

Ralph Borsodi, A Decentralist Manifesto, India, 1958

A new world is being born.

If this new world is to be a better world than the one now dying and to make possible a fuller fruition of the human spirit, then it will be very different from the Capitalist world of today, and different from the world which the dictators of Russia and China are providing, and different from the Socialist world into which most of the world is now drifting.

Concerned and thoughtful men and women are challenged to arrest the present drift and drive into a mechanized barbarism, and to contribute to the birth of a world in which persons will be free to realize their potentialities as creative beings. Such leaders must have the courage to assert themselves, and must discipline themselves to think about all the institutions essential to such a world.

The time has come to recognize that good intentions are not enough, to part with sentimental follies and to expose power-seeking politicians who call the demagoguery of the Welfare State democracy. It should be clear that there is no one panacea for the problems of society. No fanatic -- no one who would transform the world by hate and revolution -- has anything but misery and frustration to offer mankind.

This manifesto is submitted to the thoughtful and concerned men and women of the world urging them to assume the intellectual and moral leadership of mankind in order to replace those who have demonstrated incompetence, lack of vision, greed, bigotry and brutality.

1. HUMANIZATION AND SOCIAL RENAISSANCE

Human beings must be humanized.

A good society cannot be created unless a determining number of the thoughtful and concerned men and women in each country exercise influence, and see that power is properly utilized. The process of humanizing individuals and society calls first for re-education, not for political and economic action. To depend only on new institutions is a mistake. If this mistake is made, the best set of institutions will be perverted. The letter of the new institutions will be honored but the spirit disregarded, and the ultimate end will be a repetition of those repeated declines in civilization which dot the tragic pages of history.

For this reason, some such program of educational reform as is here presented is absolutely essential.

1. **A New Leadership.** The leadership which the priests lost to the warriors, the warriors to the kings, the kings to the business men, the business men to the financiers, and which the financiers are now losing to the politicians, must be assumed by a group which sharply distinguishes between the exercise of influence and the exercise of power. The minority of concerned and

thoughtful teachers and .writers, of poets and preachers, of artists and scientists, of physicians and lawyers, who constitute the real leadership of any society, must be. reborn. They should consecrate themselves to the search and realization of what is true, what is good, what is beautiful.

They must go even further.

They must not only seek and create, they must also teach. They must equip those whom they influence with the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of both the East and West, and of the ancient and modern world. They must furnish inspiration, not only instruction; they must motivate those whom they influence to live on a high moral, intellectual and cultural level. Without such a leadership, no good society and no good life can either be created or maintained.

2. Academic Autonomy. Universities above all other institutions should be staffed by men and women of quality. But to enable them to furnish unbiased and impartial leadership to individuals and society, the universities must be autonomous -- they must be completely free and independent. They must cease being dependent upon government; they must be freed from the necessity of catering to public officials. They must be freed from the dictation of partisan ideologies, of the evangelists of religion; of commercial, industrial and financial leaders. Academic autonomy is not real unless universities are completely free to seek the truth. Without this freedom, they will omit teaching what is offensive to those who control them; they will warp what they teach so as to please them; they will teach what those upon whom they depend, demand of them.

3. Basic Instruction. Every child must be taught all that is essential to their humanization -- a useful craft and the cultivation of the Earth; the practice of domestic arts; to read, write and use numbers. All must be imbued with the basic virtues -- the love of nature, of beauty, and of mankind without regard to race, religion or nationality. Basic instruction in these matters should begin in the home and continue in the school. No good society can be created without this basic instruction.

4. Professional Instruction. Instruction to the limit of the interest and the capacities of every individual, calls for some professional instruction for the more gifted and diligent, in one of the various fields essential to maintaining a genuinely civilized society. Yet specialization should not exclude the general education essential to developing each person's whole personality. General education must not merely furnish information, but must imbue them with high purposes and values so that professionals and managers do not use their special skills only for their own aggrandizement.

