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GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
22 FEB 1955
KALLUPATTI

ALL THINGS COMMON

by

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FIRST EDITION

I-Z

To

MARGUERITE DUMONT

one who is

of unparalleled comprehension

ILLUSTRATIONS

(*facing page 114*)

Boimondau. The Door to Freedom

Boimondau. A Course on an Intellectual Subject in one of the Workshops

Boimondau Soccer Team

Young Boimondau Communitarians on Their Way to "Work"

Community Boisalpes

American Information Center at Lyons

Domain Ott

Community Rossier

A Geneva Milkman on His Route

Les Compagnons de la Musique

Night. Olivetti Factory

Outside Olivetti Factory

Bouron

Bouron Companions

The Little Prince of Saint-Exupéry

"L'Entente Communautaire"

FOREWORD

I SAW free men.

Where? In America? No. I do not say that they do not exist here, but I have not seen them. In Russia? No. I do not say that they do not exist, but I did not go there. So what is left? Nowadays people take it for granted that no other country matters. If I say the men I saw have no allegiance either to America or to Russia I run the risk that no one will bother to read this book.

Yet everybody wants to be free, or at least says so. Here, in the United States, experiments in freedom have always caught our imagination. The country was built on freedom as a necessity, essential as bread, the curtailment of which could in no way be justified or endured.

So it would seem that I did not have to go elsewhere to see free men. Yet, if we are still free here, all the more reason to want to know about other people who are free too. If you practice anything, whether it is baseball or music, you are deeply interested in what other people do along the same line. There is no apprenticeship nearer the heart of men than apprenticeship in freedom, which is a continuous task. Slavery changes face at each turn of history, but at each turn of history there are people who rise and

are willing to take up the age-old challenge of the yet-unbeaten path to new freedom.

What is interesting now is that there are many different groups under different skies who are blazing a trail through unknown stretches of liberty. The places where I saw free men happen to be in Europe, but there are other parts of the world where groups of men are on their way to new freedom. On the other hand, there are always men who prefer to spend their energy holding on to what has already been explored. We know them well in this country. We left them behind when we came here. Ever since, Americans have understood pioneers. The men in search of the ways of new freedom are pioneers. Pioneers talk little. They do not offer ready-made solutions. They make a path. They try a way out. They are men of action. We, Americans, like that. "Let's do something about it."

Yes, let's. And that is what the groups of men I saw are doing.

This book is a record of what I saw and was told. I do not pass judgment on it, I do not wish to convert anyone. I want to try to present, as faithfully as possible, to the American reader a search for a better way of living, which it has been my privilege to witness in Europe.

A theory, a thesis on the whole movement might be written jointly by a competent economist and a farsighted philosopher. I attempt here simply to take the reader with me on my tour and let him do his own thinking.

I came across the free men first in 1946. At that time I was gathering material on what was called, short of a better word, the spiritual renewal in France,[1] meaning anything other than strictly material recovery. I had a certain number of addresses and as usual I trusted much to chance acquaintances, since I have long known that the most interesting experiments going on in France are neither catalogued nor centralized. Someone said in a café at Lyons: "Do you know about Boimondau, at Valence? You ought

