjoy life on their own terms and in their own way, in spite of ignorance, neglect or squalor, and will steadfastly resist being "improved" if social improvements take the joy out of life.

J.E.

THE LATCHKEY CHILDREN

by Eric Allen (O.U.P. 12s 6d)

This book is about a bunch of children who meet in the playground of some high blocks of flats by the riverside in Pimlico. The book calls it St. Justin's Estate, but it sounds like the Westminster Council's Pimlico Estate, where the blocks of flats are also named after famous writers. Not all of them live on the estate. One called Duke Ellington Binns, a West Indian boy, lives over the river in Battersea, and some live in the Peabody Buildings in Chelsea. But they, all meet in the same playground. The book opens with one of them called Billandben (William Benjamin) sitting in an old

half-dead tree near the concrete ship in the playground, “straining his eyes across the empty alkali flats for any sign of hostile Comanches.”

This tree is what the story is really about. They meet there every day, but one day they meet a man with blueprints for building a concrete railway engine in the place where the tree is. They decide to organise a protest:

“We’ll have the meeting this afternoon”, Goggles said, “If we all say we don’t want the engine they can’t make us have it. We’ll all march to the town hall and sit down in the road, like the ban-the-bombers. That’ll show them.”

They put up posters in the flats and go round getting all the kids to say they don’t want the engine. The meeting was held but nobody took any interest after all, and the meeting broke up when the rain came down.

There was a lot of talk about who to protest to, the Houses of Parliament, the London County Council, or Westminster. Two of them went to Hampstead Heath, where, while rescuing a kitten they met Malcolm McCrae, a television interviewer. They tell him about their problem and he agrees to bring the TV cameras to do a five-minute programme on the tree. Two others go walking round inside County Hall trying to find the right department and get sent to Westminster Council. Meanwhile two others go to Battersea Dogs Home to find one of their

Goggles looks across the river to the Middlesex bank. One of Charles Keeping’s drawings from “The Latchkey Children”. [not reproduced here]

14

dogs which has got lost. Goggles goes to the Houses of Parliament to see his MP. He meets a clergyman called Mr. Frisby who is the vicar of St. Justin’s and he takes him to see the local MP. But all the vicar and the MP talk about is how he ought to join their Youth Club.

In the end two workmen from the Council, one of them Duke Ellington Binns’s father, come to saw down the tree. Goggles explains to him about the tree and why they want to keep it. Mr. Binns tells the boss that he isn’t going to chop it down. “I’m sorry man, I’m sorry, but I can’t do that job.” The other man tells him he can collect his cards at the office. This results in a strike of the Council’s Department of Works. The strike goes on for weeks and brings back Malcolm McCrae and the TV cameras. Mr. Binns is reinstated and the famous tree stays.

“You know what?” said Froggy. “You know what is going to happen, don’t you? We won’t be able to get near the tree now. Every kid on the estate’ll come scrambling round it, you see.” “Well ...” Goggles shrugged, “There isn’t anything so special about it really. It’s just an old tree.”

This is a book for boys and girls up to about fifteen. Most children’s books seem to be about people who go off in a chauffeur-driven car to a castle by the seaside and have adventures in smugglers’ caves. This book is different because it is about real London kids.

A.B.

House and home (from page 2)

ing that unity is strength. *The Spectator’s* account of the formation of the St Stephen’s Tenants Association concluded thus:

Of course, it was difficult to persuade tenants, even if their rents were grossly unfair, to take the risk of going to the Tribunal and incurring the wrath of their landlords. However, fourteen were piloted through the terrors of reprisal to success. The reductions ranged from one-third to two-thirds.

It wasn’t an entirely bloodless victory: the tenants were threatened by agents of the landlords before they went to the Tribunal (one tenant was visited by two men and an Alsatian), and they were threatened again after the reductions had been made (one was attacked by four men with empty bottles and came away with a broken wrist and abrasions).

But beyond the individual gains against bad landlords and the occasional dents inflicted on official complacency (“We all know what dreadful things are happening. It is up to the people to go to the police. We as the borough council can do nothing at all”), the mere coming into existence of a group of people, white and coloured indiscriminately, for the express purpose of improving their living conditions, forced landlords to tread more warily, authorities to uncover blind eyes, and the tenants themselves to realise that they were not quite as helpless as they had once supposed.

Later came the eviction of Mrs Cobb, during which the police distinguished themselves, and the formation of further tenants’ associations in other boroughs. Colin MacInnes commented that “Direct action of the kind adopted by the tenants’ associations may not be unconnected with the recent marked upsurge of anarchism among the young in their tactics, that is, if not always in their conscious philosophy.”

Perhaps this is optimistic, but *something* has to happen to break the housing stalemate, something beyond reliance on the promises of the politicians in readiness for the general election this year.

15

Self-help housing in South America

THE ORDINARY WELL-HOUSED CITIZEN IS VERY ILL-INFORMED about other people's housing conditions here: small wonder that he knows or cares very little about housing in Latin America. What he does know he will have gleaned from the media of film and television. For instance, the recent BBC television films on Latin America have shown him the superblocs at Caracas which were one of the less bizarre manifestations of the building activities initiated by the former Venezuelan dictator Perez Jimenez, as well as the utter hopelessness of rural life in Peru which the peasants are leaving in great numbers to squat on the rubbish tips of the capital. Or he may have seen the film *Orfeu Negro*, in which case he will have grasped the fact that the city of Rio de Janeiro is bursting at the seams, and realise why the former Brazilian dictator felt impelled to embark on *his* project for a new inland capital Brasilia, whose visitors, one imagines, escape from the official receptions and broad avenues, to the petrol-can shanty-towns on the outskirts where the building workers live, for a bit of local colour. The thoughtful recipient of these titbits of information may be curious about the less sensational aspects of the housing problem in the South American countries, and in particular about the ways in which people can exercise their own initiative to overcome their own problems.