5. Academic Education. Education is clearly distinguished from instruction. Higher education in liberal arts and the humanities is the right of all exceptionally gifted men and women. Every family and every community should consider it both a privilege and an obligation to enable their gifted sons and daughters to cultivate their talents. Higher education, however, must not produce only scholars and intellectuals, but a class of selfless, inspired and creative thinkers, scientists, writers, artists and professional men and women, completely dedicated to cultivating the good, the true and the beautiful. They must also be imbued with fortitude and courage along with such

deep love of humanity as to live, and if necessary sacrifice their lives, for preserving the rights of free persons and the values essential to a good society. Higher education should equip the exceptionally endowed men and women to teach, to influence, to furnish the wisdom and knowledge, the vision and the direction, for social renaissance and -for the progressive humanization of human kind.

6. Moral Re-education. A moral revival is essential at this crisis in history. Education at every level must therefore deal with values and purpose. Fallacies in this area must be exposed: moral relativism and modern amoralism; the doctrine that positive law is the only binding law; the theory that all statutory and even constitutional law must be obeyed even in disregard of absolute moral law. The moral law is the natural law, universal and perpetual. Like all natural laws, it must be discovered and constantly and more explicitly formulated. Moral law should, under no circumstance, be confused with mere legislative fiat. The moral law is binding, upon all faiths, all nations, all races, all statutes. Legislative acts which disregard it [no matter how enacted nor how powerfully enforced] are null and void.

Teaching of moral law, begun in the home, should continue in school. Humanization of education in school and college is essential for the moral re-education called for here. For millenniums moral education has been warped by priesthoods. As a result moral education today is full of inappropriate theological injunctions. Moral re-education calls for separation between metaphysical creed and ethical obligation.

The true first commandment is "Harmony, not discord." This prohibits all dogmatism, fanaticism, persecution; it is binding on all humankind. It enjoins upon every religion, nation, race and every political, social and economic doctrine, to be tolerant of every person except only the intolerant. "Harmony, not Discord" calls for the tolerance of dissent and difference which is essential if the world is to be really free. Discord, with disregard of the rights of others, is the inevitable result of intolerance. Discord is involved when violence is done to individuals by private persons or groups engaged in imposing their intolerance upon them Mass-discord is involved when mass-violence and mass-killing is indulged in by political or governmental promotion of intolerance Such intolerance calls for disciplining those who practice it, with essential force, until completely ended. Ostracizing intolerants is recommended.

Discord should not be confused with disturbance. It disturbs mistaken people to learn the truth about (heir mistaken beliefs, values, activities and education. But to learn the truth* is essential to the humanization of everybody, including those whom it disturbs. Discovering truth is a kind of discipline, and may be uncomfortable as are most other kinds of discipline. But truth creates a foundation upon which harmony replaces the static acceptance of discordant mistakes. Ralph W. Emerson said, "Choose between truth and repose. You can never have both."

7. Humanization of the Family System. The family system should be normalized. Archaic patriarchal family systems must be modernized; the disintegrated and atomized modern family must become an organic entity again. For it is the family, not the individual, which is the primary unit of society, and the family's responsibility for its members must be recognized if there is to be any social renaissance The evidence which establishes the family as the essential nursery of human virtues, is overwhelming. This all-important activity, now usurped by the school and the

state, must once again be reestablished as the principal function of family life.

8. Revival of the Small Community. Social and cultural revival of the small community is just as essential as are economic prosperity and political autonomy. Small communities are primarily agricultural for the most part. But if life in them is to be humanized they must be centers of arts and education, as well as of trade, craft, manufacture and entertainment. Small communities tend to decay if they do not provide all the institutions and enterprises to supply the basic needs and humane desires of the people who live in them.

The gifted young who have been given the privilege of higher education, perhaps in distant colleges and universities, should be inspired to bring back to the families which have nurtured them, and to the communities in which they have been reared, the skills and good taste they have been privileged to cultivate. (Too often the case today is that youth have their appetites and their ambitions stimulated for greater financial rewards which practicing their professions enable them to earn in metropolitan centers.)

9. Regionalism. Not the nation, but the region is the true unit of the world. (Cultural nationalism is not to be confused with political nationalism.) The nation-state today is almost always an artificial aggregation of regional cultures. Regional arts should be developed -- regional poetry and literature, music and dancing, regional festivals, costumes, architecture and the genius of each region encouraged. The present insistence upon standardization of culture, and the creation of one uniform national or world culture, should be arrested.