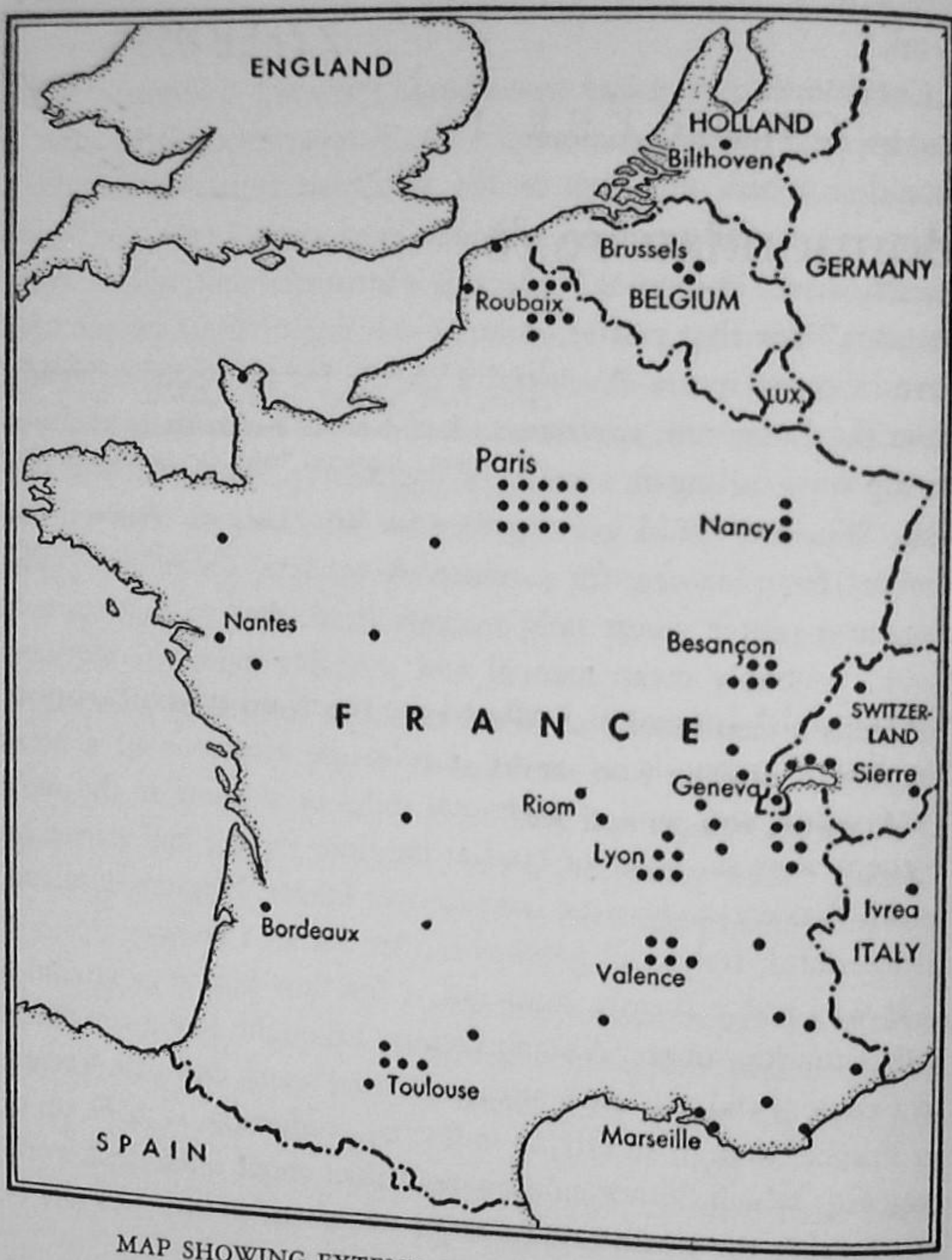
[1] *France Alive*, Declan McMullen, 1948.

to see it. It is a communitarian experiment. A Community of Work."

Communitarian? I had never heard the word. Communal, communist, yes. But not communitarian. The person explained that I should not link the term to the American word "community," which is a social group on a limited geographical spot, nor to the French word "commune," which is a territorial unit, nor to "communism," for that matter, unless I was one of those people who have in recent years developed a phobia for all words stemming from the Latin root *communis*. And I should also be careful not to slip into calling it a workers' community. Because it was not that. Workers could get together for all kinds of common endeavor; for pleasure, for instance. A workers' community could also be a center where only workers lived. And in that sense it would probably mean manual and probably industrial workers. Whereas a Community of Work could be formed by all sorts of "workers," anyone who works at anything.

"Anyway, you go and see."

I did.



MAP SHOWING EXTENT OF THE COMMUNITARIAN MOVEMENT IN EUROPE, 1950

GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
22 FEB 1955
T. KALLUPATTI

CHAPTER I

Boimondau 1946

> There is not much time left us; society, within the nation and without it, is breaking down into groups that show an ever-increasing hostility to each other; irrational hates are taking the place of cooperation.
>
> —Elton Mayo, *The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization.*

LITTLE did I foresee as I entered the courtyard of the factory of my first Community of Work, late in the afternoon of a bleak 1946 winter day, and after several miles of slushing in the snow —there were no buses or taxis at the time—that I had started on a trail that was to lead me later all over France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Italy, and perhaps farther for all I knew.

It was just a factory courtyard, a few low buildings around a rather muddy square. A small factory, I thought, like many others in France. I did not know at the time that watch-case manufacture in France, though strictly an industrial production, is made up of concerns which do not employ more than about a hundred workers. So that the watch-case factory I was about to visit was one of the largest, since it had 133 workers.