John Turner, whose name will be familiar to some of our readers, first as one of the "anarchists" among the first postwar generation of architectural students, and later as a furniture maker and contributor to FREEDOM, left Britain seven years ago with Kitty Turner and Pat Crooke, to work for various specialised agencies on community development and housing plans in Peru. He recently prepared a report on *Dwelling Resources in South America* which was published as a remarkable special number of the journal *Architectural Design* for August 1963. (*Architectural Design* Vol XXXIII No 8, four shillings plus postage from 26 Bloomsbury Way, London, WC1).

What happened to the spectacular "superblocks" at Caracas which were built between 1954 and 1958 to house 160,000 people, mostly recent immigrants from rural Venezuela? One of the articles in Turner's report tells us that:

By the time the dictatorship finally collapsed the superblocks were in social chaos which, even now, has only been partially resolved. The incomplete and unoccupied apartments and many community buildings were invaded, controlled by gangs, the utilities and even the lifts broke down, the facilities were totally inadequate, the groups were often isolated, by difficult communications, from the rest of the city, and, on top of these and many other difficulties the political situation made it extremely difficult to do anything at all.

Extensive social rehabilitation and community development projects were subsequently initiated, and "their success shows that the

16

blocks can function well and suggests that the failure of social and financial planning, at least partly due to political interference, was the cause of the initial failure rather than the original concept". An account is also given of "aided self-help" rural housing in Venezuela carried out under the auspices of the anti-malarial division of the Public Health Ministry, and of the work of the Instituto de Credito Territorial in Colombia and its recent evolution from providing credit for middle-class housing to its present policy of giving priority to self-help plans by individual effort (*esfuerzo*

proprio) and mutual aid groups (*ayuda mutua*) which enable it to finance effectively and economically, housing for the “lower income groups” which could not benefit from previous schemes.

The description of a successful co-operative housing venture in Chile notes that “Theoretically, this type of limited co-operative is ideal in low-cost housing and in South America there have been frequent waves of enthusiasm for housing co-operatives ever since the ’forties. Although the first housing co-operatives were started in the first years of the century very little progress has been made anywhere until very recently; the waves always seem to have been followed by troughs of disillusion. Now it looks as though the Chileans may have made real progress.” The example described, after years of frustration, gained technical and financial assistance from newly formed savings and loan associations. Without these essential props, the author comments:

the co-operative would have gone the way of many hundreds throughout the continent; after years of patient effort and considerable sacrifice, the group would have failed and its failure would have destroyed the hope and faith of many families and wasted a large part of their savings. Pioneer Co-operative groups are formed by a minority of the population which has done its best to act constitutionally, to buy land instead of taking the law into its own hands, and thereby avoiding the incomprehensible delays over apparently unnecessary and often illogical requirements. Only too often are these well-intentioned groups, often surprisingly well-organised and self-disciplined, made to look foolish by their lawless neighbours who just go ahead, take their land and build as best they can, often quite well and almost always improving their condition, with very little delay and of course, no red tape at all.

The moral of this is plain to see, and is exemplified by the experience from Lima, the capital of Peru, which is documented and illustrated with very striking photographs of the squatter settlements which are variously known as *barriadas* in Peru, *barrios* in Colombia, *callampas* in Chile, *ranchos* in Venezuela, *villas miserias* in Argentina, and *fevelos* in Brazil. John Turner calls these “the unaided self-help solution: a demonstration of the common people’s initiative and the potential of their resources.” And certainly if we are to discuss housing in Latin America, this is its most important aspect. The three authors indicate this in their conclusions:

In the seven years 1949 to 1956 the Peruvian government built 5,476 houses: less than 1 per cent of the housing deficit during those years, and at a unit cost that made repayment by the average urban family impossible. And this in an exceptionally active period in government building work.

During the same period no less than 50,000 families, the great majority from urban working class groups, took matters into their own hands and solved at least part of their housing and community development problems on their own initiative, and outside the established legal, administrative and financial superstructure.

17

Official policy led, on the one hand, to an authoritarian imposition of public housing and, on the other, to an almost total neglect. Until 1958 no attempt was made in Peru to guide the common people’s own contribution into local development programmes.

Some extraordinary photographs illustrate the Pampa de Comas, a squatter settlement with a population of about 30,000, part of the Caraballo group of *barriadas* which has a total population of about 100,000. “The initial invasion was carried out in 1957 by a group of families evicted from a slum in the centre of Lima in order to make room for an office and apartment block which, as a matter of fact, is still largely unlet.” The entire development was organised and carried out by spontaneously formed associations of lower-income blue- and white-collar workers and their families in much the same way as that described in William Mangin’s fascinating case-history which is reproduced in this issue of ANARCHY.

Margaret Grenfell, an English architect working privately with owner-builders of Lima *barriadas* describes the way in which these can be improved and completed more satisfactorily. Understandably the attitude of the house-owners to the terms on which lending agencies approve their houses for loans for completion is “We have survived for ten years without their help alright, if they will not lend us money to roof our house as it is we will do it ourselves, even if it takes us another ten years.” And an account of the effect of the legislation passed in 1961 for the “Remodelling, Sanitation and Legalisation of the Marginal Developments” notes that “It is still too soon to say how long the average *barriada* dweller takes to build his house. His own estimate is

about ten years for a properly finished one—with no credit or technical assistance. With credit and a minimum of technical assistance he can build a house in six months, and finish the typical half-completed structure in two or three months.”

This comparison illustrates the way in which the labour of the house-builder and his family is a substitute for the capital to which he is usually denied access, and this point is poignantly demonstrated by the detailed examination of a village artisan’s self-built house in Southern Peru, built over the past *thirty-two* years by Senor Pedro Vizcarra, who in the early years would work on the house from 4 a.m. until he left for the factory, and again when he came home until it got dark, carrying stone for the foundations and walls on his back one mile to the site.