10. Pan-Humanism. All human beings, while members in smaller units, are members of humanity. Membership is concurrent in groups of differing area and levels. Real social renaissance for all humankind will not come until every vestige of unilateral and exclusive citizenship in nations is abolished, and people everywhere recognize that their obligations to humanity are above those of nation-states. Not the nation "right or wrong", but the world, the region, the community and the family are entitled to claim peoples' allegiance.

Between the region and the whole world, every social, cultural, economic and political entity is an arbitrary construct, which should be used only to develop regions more freely on the one hand, and the whole world on the other. To whatever extent nation-states now usurp the normal functions (and prevent normal development) of the whole world, they should be abolished.

II. POLITICAL LIBERTY

Creating a New Leadership and re-organizing educational institutions so that humankind may be humanized is the first step in the birth of the sort of world for which human beings are hungering. But more is necessary. Good intentions and rigorous thinking must be followed by action. The social, economic and political institutions, which inflict economic injustices, interfere with political liberty, and prevent the realization of the good, the true and the beautiful, must be abolished. Those which are imperfect must be reformed, and those which are missing must be created by the voluntary activities of individuals and groups, corporations and cooperatives, and

where necessary by political action, statutory changes or constitutional reform.

Human beings are not mere animals. They have, it is true, in common with all other animals an inherited, instinctual drive for self-survival (an economic drive). Also in common with animals, a sexual drive for self-production. But much higher than these two is the last instinctual drive with which evolution has endowed humankind -- the drive for self-expression.

It is for this reason that no political institution can be considered human and properly adapted to the nature of humankind if it in any way infringes upon liberty; if it even in the slightest, interferes with the conditions necessary to individual self-expression and to the free development of the highest potentialities of being human. Six fundamental political reforms are needed if the new world, now being born, is to provide better for human liberty than the "free" world (even at its best) is providing.

1. The Obligations and Rights of Human Beings. Every human being confronts natural obligations -- the obligation to respect the person, the possessions, the premises, and the rights of other human beings; the obligation to utter no libels or slanders, not to interfere in any way with the peaceful religious, political, economic or social activities of others. Each person has the obligation to protect basic rights and enforce these obligations by the payment of just taxes and by answering every just call of any properly constituted local, regional or world authority to defend them even at the cost of life and property.

Every human being has certain inalienable rights -- to life, to liberty and to property; the right to defense of his person and property; to sue others, including public officials for compensation for damages inflicted and for the redress of grievances; the right to travel anywhere in the world; to free speech and publication; to peacefully assemble and seek correction of injustices; the right to freedom from search and seizure of himself, his possessions and his premises except after a due proceeding at law -- a proceeding in which he is represented by counsel, in which the judges are impartial, in which the same facilities are furnished for securing witnesses as those enjoyed by the State, and in which he is presumed to be innocent until the charges against him are proved beyond reasonable doubt. Every regulation, ordinance, statute, or constitutional provision which violates any of these natural rights -- being morally null and void -- must be repealed forthwith. The violation of any of these natural rights by any public official constitutes malfeasance, and such public official should be removed for usurpation.

The multiplicity of encroachments on these rights by so-called democratic governments and Welfare States must be ended and every encroachment repealed. All dictatorial governments, including those ostensibly set up to promote socialism called peoples' democracies, are by their very nature violators of these rights.

2. Limited Government. The functions and authority of all government bodies shall be limited to those which are necessary to the preservation of these rights and to enforce the fulfillment of these obligations. The exercise of power by a government for any other purpose whatsoever is invalid. Assumption by a government of any function which can be fulfilled by private persons and private enterprises, shall constitute usurpation; and any regulation, ordinance, statute or constitutional provision which legalizes such usurpation shall be treated by all persons as null

and void.

3. Local Autonomy. No free society (in which people truly participate and so give continuing consent to what government does) can long endure unless the primary political unit (the village, borough, township, commune, canton) is autonomous. The present system by which a centralized State exercises power over local communities or "grants" limited power to them, must be ended. Ultimate power is in the people, and they grant specific powers upward to their local community; communities delegate certain powers to county or district; the counties or districts to regional federation; and so on until regional federations in the whole world finally grant specific powers to a world federation. It is usurpation for power to descend from a centralized State to the people. Today local autonomy calls for political and power-decentralization.

4. Federation. Long human history has demonstrated that democracy (real participation of the people in government) is possible only in relatively small local communities. In all larger units of government, participation by the people becomes a form only. All such larger units of government become representative or 'republican' in form.