I am fully aware that many Americans tend to dismiss as uninteresting any experiment on such a small scale. If the experiment is carried on with artisan methods and the result is limited production, it bears no relation to the American setup. But such is not the case here. This small plant is organized on a mass production basis, time motion, scientific planning, assembly-line technique.

Of course special and difficult problems arise with increase in size. What we should remember is that we are not looking here at a reform of the plant but at a way of living that includes the plant.

Boimondau—the name of this community—was made up of three words: BOI, *boîtier* (watch case), MON, *montre* (watch), DAU, *Dauphiné* (the French province). Boimondau, so they called themselves in order to fool the Germans in 1943—the name sounded just like that of a house in the woods. Before that, it was called Community of Work Marcel Barbu, named for its founder.[1]

It was only later that I became interested in learning about Marcel Barbu. Biographical material rarely holds my attention and it did not then more than usual. I had come to see a Community of Work.

I waited in an unassuming office, reminding me somewhat of a grain elevator office in a small midwestern American town. Outside there was the busy humming of the machines. Men and women came in and out of the office. They looked busy, carefree and free. They resembled no industrial workers I had ever seen before. For the first time in my life I did not feel embarrassed, as if I were looking at slaves.

Apparently it was quitting time; but no one was leaving. The cleaning woman who came in looked as if she owned the place, in the sense that a housewife owns her home. She began tidying up the office as if she were tidying up her home. Then a sort of committee took charge of me. "Too late," they said, with a smile, "you won't see the machines running." From the way they said this, I could see that they liked machines and were proud of their own.

Knowing the usual French working hours I remarked: "Five o'clock. Don't you quit early?"

"Yes," they said. "We found out how much we need to pro-

[1] Much of this chapter already appeared in the *Commonweal*, July 25, 1947, and the *Survey*, August, 1949.

duce in order to make a decent living. All the time we gain on production goes in for educating ourselves."

We went through the shops. Men and women sat by the silent machines, and it was as if they were at an extension course for adults in some college. Only they took the courses at the factory. They sent out for the best instructors, paid them the regular rate. In one shop I saw engineering drawings on the blackboard; in another they were tackling physics; in another someone was reciting Corneille; in another young men were spelling words and saying such things as "the noun governs the adjective."

"We also have classes in singing, dancing, Marxism, basketball and Christianity. Just now we have a forty-five hour week—thirty-nine in the shops at the machines, six in the shops at the blackboard, or the easel, or the violin, whatever we like. We are paid for it all."

"Paid for educating yourselves? And who pays you?"

"The Community. Ourselves."

Such was my introduction to Boimondau. The group of workers who took me around were young men who looked like any other young French manual workers, except for that self-assured and happy look I have mentioned. If they seemed to use abstract words occasionally in the course of conversation, it was because, in common with all Frenchmen, including uncultured manual workers, they had an intellectual turn of mind. But one had only to listen to their technical explanations about the machines, and to look at the watch cases, to know that the factory was not run by intellectuals.

It was also clear that they were not putting into practice the ideas of some theorist. It was their own joint discovery made in association with another manual worker tinged with genius, Marcel Barbu.

As I remarked on the perfection of the watch cases, which even a layman could notice, someone said: "They have to be the very best, because here, production is not an aim but a means. Barbu

has a slogan for it: 'We make watch cases in order to make men.' "

And, lest I think they had embarked on a sentimental bettering of the human race, they added that their production had tripled since 1943, and the allotment to each worker was between 10 and 20 per cent higher than union wages, not counting all the special advantages. They were well on their way to becoming one of the seven large watch-case concerns in France.

How did it all start? Boimondau has already its legend and so has its originator. Yet when all is examined, it seems that a few essential facts can be retained and summed up:

Barbu and his wife, who started the ball rolling, were watch-case makers who knew their trade exceptionally well. So much for the sound technical background.

About the communitarian aspect. Whether or not Barbu knew of past scattered experiences in communitarian colonies which had taken place in previous centuries throughout the world, including America, Boimondau bears little resemblance, if any, to nineteenth-century collectivists (Fourier, Owen, etc.). Barbu and his few companions tackled the problem anew and by themselves. Both economically and ideologically, Boimondau is the result of their own discovery, their work and their experience. On the other hand, if Boimondau and other Communities of Work may, by certain of their aspects, remind the student of the kibbutzim or the kolkhozes, it is not because there is imitation or even remote adaptation. But because there is a trend of thought in the air the world over, somewhat perhaps as happened when our modern system replaced feudality. It is one of the reasons why the experience is successful and has multiplied. Barbu acted as a catalyzer; the elements were already present. He crystallized the thoughts of many.