The authors, commenting on the neglect of popular resources remark that:

The form of the programme and works which the planner and architect propose must be suitable vehicles for these resources. Refinement of designs and techniques that cannot be effectively used by these resources are a loss of time, money and effort: a loss often made more tragic when the real “executive forces”—those of the people—are sowing the seeds of urban chaos, at immense cost and sacrifice, simply for lack of technical aid. It is terrible, and too common, to hear the complaint: “*Ingeniero, si nos habian dado las ayudas y orientaciones cuando las necesitabamos ...*” “Mr. Engineer (or Architect) if only you had helped us when we most needed your knowledge ...”

And they present the projects illustrated in *Architectural Design* to show *not* what architects and planners are doing in South America, but what they *should* be doing.

18

The Barriada: a case history from Peru

FORTUNATO QUISPE, A QUECHUA-SPEAKING INDIAN from an hacienda in the mountains of Peru, contracted himself out to a coastal sugar plantation for a year’s work in order to earn some cash for a religious festival. After a year on the coast he took a wife and settled down on the plantation leaving his mountain home for good. He and his wife had seven children. When their oldest, Blas, was 18, he found himself with no job, no possibility of schooling, and under pressure from his father to leave and get a job. The small two-room adobe company house was hardly big enough for the parents and the seven children and the sugar company was mechanising the plantation even as its resident population expanded rapidly. Blas, who had spoken mainly Quechua as a child, was at 18, fully at home in Spanish. He had visited Lima, the capital city, twice, was an avid radio and movie fan, and considered the life of the plantation town dull.

Six months after his eighteenth birthday he and his friend, Antonio, took a truck to the Lima valley and took a bus from the edge of the valley to the city. Having been there before, they knew how to get to the house of an uncle of Antonio’s near the wholesale market district. The uncle had heard via the grapevine that they might come. He was renting a three-roomed house on a crowded alley for his own family of seven, and his maid and her child slept in the small kitchen. He was only able to put them up for one night. They moved into a cheap hotel and pension near the market, and through Antonio’s uncle were recruited for a provincial club, Sons of Paucartambo, the native mountain district of Antonio’s and Blas’ father. Much of their social activity is still with members of the club, and their first orientation to life in Lima was from club members.

Antonio went to work for his uncle, and Blas, who had been robbed of all his clothing from the hotel, took a job as a waiter and clean-up man in a modest boarding house catering to medical and engineering students. He worked six-and-a-half days a week in the pension, taking Thursday nights and Sunday afternoons off. During his first year he saved a little money. He impregnated a maid from a neighbouring house, Carmen, and agreed to marry her sometime. Meanwhile, they rented a two-room, one-storey adobe house in a large lot not far from the boarding house. The lot was packed solidly with

WILLIAM MANGIN's fascinating case-history of the human problems encountered in migration to the city and locating and housing a family in a "barriada" or squatters' settlement, is reproduced by kind permission of Architectural Design.

19

similar houses and the walks between them were about five feet wide. They had filthy, constantly clogged common baths and water taps for every ten houses and the rent was high. They paid extra for electricity and for practically non-existent city services.

Through a relative of one of the students Blas got a better job as a waiter in a rather expensive restaurant. In spite of the distance and the extra money spent for transportation it paid to take the job. With the arrival of a second child plus a boost in their rent, they found themselves short of money even though Blas' job was quite a good one for a person of his background.

Carmen, Blas' common law wife, had come to Lima at the age of fourteen from the southern highland province of Ayacucho. She had been sent by her mother and step-father to work as a servant in the house of a Lima dentist, who was also a land-owner in Ayacucho, and Carmen was to receive no pay. The dentist promised to "educate" her but, in fact, she was not only not allowed to go to school but was rarely allowed outside the house. During her third year with the dentist's family her mother, who had left her step-father in Ayacucho, rescued her from the dentist's house after a terrible row. Her mother then found a maid's job for Carmen where she was paid. Carmen worked in several private houses in the next few years and loaned a large part of her earnings to her mother. Blas was her first serious suitor. Previously she had had little experience with men and when Blas asked her to come and live with him after she became pregnant, she was surprised and pleased.

In her own crowded house with Blas and their son she was happier than she had been since her early childhood with her grandmother. Although her work was hard, it was nothing like the work she had done in the houses in Lima. They were poor but Blas had steady work and they ate better than she had in any of her previous homes. Her infrequent arguments with Blas were usually over money. He had once hit her when she had loaned some of the rent money to her mother, but, on the whole, she considered herself well-treated and relatively lucky in comparison with many of her neighbours.

She did not have too much to do with her neighbours, mostly longer time residents of Lima than she, and she was afraid of the Negroes in the area, having been frightened as a child in the mountains by stories of Negro monsters who ate children. She found herself being drawn into arguments over petty complaints about children trespassing, dogs barking and messing the sidewalk, husband's relative success or failure, mountain Indian traits as opposed to coastal Mestizo traits, etc. She was mainly occupied with her son and her new baby daughter, and the constant arguing annoyed Blas more than it did Carmen. Blas had also been disturbed by the crowded conditions. There was no place for the children to play and the petty bickering over jurisdiction of the small sidewalk was a constant irritant. Thievery was rampant and he had even lost some of his clothes since they had to hang the washing outside above the alley. In Lima's damp climate, it often takes several days to dry clothes even partially.

20

He had been thinking of moving and, although Carmen was settled into a more or less satisfactory routine, she was interested as well. They carried on for another year and another child without taking any action. When their landlord told them that he was planning to clear the lot and build a cinema within six months, they decided to move. A colleague of Blas' in the restaurant had spoken to him about a group to which he belonged. The members were organising an invasion of

state land to build houses and they wanted fifty families. The group had been meeting irregularly for about a year and when Blas was invited they had forty of the fifty they sought.