Representation calls for federation (not union) of all units of government larger than the local community. Federation must therefore be substituted for the present oligarchical or autocratic organization of all larger units of government, beginning with the county or district, and ending with the world. Not national union, but regional federation -- not world union but world federation -- is called for. Federation calls for a multiplicity of government units, each with specific functions delegated to it by the smaller units which constitute it, until at the base, ultimate, residuary powers are exercised by the people in their own autonomous communities.

My strong condemnation of Nationalism is accompanied by a proposal for a World Authority federally organized and strong enough to maintain international peace.[2] (Until such a world authority is a reality, it could not be expected that nations surrender their sovereignty.) The United Nations as now organized violate basic principles of federation. In spite of the passionate devotion of those who believe in it, the United Nations is a fraud perpetrated by the great powers, upon a peace-hungry world. As now organized, the United Nations pretends to, but cannot, maintain world peace.

5. Concurrent Jurisdiction. Implicit in the two great principles of autonomy and federation, is the principle of concurrent jurisdiction. Since every unit of government (from the local community to the world federation) should have specific and limited powers only, and since those powers entrusted to larger units of government must be exercised within the areas (and over the people in) the smaller units, jurisdiction must be concurrent -- not exclusive or absolute.

This principle of concurrent jurisdiction[3] applies to all levels of government because no federated unit of government can fulfill its specific functions if its jurisdiction is limited by the government of any region in which it has to operate. Concurrent jurisdiction is essential if effective federal action is not to be frustrated and conditions result in further centralization of power rather than limiting government.

6. Consent of the Governed by Self-Determination. People of every region have a basic

political right to live under a government which governs with their consent. Yet hundreds of millions of people today are governed in violation of this essential human right. Liberty and democracy are mocked by this tragic fact. Millions of people are governed by "people's democracies" which in reality are Communist dictatorships. Other millions are ruled by combined native and foreign oligarchies under the military power of great nations. Millions of colonies are governed despotically by governments which operate more "democratically" at home. Millions more in Asia and Latin America are governed by military or political dictators and oligarchies. Tragically, dissenting minorities in these despotisms are accorded inhuman treatment.

World-wide autonomy and federation are ultimately the answers to these problems. Democracy breaks down and falls into the hands of political oligarchies, in large units of government. In such cases, nations feel justified in intervening. An adequate world federation is needed as an impartial trustee to assist formation of stable and free governments for the millions now enslaved, or subject to foreign and dictatorial rule not of their own choosing.

III. ECONOMIC JUSTICE

If the whole world is to be made free, and the peoples of the so-called free world made completely free, justice and not equality, must be the aim of the economic order. It is not true that economic equality must be imposed by government upon human kind, in order to abolish poverty. Prosperity is highest where political tyranny and economic injustice is lowest. Poverty, on the other hand, continues in proportion as equality is imposed.

Justice is in accord with nature's laws, and should be the aim of all effort, including legal effort. Legalized equality is an attempt to abrogate nature's laws. Justice provides economic incentives; enforced equality destroys them.

Is it justice for the slack and shiftless laborer to receive the same wage as the one who works diligently and efficiently? Is it justice to pay the person who has devoted years of life to training, the same as the person who has cultivated no skill and has been indifferent to training and education? Is it justice to reward the person who has been thrifty, invested savings productively, taken risks and responsibilities in conducting an enterprise, the same as the person who spends all his earnings, saves and invests nothing, risks nothing and takes on no responsibility of any kind?

Justice is the expression of the moral law; enforced equality is a form of compulsory charity. Charity to the victims of unavoidable misfortune is a human obligation. But this is a voluntary, individual, (and not a political) obligation.

A principle to govern a just and moral economic order is: "to each contributor in proportion to his contribution" -- to labor, capital, industry, agriculture, and management -- to each what each contributes to the production of wealth. To establish this principle in the new world aborning, seven fundamental reforms of the present economic order are essential.

1. **Free Enterprise.** No truly just social system is possible if freedom to embark upon enterprise is denied or curtailed. Freedom is not possible if special privileges are granted to one enterprise which handicap others, or if freedom to work (or employ any individual) is infringed by laws of any kind. Political freedom is mocked when economic freedom is curtailed. Equality *of opportunity* is essential to insure full use of capital and labor, to furnish incentive and encourage initiative, and to assure justice in the division of wealth between capital and labor, and between industry and agriculture. We must abolish all special privileges, differential tariffs, subsidies, quotas, licenses, limited liability corporations and all cartels or monopolies (particularly in banking) in the private sector of the economy.

