



THE FIELD OF FORCE

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THE prevailing conception of power in modern times is usually political. In the modern state, bodies of subordinate workers are well protected by their trades union and by the general law of the land. Workers fear unemployment, they fear inflation, they fear war, but as a rule they do not, at least in Britain and America, fear the employer as a personal agent. Sometimes the boot may even be on the other foot, in that workers, by their organised activities such as striking, can do more harm to the employer than they could in most cases suffer from him. It would in fact be difficult to apportion the amount of power individually between say a shopsteward, the Chairman of L.C.I., the President of the Transport Union and the Director General of Ford Motors. Nor would it be very fruitful.

Politically, however, although this is concealed by democratic forms in most countries, the power which has been lost by the individual and transferred to the statesman is alarming.

Throughout history human society has thrown up governments, powerful governments and powerful parties, so that since very primitive times human society has never been without them. And it is true to say that, apart from isolated communities, such as the Red Indians and the Esquimaux, force has always been the main promoter of human activity.

But I want to refer to another kind of force - the "field of force" as, I believe, it is understood in mathematics and engineering, in which enormous stresses are exactly balanced without any single area monopolising the resources of power. An ideal society would be analogous to this, one in which the totality of power inherent in it, is diffused throughout the whole in such a way that, although weak

and strong elements exist side by side, yet over the total field they cancel each other out exactly. An analogy perhaps more familiar would be that of a cathedral dome in which the circular ribs of the vault, curving to meet at the highest point, exactly balance each other and no strain is felt at the top. The point of the dome, while apparently the focus of innumerable tensions, is a point of no tension at all.

Although some people are weak and others strong, it is not inconceivable that they might be placed in such a relationship to each other as would balance out exactly. We realise that in the present monopoly state of the world this possibility can be presented only on a theoretical basis, but there is evidence that can be drawn from the past and from some scattered examples in our time that the theory is a relevant one.

To start with a fundamental economic issue we might take the argument for free trade. Presented in its purest simplicity the argument is convincing and has, in fact, never been refuted. In the course of world trade, goods pass from Hong Kong to Britain and *vice versa*, and what is called free exchange takes place. Thus the standard of a normal free exchange should be simply the bargaining between men of greater and less skill and greater and less natural advantages on a background of freedom and nothing else. The man of greater skill gets more out

of it, as he should, but the weaker man gets his fair share, according to his merits. No monopoly element should enter in and no restraints of any kind should be imposed by governments.

We may then suppose that each party in the affair has agreed that the value of the goods (or money) he receives is greater to him than that he is parting with. Now here we are presented with the miracle of free trade. Both sides have gained, otherwise there would have been no point in trading, and the operation of free trade has simply increased the wealth of each party. The exercise has been profitable.

There, if only in a limited form, is the field of force to which I refer. This kind of profit is what the ill-used term profit really means in the economic sense, not the "profit" pejoratively spoken of, when one man gains only at the expense of another. All profit could be of this kind, embodied, as it were, in the field of force and arising only with mutual consent and springing only from mutual self-interest. One great potentiality for social and economic good in the world is free trading between nations. If achieved, it would create a perfect field of force. No one would dictate it, no one would control it, no one would hinder it. It would constitute a completely free, yet harmoniously working, market.

The issue can be broadened to include other elements of economic sense, going beyond free trade and its relatively simple problems. The natural economic channels through which wealth is distributed correspond to the factors engaged in its production - wages for labour, rent for land and interest for capital. Is there an interbalancing field of force for these three factors once state-sponsored and maintained monopolies and state privileges have been excluded?

A society of really free citizens



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would not be divided into anthropological species such as capitalists, landowners and workers (with monopolists and sectional interests hiding behind the skirts of the capitalists) who are presented as organically different types of human beings; people who talk differently and struggle incessantly against each other. Instead, it would be a society where individuals would be free to embody all or any of the economic characteristics in their individual activities. In varying degrees according to skills, inclinations and opportunities individuals would be labourers, capitalists and, in sharing the

economic rent of land, they would be landlords. They would also be tenants, since they would be contributing rent to the community for any land they held in their possession. The demarcation which now exists between landlords, capitalists and workers (though even now somewhat blurred) would be lost altogether in the re-shaping of society. The fact that the "boss" who managed a particular enterprise earned more than the men below him would be simply an index of his greater skill and responsibility, in no way marking him off as a distinct anthropological species.