The waiter's group came mainly from the same central highland region and their spokesman and leader was a bank employee who was also a functionary of the bank employees' union. The other major faction was a group of career army enlisted men, including several members of a band that plays at state functions, who were stationed near the proposed invasion site. About half the group had been recruited as Blas was. Blas himself recruited a neighbour and another family from the Sons of Paucartambo, to which he still belonged.

They met a few times with never more than fifteen men present. They were encouraged by the fact that the government seemed to be tolerating squatter invasions. Several earlier invasion attempts had been blocked by the police and in many *barriadas* people had been beaten, some shot, and a few killed. The recent attitude, in 1954, seemed tolerant, but under a dictatorship, or under any government, the law is apt to be administered whimsically and their planned invasion was illegal. Another factor pointing to haste was the loss of seven of their families who had found housing some other way. Blas was one of those suggesting that they move fast because his eviction day was not far off.

Many *barriada* invasions had been arranged for the eve of a religious or national holiday. Their invasion site was near the area used once a year, in June, for a grand popular folk-music festival, so they decided to wait until that was over. The next holiday was the Independence Day vacation, July 28th, 29th, 30th; so they picked the night of the 27th. It would give them a holiday to provide a patriotic aura as well as three days off from work to consolidate their position. They thought of naming their settlement after the dictator's popular wife, but, after taking into account the vicissitudes of current politics, they decided to write to her about their pitiful plight, but to name the place after a former general-dictator, long dead, who freed the slaves.

A letter was drawn up for mailing to the dictator's wife and for presentation to the press. The letter stressed equally their respect for the government and their abandonment by the government. They had no hesitation about wringing the most out of the clichés concerning their status as humble, abandoned, lost, helpless and disillusioned but always patriotic servants of the fatherland.

During the last month word was passed from the active meeting goers, still never more than 20 or 25, to the others and preparations were made. Each family bought its own straw mats and poles for the house, and small groups made arrangements for trucks and taxis. Each

21

household was asked to get a Peruvian flag or make one of paper. No two remember the details of the invasion the same way, but about thirty of the expected forty-five families did invade during the night. A newspaper photographer was notified by the invaders and he arrived about the time the houses were being finished. The members had discussed previously what lots they would take, and how the streets were to be laid out and there was very little squabbling during the first day. By early morning when the police arrived there were at least thirty one-room straw houses flying Peruvian flags and the principal streets were outlined with stones.

The police told them they would have to leave. A picture and story appeared in two papers and by the 30th of July about twenty or thirty more families had come, including some of the old members. A few men, with the help of friends and relatives and, in at least one case, paid workers, had built brick walls around their lots. These families and a few other early arrivals, most of whom are still in the *barriada* in 1963, proudly refer to themselves as the original invaders and tend to exaggerate the opposition they faced. They were told to leave several times but no-one forced them. A resident, not one of the original invaders, was killed by the police in 1960 during an attempt to build a school on government land. The unfavourable publicity caused the government to desist and the residents cut a lot out of the hillside and built a school.

Blas and Carmen picked a lot about fifteen by thirty metres on the gradual slope of the hill on the principal street. The lot was somewhat larger than most subsequent lots, an advantage of being an original invader.

Blas and some friends quickly expanded the simple invasion one-room house to a three-room straw mat house and they outlined the lot with stones. He worked hard on Sundays and some nights, sometimes alone, sometimes with friends from the *barriada* or from outside. He soon managed to get a brick wall six-and-a-half feet high round his property. Many of the residents of *barriadas* hurry to erect the walls around their lots and then take anywhere from one year to five or ten to finish the house. After about a year of working on the lot and making his "plan", Blas decided to contract a "specialist" to help him put up walls for four rooms. He paid for the materials brought by the "specialist" and helped out on the job. When the walls were done he roofed the rooms with cane, bricked up the windows and put in cement floors. With his first pay cheque, after finishing paying for the walls, Blas made a down payment on a large, elaborate cedar door costing about \$45. With the installation of the door and wooden windows they finally felt like home-owners. They even talked of getting formally married.

About two years later, after a particularly damp winter during which his children were frequently sick, he decided to hire another "specialist" to help him put on a concrete roof. He hired a neighbour who had put on other roofs and he found out that the first "specialist" had sold him faulty cement and had also erected the walls in such a way

22

that it would be difficult to put on a roof. It took considerable money, time and energy to rectify the mistakes and put on the roof, but when it was done it was a good job and strong enough to support a second floor some day. Meanwhile a straw mat room has been erected on the room and Blas helps out with the houses of friends and neighbours against the day he will ask them to help with the second floor.

Skilled bricklayers and concreters abound in *barriadas* and the bulk of the construction in these places is cheaper than on contracted houses. Much of it is done through informal mutual aid arrangements and when contractors are hired they are generally very closely supervised. There is considerable cheating by contractors on materials and many of the specialists hired for roofing and electrical and plumbing installations are not competent. Transport of materials is often expensive but the personal concern of the builder often results in lower prices at purchase. Some *barriadas* have electricity from the central power plant and public water; the one in this story does not. The front room shop combination they have in their house is not only fairly common in *barriadas* but throughout the provincial area of Peru.

Their principal room fronts on the street and doubles as a shop which Carmen and the oldest children tend. Blas is still a waiter and they now have five children. The saving on rent and the income from the shop make them considerably more prosperous than before, but, in spite of their spectacular view of the bright lights of the centre of Lima some twenty minutes away, Carmen has never seen the Plaza San Martin and has passed through the central business district on the bus only a few times. She has never been inside the restaurant where Blas works. She gets along with most of her neighbours and has the company and assistance of a fifteen-year-old half-sister deposited with her by her mother.