Of his own evolution, Barbu has this to say:

At home I knew destitution. . . . Then I was taken into an orphanage. . . . Then at the preparatory seminary where I stayed up to the

fourth year [fifteen years of age] until I discovered that I did not have the vocation. Then they wanted to stick me in an office. I did not like it. I learned a trade in Paris. I was a young worker. I got a firsthand knowledge of what bosses are worth and also workers. Like everyone else, I was unionized. But soon I understood that I had to look elsewhere. Together, my wife and myself, we decided we would try to build our own business in order to shape our own means of liberation. . . . We sold all our furniture to buy machines. . . . We slept only three or four hours at night in order to stick it out. We had no money, no backing, the banks refused to accept the drafts. That's how I started on my own.

There is nothing new in this. In fact it is a very familiar pattern to those who "make good in America." Later, when he had his own factory, Barbu introduced a factory council and a wage rating approved by all. Nothing startling here either. It has been done elsewhere, including sharing in the profits. But Barbu was aiming at more than enlightened paternalism. He was after a style of living. He tried to enlist his workers in his search. They were not interested. They were satisfied with the conditions in this plant.

It was not until 1940, after the defeat, that Barbu was able to make a real start toward the liberation he had hankered for since childhood. At that time everything in France was so bad that it seemed everything could and must be reshuffled. It was a time when a man could make a choice, and wanted to make a choice, especially if he had been in the army, where there was no choice at all and where there was only defeat. Barbu tried to find some mechanics in Valence. He could not find any. So he went out in the streets and corralled a barber, a sausagemaker, a waiter, anyone, except specialized industrial workers. The men were all under thirty. He offered to teach them watch-case making, *provided* they would agree to SEARCH with him for a setup in which the "distinction between employer and employee would be abolished." The point was the search.

At that time Barbu and his wife (they had then five children) were the only competent workers. The whole outfit was settled in

a barn, the only place found for lease, but within two months they started to sell, notwithstanding the fact that the people who supplied the raw materials were so distrustful that they would extend no credit on their bills.

The first and epoch-making discovery was that each worker should be free to tell the other off—"to wash each other's head," as the saying goes in France. At once, this complete freedom of speech between themselves and their employer created a buoyant atmosphere of confidence.

It soon became evident, however, that "telling each other off" led to discussions and a waste of time on the job. So they unanimously set apart a time every week for an informal meeting to iron out difference and conflicts.

But as they were not out just for a better economic setup but a new way of living together, discussions were bound to lead to the disclosure of basic attitudes. "Very soon," says Barbu, "we saw the necessity of a common basis, or what we called, from then on, our common ethics."

This necessity: unless there was a common ethical basis, there was no point to start from together and therefore no possibility of building anything. To find a common ethical basis was not easy, because the two dozen workers now engaged were all different: Catholics, Protestants, materialists, Humanists, atheists, Communists. They all examined their own individual ethics, that is, not what they had been taught by rote, or what was conventionally accepted, but what they, out of their own experiences and thoughts, found necessary.

They discovered that their individual ethics had certain points in common. They took those points and made them the common minimum on which they agreed unanimously. It was not a theoretical, vague declaration. In their foreword they declared:

> There is no danger that our common ethical minimum should be an arbitrary convention, for, in order to determine the points we rely on life experiences. All our moral principles have been tried in real life, everyday life, everybody's life.

This is important because we know that in the name of liberty people have, over and over again, voted themselves out of liberty. The young workers must have been conscious of that danger, since they wrote:

> We express them [the ideas] badly. For a long time we have hesitated to write them down because we know the ferocity, the sectarianism of the thinking brutes. We distrust philosophers and doctors.

Here they certainly underestimated their own ability of expression. Their Rule is clearly set out, well written. The fact that they distrust intellectuals gives added weight to their testimony. It is not bookish speculation.