"Liberty, justice, Humanity"

Predatory competition is permitted and encouraged by the granting of special privileges to particular persons, companies and classes. Until this is ended there can be no real free market, no fraternal competition in establishing wages and prices, no just return to agriculture and other producers of basic raw materials.

The cure for what is wrong in the so-called free world today is not to confer off-setting special privileges (which was begun during the Thirties under The Franklin Roosevelt administration). The cure is to repeal existing special privileges, instead of wholesale granting of special privileges, subjecting the whole economy to the whims, fancies and corruption of politicians and bureaucrats.

One of the most crucial and least understood special privileges are those granted to corporations. Three of these are outstandingly unjust: (1) limited liability, (2) non-accessibility of stockholders of corporations, and (3) exemption of directors and officers for liability for mis-feasance, non-feasance and mal-feasance. Such special privileges to corporations have inhibited the growth of cooperative enterprises. One responsibility of the New Leadership is to fire the imagination, stimulate the organization, and train management of cooperatives so that cooperatives develop where the nature of the enterprise calls for cooperation.

This is particularly true in banking, in the operation of public utilities, and "natural" monopolies. This occurred in Denmark and in other countries where cooperation flourishes. Leaders inspired by the Danish folk schools, transformed the economic order of Denmark. A veritable revolution took place slowly under the initiative of men and women whom I regard as consecrated members of the New Leadership.

The terrible handicaps under which proprietary enterprise in America operates, can be corrected. The existing land tenure can be changed to one which is genuinely just; the dishonest money system can become stable; the present imperfect market system can be free -- and competition can work so that prices, wages, rent, interest and profits are fair and just. This calls for new leadership and re-education.

Free enterprise in a free economic order is not of one kind -- (private) only. It is three totally different kinds: (1) proprietary, (2) corporate and (3) cooperative. With genuine freedom all three of these spontaneously arise and progress unless they are interfered with by the granting of special privileges to one, and handicaps imposed upon others.

2. Prices in A Complex Industrial System. Only through a free market can prices be justly established and economic activities effectively regulated. This calls for each producer producing his best, but in such a market, competition must be fraternal. In effect, in a free market cooperation between buyers and sellers establishes prices which are just. Fraternal competition must replace all the forms of predatory competition which we mistakenly accept or excuse in the present capitalistic order. To create a truly free market, all regulation and interference by government of prices, wages, rent, interest and profits must be abolished, and the market given the opportunity to regulate them in accord with the law of supply and demand.

3. Mutualization. No just society is possible unless it is recognized that not two but three distinct sectors exist in every economy: (1) the naturally private, (2) the naturally monopolistic and (3) the naturally public. All natural monopolies -- railroads, power companies, water services, gas companies, pipelines, telegraph and telephone systems, irrigation districts, banks of issue -- must be mutualized (owned and operated in the interests of those who use them) and by rebating all surplus earnings pro rata to users, insure that their services are furnished at cost, and no profits are appropriated by private interests nor exploited by the government.

4. Free Trade. All differential and so-called protective tariffs must be abolished, and national boundaries in essence abolished. National boundaries must cease being economic barriers; they should be reduced to administrative conveniences. Basically all peoples, all creeds, all races have the human right to trade freely with one another. If free trade is a good within a country, free trade is good between countries. Customs guards must be ended, and recognition given to the fact that all mankind belongs to one human race, if a free and just economic order is to replace the capitalistic and socialistic economies of today.

5. Free Banking: Honest Currency; Stable Money. Government control and regulation of banks -- private, commercial and mutual -- must be ended. Banks should be free to provide credit as needed by all legitimate borrowers. The natural monopoly of issue of legal tender currency should be restricted to cooperatively-organized reserve banks. Banking is a profession, not a business; banks which create credit and issue money should be cooperative, and not commercial enterprises.