Blas and Carmen have a television set which runs on electricity brought from a private motor owner and they are helping to pay for it by charging their neighbours a small amount to watch. It also brings some business to the store. Carmen and Blas bemoan the lack of sewage disposal, running water and regular electricity in the *barriada* and they complain about the dust from the unpaved streets.

They are also critical of the ramshackle auxiliary bus which serves them but on the whole, they are not dissatisfied with their situation. They own a house which is adequate, Blas has steady work, their oldest children are in school, and Blas has been on the elected committee that runs

barriada affairs and feels that he has some say in local government. Since local elections are unknown in Peru the *barriadas*' unofficial elections are unique. The committee passes judgement on requests from new applicants to settle in the *barriada* and cut new lots out of the hillside. They also decide on requests to sell or rent. Renting is against the rules of the association. Another important function is presenting petitions and requests to various government ministries for assistance. Until 1960 *barriada* residents had no legal basis for their ownership of lots. Any recognition by the government in the form of assistance or even taxation was an assuring sign. In 1960 the congress passed a law

23

saying, in effect, that what could not be changed might as well be made legal, and residents of *barriadas* are to be given their lots. As of 1963 a few land titles have been given out by the government, but the people have been buying and selling for years with home-made titles.

The committees are also concerned with internal order. *Barriadas* are ordinarily quiet places composed mainly of hard-working family groups, but the public image is one of violence, immorality, sloth, crime and revolutionary left-wing politics. *Barriada* residents are quite sensitive about this and the committees try to screen out potential trouble makers and control those present. They also try to get as much publicity as possible for the productive work done by *barriada* people.

The experience of this couple is probably happier than that of the average family but is certainly well within the "typical" range. They feel, in comparison to people like themselves and in terms of their own aspirations, that they have done well. When asked what they would do if they acquired a large sum of money, they both answer in terms of improving their present property and educating their children. There is some resentment of the children, and Blas beats the oldest boy for not doing well in school, all five children are bedwetters, but they give the impression of a happy family, and, although Carmen cried during several interviews, they smile frequently and seem to be getting along. Carmen speaks some Quechua with her neighbours and her half-sister, and has actually improved her Quechua since coming to the *barriada*. Spanish is the principal language, however, and neither she nor Blas have any strong interest in their children learning Quechua.

The children themselves learn some Quechua but they speak Spanish with their peers, and in a group of children it is difficult to distinguish those of recently arrived near-Indian migrants from those of the most *Criollo* coastal families. There is a certain amount of antagonism among the adult *barriada* dwellers over race, cultural difference, politics and place of origin. The children however, are strikingly similar in attitude and have very little of the mountain Indian about them.

The situation of Blas and Carmen is similar to that of many others. They have some friends, some relatives and some income, but they could be ruined by a loss of job or any chronic illness of Blas, and they are aware of it. If there is a potentially disruptive factor in their lives it is that the high aspirations they have for their children are vastly unrealistic. They are sacrificing and plan to sacrifice more for the education of the children, but they over-rate the probable results. They say they want the children to be professionals, doctors, teachers, people with comfortable lives, and in this they are similar to most interviewed *barriada* families. But it is highly unlikely that they will be, unless there are monumental and rapid changes in Peru.

When the children come to this realisation they may fulfil the presently paranoid prophesy of many middle and upper class Peruvians who see the *barriada* population as rebellious and revolutionary.

24

A revolutionary

fable

GENE SHARP

AMONG THE FACTORS which produce revolutionary—i.e. fundamental—social change are ideas. Social conditions may differ. The amount of suffering and oppression men will tolerate before revolting varies. Outstanding leaders may or may not be present. But ideas are present in all revolutionary situations.

People may cower before the most blatant tyranny, may die of hunger because of their exploitation—and still not revolt. But once they grasp the idea that something can be done to improve their lot, the situation becomes potentially revolutionary. The greater the gulf between actual conditions and men's idea of how life can be, the more likely is a social upheaval.

Much of the earlier work of discrediting the existing social order, of popularising the idea of change, and of creating a favourable response to a new ideology can only be done by “men of words”—writers and talkers. They may be novelists, priests, prophets, teachers, students or artists. When such people are unable or unwilling to fit into the existing social structure, they are likely to herald a new day. Regarded often as not dangerous because they only talk, they may be tolerated by the powers-that-be. But they are dangerous to the status quo, and contribute to the emergence of an articulate minority where none existed before. That is a potentially revolutionary step.

The “men of words” discredit the popular creeds and institutions. They lead men to give them allegiance no longer. They bring to people's consciousness their need of a faith by which to live, and they prepare a way for preaching of a new faith or ideology so that when it appears, it meets a more ready response. The “men of words” also furnish the doctrine and the slogans of the new ideology. They undermine the beliefs of people so that when the new ideology and movement appear, many of them are either unable or unwilling to resist it, and some may even lend support.

In a world in which increasing numbers of people are literate and have leisure for reading, study and thought, and at the same time are more in need of convictions, ideas have become increasingly important. Organised efforts by powerful groups and small bands of dissenters to

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25

spread various ideas therefore play a progressively larger role in such a society.

One way in which ideas about the society are spread and propounded is through the novel. The novelist may intentionally propound them, accept the ideas personally but he may also simply present them in a primarily artistic work as relevant to human problems portrayed in his novel. A writer may also use the medium of a novel as a means by which he personally seeks solutions to fundamental human problems and attempts to clarify his own thinking and find a way to social and personal “salvation”. If his novel contains important social thought, he may thus intentionally or unintentionally become a “man of words”—a precursor of fundamental social change.

FAULKNER'S FABLE

An example of such a novel containing important social thought is *A Fable** by William Faulkner. This work of one of America's major novelists received the 1954 Pulitzer Prize for Literature and the 1955 National Book Award. It aroused considerable interest in the United States,

apparently more than here in England. At his death, relatively few references were made to this great novel—very significantly.