What they had rediscovered, all by themselves and step by step, was natural ethics, the Decalogue,[2] which they expressed in their own words as follows:

> Thou wilt love thy neighbor.
> Thou shalt not kill.
> Thou shalt not take thy neighbor's good.
> Thou shalt not lie.
> Thou wilt be faithful to thy promise.
> Thou shalt earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow.
> Thou shalt respect thy neighbor, his person, his liberty.
> Thou shalt respect thyself.
> Thou shalt fight first against thyself, all vices which debase man, all the passions which hold man in slavery and are detrimental to social life: pride, avarice, lust, covetousness, gluttony, anger, laziness.
> Thou shalt hold that there are goods higher than life itself: liberty, human dignity, truth, justice.

It may be argued that this was no "discovery" at all. It was unconsciously conditioned by their early training, their background, their inherited character. Granted this, we have to record: First, that the men stated that this common ethical minimum was not an ironclad set of principles adopted once and for all. They reserved for themselves the right to improve on it. Second, that there is an

[2] Minus the first commandment, which bears on man's destiny and not on ethics.

If the General Assembly does not want to yield, a vote of confidence has to be taken. If confidence is not granted unanimously, the Chief has the choice either to rally to the General Assembly's opinion or to resign.

The General Assembly elects the member of the *General Council*. The General Council's task is to counsel the Chief of Community. Members are elected for one year. The General Council meets at least every four months. There are seven members plus the Heads of Departments. All decisions have to be taken unanimously.

Within the General Council, section managers and eight members (including two wives) and the Chief of Community form the *Council of Direction*, which meets weekly.

All responsible positions in the Community, including section managers and foremen, are secured only through "double trust" appointment, that is, the person is proposed by one level and unanimously accepted by the other level. Usually, but not always, candidates are proposed by the higher level and accepted or rejected by the lower. This, say the members, prevents both demagogy and authoritarianism.

All members meet once a week in an *Assembly of Contact*, which, as the name indicates, aims at keeping everybody abreast of what is happening in the Community and also of keeping in touch with each other.

Neighbor Groups meet periodically. A Neighbor Group is the smallest organism of the Community. Five or six families which do not live too far from each other get together in the evening after supper under the guidance of a Chief of Neighbor Groups chosen according to the principle mentioned above.

In a sense, the Neighbor Group is the most important unit in the Community. It is "leaven" and "lever." It is required to meet at one of the families' home and at no other place. There, while drinking coffee, all the issues are thrashed out together. Minutes of the meeting are taken down and sent to the Chief of Com-

ethical minimum worked out by the young workers of Boimondau is the only one to be had. In the course of this book we shall see that even in the Communities of Work this ethical minimum occasionally varies. It is true that it does not vary greatly, but it is not in an effort to conform to Boimondau, but because this ethical minimum is universal in character. If anyone doubts it, let him read what the men wrote about it:

The mission of man is to improve, transform, and perfect nature and to draw the best out of it for the good of all men and of himself.

This end is considered sufficient by materialists. Christians accept it as intermediary goal. They feel they have the same mission, since they know that they will not reach their ultimate goal (to glorify God) without having achieved this intermediary goal. Therefore, there was unanimity as to that goal which was recognized as common to all, and this without misunderstanding, still less compromise.

"There was unanimity." The common ethical minimum worked out by all was agreed upon by all. It was not a majority vote. Unanimity, as we shall see later, is the only mode of decision recognized by Communities of work.

We must also remember that the men were bent not only on making a living but on discovering a way of making it more human. It is more than an effort to raise the standard of living that we are examining now. Though, even at that, Communities of Work question whether some failures to come to agreement over purely material questions do not result partly from the fact that no fundamentals have been previously accepted unanimously.

At any rate, the young workers of Boimondau, non-Christians, Christians, believers and nonbelivers alike, found it indispensable. It was not a preconceived idea. They discovered that it was a necessity.

So much so that in order to make sure the pledge would not be merely verbal, the common ethical minimum is followed by some practical hints:

We will put down in writing what is our ideal for living and acting. We will strive to conform our lives to it. We will reread it frequently.

We pledge ourselves to belong to a spiritual group. The responsibility of the spiritual group is to see that all members observe the common ethical minimum, and each member his own particular ethics.

Each week we will devote at least one hour to the collective study of spiritual, philosophical and religious problems.

The failure of any one of us in observing the Rule will contribute to the education of all.

The Community is not a selection of the best. It accepts every man as is, and asks of him only to turn, with good will and energy, toward the proposed ideal.