Nothing has done more to discredit capitalism or to destroy faith in a free economy than the use of a banking system for private aggrandizement along with using the money system for meeting the deficits of government. The gross immorality of debauching the currency must be ended. The business cycle with its boom and bust is a monetary phenomenon. There are no unsolved technical difficulties in creating a stable and honest unit of currency. Capitalism's exploitation of the banking system and the debasement of money must stop.

6. Free Access to The Possession of Land. A just system of land tenure is essential to ending employment, wage-slavery and landowners' exploitation of farmers. By arranging equality of

access to land for everyone, laborers and tenants will have the alternative of going to the land and producing on their own. This adds to their bargaining power in dealing with employers and landowners. It is their alternative to accepting unjust wages, or payment of excessive rent to landowners.

All the natural resources of the earth -- the land, the forests, the oil, the minerals and the waters -- are the gift of nature, or Nature's God to nil humankind. No title to absolute ownership of any part of the Earth can be traced back to a deed issued by the creator of the Earth. All natural resources are by their nature *trusterty*, not property. Land should be privately possessed (not owned to buy and sell) to be used for incentive to its fullest and most efficient use. But the unearned increment (the ground rent and the mineral royalties) instead of being privately appropriated, should be used instead of taxes to pay for the necessary services provided by the community.

Apologists for capitalism defend private property in land; they defend speculation in land. Such insistence has hopelessly identified Capitalism with the injustices of the present land-tenure system in the "free" world Communist alternatives -- nationalization and collectivization of land -- can be avoided. A new system of land tenure can be based on the ethical principles of Mencius in China and Henry George in America.

7. Freedom of Possession. Title to property can originate legitimately only in one way -- by its production. Once created in this way, title to it can be transferred, devised, or exchanged for other property, the ownership of which has come into existence the same way. The law of property in a free world must be revised so as to distinguish not only between what is mine, and what is yours, but also what is ours. Both property and trusterty exist. Community collection of what is "ours" -- the ground rent of natural resources would be in the direction of justice. Other taxes could be eliminated as limited government replaces unlimited government and as world federation replaces national efforts for defense. Reduction in costs of government would follow, and be met by the collection of community value in, or the economic rent of, land.

A NEW LEADERSHIP

An ideological vacuum exists in the free world, and in the military and communist dictatorships of the world. The world has lost its bearings. People are disillusioned with mass poverty, government support, exploitation, rural decay and urban blight, imperialism and militarism, and above all languish for the denial of liberty. Many people are sick even of prosperity in which the human spirit is alienated. Because of the scientific revolution, many are ready to abandon the dogmatisms of religion. They are ready to turn from demagogues and nationalism. They are looking for something fresh and new, something to give purpose and meaning worthy of the human spirit.

Promises are made to abolish all existing evils with the panacea of the State -- organized force and compulsion. Masses have been, and are being, dazzled by these golden promises. What do the active leaders of the free world have to offer? In sum, they offer continuance of what we now

have in the so-called democratic world But this is what most of mankind has already subconsciously rejected. This is the ideological vacuum which gives to the Statists their opportunity. But this rejection is what also affords opportunity to a New Leadership to provide truly human solutions.

A New Leadership faces a real difficulty -- one they do not welcome and confront courageously. Our difficulty is that we cannot create a good world quickly.

But if the program presented is adequate; if it deals with the roots of our social and human weakness -- not expedients dealing superficially with grave problems -- then every year there will be improvements -- which accumulate geometrically. But to reach the hard-tore common sense of people, to enlist the enthusiastic support of intelligent men and women, the program must be explicit It must be comprehensive and persuasively presented. And it must be promoted by selfless leaders who do not discredit themselves by apologizing for the evils of the present order.

Neither capitalism as it exists in the so-called free nations nor Socialism in the so-called Welfare States, nor Communism in the so-called "people's democracies" are adequate social orders. Social renaissance calls for abandonment of Socialism and Communism and transforming Capitalism into a free and just economic order Is the Pan-Humanism with its drastic changes here called for, ready to come into its own?

No such changes in economic institutions of both democratic and dictatorial countries are possible without re-education and humanization of at least a determining number of men and women in the world. Political and economic drastic changes are not enough. In the final analysis, if human kind is to be saved from a mechanical and materialistic barbarism, if people are to be taught to live rationally, lovingly and humanely, the educators of mankind must furnish the leadership which the crisis calls for. Then men and women in every race and country can create liberty and justice for all humanity.