A Fable is a story of human fears and hopes, of violence, self-denial, cowardice and courage, of tragedy and triumph. It is the story of men facing a world they did not create, men who dare to fight back. It is the story of man's anguish, his universal wrestling and searching. It is the story of what a modern prototype of the historical Jesus might do, and how he might be treated.

On a Monday in May 1918—according to the novel—six months before the end of World War I, the generals on both sides unexpectedly saw “the vast cumbrous machinery of war grinding to its clumsy halt” quite independent of them. At dawn when a French regiment was ordered to attack, every man declined to follow that order and remained in the trench. The Germans, having seen the mutiny, made no expected counter-attack. By noon the entire French front and the German facing it were silent. Three hours later, the American and English fronts and the facing German ones had stopped fighting also; the generals gave no more opportunities for mutiny. That night found the front “as dead as Pompeii or Carthage” illumined by rockets and the silence punctuated by the thud of back-area guns.

The rebel French regiment, including the corporal and his squad, whose efforts for over two years had resulted in the entire war in Western Europe taking a recess and thereby stopping the German advance (which the Allied generals had been unable to do since the March break-through), was arrested and placed in a stockade. There they remained while the Allied generals conferred with the German generals about how to get the war started again. On Thursday morning an unarmed British battalion arose from its trenches, and proceeded across no-man's land to meet similar unarmed German soldiers. Then

* New York: Random House, 1954; London: Chatto and Windus, 1955.

26

both were destroyed as British and German artillery jointly fired on them. On Friday morning the corporal was tied to a post, between two men charged with robbery and murder, and shot dead.

In the process of writing a major novel dealing with one of the primary questions of our age—that of war and peace—Faulkner treated several important areas of social philosophy and theory. This fact and the ideas themselves, were to a very large degree, ignored by American critics, when the book appeared. Although the title would indicate that Faulkner intends the novel to convey a lesson, few critics asked themselves what the lesson might be. One reviewer complained that Faulkner left his readers and critics confused. Another expressed surprise that Faulkner asked “the question of pacifism” which he thought had been discarded long ago. The reviewer in *Time* commented glibly, “above all, Faulkner has failed to differentiate between a pointless war and a needful one”.

Preferring not to face the ideas in *A Fable*, such reviewers turned their attention to theological parallels between the corporal and Jesus. Only a rare critic grasped the social significance of *A Fable*. Irving Howe, in *The Reporter*, declared that this novel has “startling political significance”. He referred to the radical view of World War I which Faulkner presents: that troops of all the armies should have fraternised and ended the war themselves, in defiance of the generals and governments, and this revolutionary act would be precisely what a modern-day Jesus would not only sanction, but lead. This is an idea which few people find comforting.

With insight, Trent Hutter commented in the *Fourth International*, a U.S. Trotskyist quarterly: “The bewilderment of the critics is due to the book's revolutionary impact ... But radicals will be able to understand much better than the bourgeois critics did.” “The central problem in *A Fable*,” he declared, “is the destiny of man, the conflict between inertia and revolutionary will.” He called it “one of these great novels that speak of man's paramount problems.”

Through the words of his characters and plot, Faulkner treats several significant areas of social philosophy and theory: the source of power in society, means and ends, the nature of modern

war, the dehumanisation of modern man, social class, the role of the individual and small group in producing social change.

THE SOURCE OF POWER

When ordinary men decide that they by their own efforts are going to stop a war, the question arises as to the source of power in society. The theory presented in *A Fable* is that all rulers require the consent of the governed, and are thus not ultimately maintained by oppression but by the commonly held belief that those in power have a right to their positions and by a willingness to obey them. Once such veneration, and consequently co-operation, is withdrawn, the regime collapses. This theory does not suppose that the existing rulers will quietly consent to such a basic challenge to their power, but rather it recognises that rulers

27

may then use any available means of coercion to maintain that status. The outcome of the struggle then depends upon the ability of those formerly subordinate to maintain and extend their non-co-operation when faced with penalties and sacrifice. This view of the source of power is presented in *A Fable*.

The old porter explaining to the runner how the men could stop the war, says:

“... all we ever needed to do was just to say, enough of this—us, not even the sergeants and corporal, but just us, all of us, Germans and Frenchmen and all the other foreigners in the mud here, saying together: Enough. Let them that’s already dead and maimed and missing be enough of this—a thing so easy and simple that even human man, as full of evil and sin and folly as he is, can understand and believe it this time.”

An English air force mechanic thinks through the question of how an occupying power could long rule a people determined to be free: “And then he knew that it didn’t really matter who won or lost wars, not to England: Ludendorff could come on over ... and take London too and it wouldn’t matter ... because he would still have to envelop and reduce every tree in every wood and every stone in every wall in all England, not to mention three men in every pub that he would have to tear down brick by brick to get them. And it would not matter when he did, because there would be another pub at the next cross-roads with three more men in it and there were simply not that many Germans nor anybody else in Europe or anywhere else ...”

The runner, pondering on the persistent efforts of the thirteen men preparing the mutiny under the very noses of those whose authority they were undermining, concludes that this “did not need to be hidden from authority,” for such determined mass action would eventually make that very authority impotent:

“... even ruthless and all-powerful and unchallengeable Authority would be impotent before that mass unresisting undemanding passivity. He thought: They could execute only so many of us before they will have worn out the last rifle and pistol and expended the last live shell ...”

The theoretical position on the source of power in society which is presented in *A Fable* is the same as is basic to the thinking of Thoreau, Tolstoy, de la Boétie and Gandhi. It is the concept tyrants fear. It was not so much the fact that the fighting had, at least temporarily, stopped that bothered the generals, as the way in which it had stopped. When the men in the trenches began to think that they themselves could stop the war and then acted upon the idea, the generals know that their position, their authority, and even war itself was threatened.