The second discovery the men made was that they craved to educate themselves. First they wanted to be able to sing well together, then to polish their French grammar. Then they wanted to read the accounts, etc. They were just ordinary French workers who had left school at the age of thirteen.

In order to make a living they had to produce a specified amount. They figured out that the time saved on production could be used for education. Within three months, they gained nine hours on a 48-hour week. Later they were to triple the production.

So it was that, instead of working to make extra money or profit, they worked in order to better themselves.

Don't we all do it? In one way or another?

But the originality of the Boimondau group was threefold:

They did not work overtime. They worked less time. That is, they speeded up at the machines in order to have extra time. And therefore that time was covered by their pay. So that to the outsider they appeared to be paid for educating themselves. And they were, since to them all human activity is work, as we shall see later.

Then, that time which they had all together contributed to save, they used together too. They did not go out individually to spend

in a private way their extra time. The group had earned that extra time as a whole. The time belonged to the group, the Community, not to individuals.

And last but not least, their choice in using that extra time is worth pondering. It was not used for additional material comfort. At the start and unanimously, they did forgo, for the time being, material raising of the standard of living for the sake of their intellectual and artistic development. It was their own choice. I am not saying that they were right or wrong. I am merely stating a fact.

As they all knew that after a day's work no one was very keen on going somewhere else to study, they arranged for the teachers to come to the factory and give the lessons there. That is how the system started which I saw working that afternoon in 1946.

It turned out that production and education went hand in hand. The new friendly atmosphere created by all at the start had made possible a speeding up of production, which in turn had made possible the studies. Through it all a climate had been created and the men had thrashed out many questions together. Soon it became evident to all that the new setup had developed through each and all, spiritually and materially. They had created not an organization but an organism. *They* were the organism within which they could live fully. They were a Community. They said: "The Community is a real person composed of all the buddies who are in it, with their wives and children."

Two years had elapsed. They had learned much. They had come of age. All of them (90), including Barbu, agreed that it was time to turn over the means of production to the Community. They took the leap. Barbu simply turned over to the Community the factory that had been created by the work of all. In order to safeguard the dignity of all, it was decided that Barbu would be reimbursed gradually his original layout in money, and that in the event he would want to leave and start a new Community a certain number of machines would be given to him.

The group called themselves a Community of Work for lack

of a better word. Community of Work does not mean common living quarters, nor one purse for all. We shall see later that some Communities of Work, called integral Communities, do have common living quarters and one purse. But this is a special feature and not a characteristic of the majority of Communities of Work.

It should also be clear that in a Community of Work, though it is work itself that is common to all, it is not so as an established, ineluctable fact. A Community of Work does not mean plant community, enterprise community. The members might decide to do something else. The work, the plant, the field (there are rural Communities), is but the *economic expression* of a group of people who wish to search for a way of life better suited to present living conditions and to a fuller expression of the whole man. It is true that there is no Community of Work without work but the work comes second in the title: "We do not start from the plant, from the technical activity of man, but from man himself." I have seen Communities of Work where people wanted to live communitarianly long before they had decided what kind of economic expression, work, they would tackle. The mere agglomeration or juxtaposition of workers in a factory does not make a Community of Work.

To be part of a Community of Work one has to wish to enter much more than a collective business relationship. A Co-operative Grange League Federation Exchange member, in America, for instance, may have a sense of collective business relationship, even ownership as a co-operator. The aim is still profit, savings, returns, whatever it is called. It is ownership divided among many instead of a few. The ownership of many may become as important financially as private ownership and necessitate delegating power to a manager and investing "savings" in bigger and bigger business. This is a statement, not a criticism.

In a Community of Work accent is not on acquiring together, but on working together for a collective and personal fulfillment. Of course, "objects" must still be made. Communitarians make

them. In our present world, more and more objects are made, through mass production. Communitarians make them that way. They aim at a style of living which, far from relinquishing the advantages of the industrial revolution, is adapted to them. When asked why they get together, people in Communities of Work have different answers which, I found, all amount to this: "We want to be men." Of course! Not at all. Communitarians are very definite and articulate on what it means to be men.

1. In order to live a man's life one has to enjoy the whole fruit of one's labor.
2. One has to be able to educate oneself.
3. One has to pursue a common endeavor within a professional group proportioned to the stature of man (100 families maximum).
4. One has to be actively related to the whole world.