The question of means and ends is implicit in the novel though there is little discussion of it on the theoretical level. Continual warfare had brought no peace, stopping the fighting had. The runner concludes:

“So the purpose of a war is to end the war. We’ve known that for six thousand years. The trouble was, it took us six thousand years to

learn how to do it. For six thousand years we laboured under the delusion that the only way to stop a war was to get together more regiments and battalions than the enemy could, or vice versa, and hurl them upon each other until one lot was destroyed and, the one having nothing left to fight with, the other could stop fighting. We were wrong because yesterday morning, by simply declining to make an attack, one single French regiment stopped us all.” The means used, this would seem to say, must be compatible with the ends desired.

THE NATURE OF WAR

A Fable has much to say about the nature of modern war, its effects and causes. The old general refers to it as “the most expensive and fatal vice which man has invented yet ...” The division commander affirms that “... it’s not we who conquer each other, because we are not even fighting each other. It’s simple nameless war which decimates our ranks.”

The role of the military as an entity above and beyond the rest of the nation is voiced by the French corps commander: “The boche doesn’t want to destroy us any more than we would want, could afford to destroy him. Can’t you understand: either of us, without the other couldn’t exist?” and by the German General who declares he is first a soldier, then a German and thirdly hopes to be a victorious German but that the uniform “is more important than any German or even any victory.” War and the authoritarian social organisation which conducts it are viewed as a social institution with interest and purposes to be maintained and obtained even at the expense of the interests of the people and nations for whose defence and welfare it purports to exist.

It is the nature of modern war that the generals either had to join the rebellion or use every means at their disposal to crush it: the mutinying regiment had to be shot. (Yet it was clear to them that such an execution would not remove the basic problem raised by their action, for “... there is already more to this than the execution of twice three thousand men could remedy or even change.”) The Allied commanders conferred with the German commander; all faced the same problem: the troops were acting *en masse* against their officers and governments. The generals consulted on how to resume the war so abruptly ended.

By Thursday the Allied general staff had sealed up the rear of the whole Allied front with troops from the colonies. The blank shells in their guns were being replaced with live ones. The men in an English battalion found foreign troops and no-man’s land now also behind them. With little time remaining in which to convert the halt in the fighting into the end of the war, and at the risk of being shot by either the Germans or the English, those men arose from the trench, stood erect and open-handed walked toward the German lines as similar unarmed German troops came forward. As the two groups ran to meet each other the German and English officers jointly frantically loosed an artillery barrage upon the men. This supreme threat to officers’ authority and war had to be destroyed.

It is also in the nature of war that without a complete reversal of his position, the old general had no alternative than to have the corporal—his own illegitimate son—executed, even as the death sentence on the regiment was commuted.

War is not here viewed outside the context of the civilisation from which it springs. (There are statements about economic causes and about “nationalism” as prime causes of war.) The process by which Europe and finally half the Western hemisphere went to war is pictured as though having taken place in a largely civilian council composed of the government officials, economic leaders, politicians, clergy and all the other leaders of:

“... the vast solvent organisations and fraternities and movements which control by coercion or cajolery man’s morals and actions and all his mass-value for affirmation or negation—and that vast powerful terror inspiring representation which, running all democracy’s affairs in peace, comes indeed into its own in war, finding its true apotheosis then ...”

Those who have made war their occupation are presented as also being its victims. It seemed to a sergeant that, when he had twenty years earlier joined the army, “he had sold his birthright in the race of man.” The division commander is seen as one “who to gain the high privilege of being a brave and faithful Frenchman and soldier, had had to forfeit and abdicate his right in the estate of man ...” The strongest statement on the subject comes from the Quartermaster-general who, shaken by the consultation with the German general and the slaughtering of the unarmed British and German troops, says to the old general:

“We did it ... We. Not British and American and French we against German them nor German they against American and British and French us, but we against all because we no longer belong to us ... We, you and our whole unregenerate and regenerable kind ... our whole small repudiated and homeless species about the earth who not only no longer belong to man, but even to earth itself, since we have had to make this last base desperate case in order to hold our last desperate and precarious place on it.”

Nor does Faulkner lose sight of the effects of war on plain human beings: a farmer, crouched in a crater during a barrage, thinking of his war-ruined fields, crying, “The land, The land.” A young man whose only trade is to fly armed aircraft in order to shoot down other armed aircraft. The sister of the doomed corporal, crying to the old general, “War, war, war. Don’t you ever get tired of it?” Men so used to the explosions of war they can’t stand the silence of peace. An old woman, kneeling beside an unidentified rotting corpse, resting one hand on what had been the face, the other caressing the remaining hair, saying, “Yes, Yes. This is Theodule. This is my son.”

DEHUMANIZATION

Faulkner speaks also of other aspects of the dehumanisation of man. The runner’s thoughts turn to liberty: “... that liberty which he no longer had any use for because there was no more place for it on the

30

earth ...” and thinks of “his pilgrimage back to when and where the lost free spirit of man once existed ...”

Martha speaks to the old general of human feelings:

“... people are really kind, they really are capable of pity and compassion for the weak and orphaned and helpless because it is pity and compassion and they are weak and helpless and orphaned and people though of course you cannot, dare not believe that, who dare believe only that people are to be bought and used empty and then thrown away.”

Modern man’s obsession with the mechanical is not ignored. The old general speaks of man’s “enslavement to the demonic progeny of his own mechanical curiosity ...”

“He has already begun to put wheels under his patio, his terrace and his front veranda; even at my age I may see the day when what was once his house has become a storage-place for his bed and stove and razor and spare clothing; you ... could ... see the day when he will have invented his own private climate and moved it stove bathroom bed clothing kitchen and all into his automobile and what he once called home will have vanished from human lexicon: so that he won’t dismount from his automobile at all because he won’t need to: to the entire earth one unbroken machined de-mountained dis-rivered expanse of concrete paving ... and man in his terrapin myriads enclosed clotheless from birth in his individual wheeled and glove-like envelope ... to die at last at the click of an automatic circuit-breaker on a speedometer dial ...”

Although there is an absence of ideological statements on the subject of social class in *A Fable*, there are references to the fact that the corporal and his squad spent their efforts exclusively among the privates in the several armies. The privates in the other regiments and adjoining divisions knew in advance of the mutiny while there had been “no prewarning, no intimation even to the minor lance-corporal among the officers designated to lead it ...” When the officers sent a sergeant to sit in on one of the many groups that came to see the corporal, everyone fell silent until the sergeant left. The role played by this distinction between military caste groups must be noted, though it is not possible to generalise from it concerning Faulkner’s conception of social class.

THE CRUST OF COMPLACENCY

Most men do not want to be disturbed, aroused from their self-satisfaction by a man, ideas and deeds which they cannot ignore. Many will consciously reject the challenge of that man, that way, some sincerely, some fearing what they may lose if they do not. Many by the side lines will favour the new way for a time doing little to fulfil it, and finally abandon it. Smaller numbers will see in a crisis the choice they must make and rise in the moment to heroism, but seeing then the continuing cost of that choice slide back, and accept the easier way. And even among those still fewer who have been the closest to that man, that way, there will be hesitancy, inaction and even betrayal.

But the man who breaks through the crust of complacency, though tempted and tried inwardly and outwardly, and faced with costs he may

31

not have calculated, if indeed he did calculate, will still remain. He may stand alone. But stand he must.

So it is in *A Fable*. The crowd turned upon the corporal as the cause of its anguish, then following his execution, left the city “in something not quite of relief but shame,” even though the regiment would now be spared as the war was about to begin again. Within two days the once insurgent regiment had turned with howls and roars against the corporal. Of the twelve, one betrayed the corporal, and one denied him (but later returned), and of the eleven at the execution scene, though they knelt before the posts, none did anything to shield their corporal from the bullets, or even resist their being led away from the place where they knelt. He is left alone abandoned by those who had followed him—alone except for the two other doomed men whom he comforts.

The priest, inwardly tortured by the happenings of that week, never saw this scene, for he, unable to resolve or bear the conflict between God and Caesar, had borrowed a bayonet and fled the life he was supposed to have helped men to face.

THE RESTORATION OF HOPE

The old general, “who no longer believed in anything but his disillusion and his intelligence and his limitless power,” had faced his son and tried to dissuade him from his chosen path. He realised that there was no solution for the conflict between them through compromise: “... we are two articulations ... which through no fault of ours ... must contend and—one of them—perish.” Yet both knew that as long as the corporal refused to compromise or betray, his articulation would gain, for were his squad released, “in ten minutes there would not be ten but a hundred. In ten hours there would not be ten hundred but ten thousand. And in ten days—” Yet by the old general’s executing the corporal, the ideal for which he died would be burned into men’s hearts with a flame that only blood can kindle. “By destroying this life tomorrow morning,” said the old general, “I will establish for ever that he didn’t even live in vain, let alone die so ...”

The runner who had yearned to believe in something but lost all hope (“we can’t be saved now; even he doesn’t want us anymore now.”) came to gain his faith and act upon it realising: “... it’s not that we didn’t believe: It’s that we couldn’t, didn’t know how any more. That’s the most terrible thing they have done to us.” He then felt armed with something greater than bullets, “capable of containing all of time, all of man.” He prodded the English sentry to join the revolt; he responded by kicking out some of the runner’s teeth; but later the same sentry went on to lead the unarmed English troops to meet the unarmed German troops. As the rockets showered upon them, half his body was enveloped in flames.

After the war, at the old general’s funeral, in the midst of oratory repeating the clichés of war and chauvinism, the sentry, now a “mobile, upright scar on crutches” lurched forward out of the crowd onto the caisson carrying the body. He cried: “Listen to me too, Marshal!

32

This is yours: take it” and held in his hand the French *Medaille Militaire* (which he had obtained from the executed corporal’s sisters), and laughing indomitable, the crowd aghast, his voice rang out: “You too helped carry the torch of man into that twilight where he shall be no more; these are his epitaphs: They shall not pass. My country right or wrong. Here is a spot which is forever England—and then the crowd had him.”

The social change initiated by a single man or small group of men is often carried forward by men and in ways that those paying the original price would never know, and could not have calculated, who acted on the faith that right action leads to right ends. Once the dream sprouts into determination and courage, it is difficult to kill it. Simple in its logic, clear in purpose, relevant to men, it takes root.

Courage and fear play back and forth across the pages of this book, the inner processes and the personal and social consequences of each. The men afraid: the men who wanted courage, yet feared to pay for that courage a price they deemed too great. The men unafraid: the sentry marred forever and still defiant, saying the truth where it needed to be said, risking life again. He must have recalled the words of the corporal: “Don’t be afraid. There’s nothing to be afraid of. Nothing worth it.”

The ideas in this novel—that men acting together are the final source of power, that means must be judged by the same standard as the goals, that war does not serve the welfare even of the people on behalf of whom it is waged, that liberty and kindness and humanness are important, that individuals and small groups can influence their fellow men—seem strange, to most people. They produce a strange philosophy in a world of spreading conformity and totalitarianism, a world ruled increasingly by military thinking and whose supreme creation and god is the hydrogen bomb. Perhaps these thoughts are relevant precisely because in our present condition they seem so strange. Perhaps the strangest thought of all is that man should believe and have hope and be unafraid. We are losing these qualities. Our future may depend on our ability to regain them.

It is fortunate that the social thought in *A Fable* has been propounded by so brilliant a novelist as Faulkner. Intentionally or unintentionally, he made a striking contribution to the spreading of ideas which may serve as part of the basis for the solution of the problems of modern man. He thus became a “man of words” to help carry man forward to the day when all tyranny, exploitation and war shall be no longer.

[inside back cover]

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