When these requisites are examined one discovers that they amount to a shifting of the center of the problem of living—from making and acquiring "things," to discovering, fostering and developing human relationships. From a civilization of objects to a civilization of persons; better even—a civilization of movement between persons.

Dream? It was tried in America in the last century? To a certain extent, yes. There were many reasons which we cannot study here for the failure of the communitarian American enterprises. One of them, pointed out by the present day communitarians, is the fact that though some of the nonreligious attempts were made precisely to find a modus vivendi in accord with industrialization, yet, that industrialization had not fully developed. It was then still possible to carry on alone. The unit of work had not spectacularly changed as it has since. Where an apprentice cut and prepared boards for one carpenter in the eighteenth century, where one machine cut and prepared the same work in a fraction of that time in the nineteenth century, now the machine cuts and prepares work for ten or more men in a still shorter

time. Then, the scientific organization, the assembly line which resulted in mass production, put the final touch of universality on the making of things. What philosophers, idealists, religious men have hammered at for centuries—that we are all one—has become, so to speak, material evidence. *Provided* that what the industrial revolution has to say to man is correctly understood. The industrial revolution does not tell men—Make more and more profit. It does not say—Become cogs in the wheel of mass production. It does not say—Be thrown together. It says—Grow together.

Fiddlesticks? The only incentive in man is profit. It is not the purpose of this book to reopen an age-long controversy: which is the stronger inclination in man, profit or mutual aid. Let us say that there are all sorts of "profits." Liberation of oneself with liberation of others may constitute the biggest "profit" that one can wish to work for.

Regarding the name "Community of Work" another important point has to be made.

As I have said, it was lack of a better word that made the men call themselves a Community of Work. In addition, "work" was taken in a much larger sense than usual. It was not only professional work, it was *any human activity which had value for the group:* "A first-class mechanic who can sing, play the violin, who is jolly and a good mixer, etc., has more value to the Community than another mechanic, equally capable professionally, but who is a sourpuss, a bachelor, etc."

This may sound childish or simply picturesque. But it is consistent with a search for a way of life, and not only a reform of the plant. The men were bound together not only through their technical work, or through their special interests and hobbies, but through their whole self. Their value to the Community was their value as men, their human value. The human value was made up of the professional value and the social value. It is figured out in adding them together according to a system of remunera-

tion with coefficients, which is out of the scope of this book. It is sufficient to say here that the professional value comes out of the multiplication of the professional coefficient by the professional rating. The rating is evaluated by the professional teams, each man grading himself and the team grading him. The social value comes out of the multiplication of the social coefficient by the social rating. The social rating is evaluated by the General Council; it is posted on a bulletin board and can be discussed if disagreed upon. It is revised every three months.

The social value includes the courses followed (physical, intellectual, artistic, philosophical, religious), the sense of fellowship, mutual aid, the ability to perceive the common good and work for it, the sense of responsibility, and the "countereffort," which is the work performed at the Community Farm. We shall speak of this later.

In 1946 an equal number of points were attributed to the social and professional values respectively. The result was that men of equal professional value might get a different allotment because of their social value. Better: a man not so good professionally might get more than another very good one. Witness the remuneration sheet Jaunary, 1946:

A. Professional Value 6.444 frs. Social V. 2.294 Total HV 8.738 frs.
B. " " 6.174 frs. " V. 3.802 " HV 9.976 frs.

That is not all. People who work industrially together are not single entities. In the family, each one, in his own way, is also working and his work has value for the Community. The Community of Work does not comprise only those who work in the factory (men and women) but also the wives and the children at home. The Community of Work is a community of families. The work the wives do at home *is* Work; housekeeping has professional value to the community. In addition wives can also contribute to the Community socially. So, like the industrial producers, they are rated professionally and socially and receive an

allotment on their total human value. As for the children, they grow, and that is work too. So they too have to be "paid." They are so paid the moment the physician recognizes conception. A sick person who follows the doctor's instructions is paid. The work of a sick person is to get well.

The system of remuneration of Boimondau, which is common in principle to many Communities of Work, has raised a flood of questions and criticisms. We shall examine a few of them in the last chapter of this book. I ask the reader to bear with me for the time being and just limit himself to the picture of the situation lest we become hopelessly entangled in discussion.

The important point is that the system was established by the men themselves. Also that, as in all other decisions unanimously taken, they reserved to themselves the right to modify it if they ever wished to do so unanimously.

The countereffort mentioned above is the work performed at the farm. The Community acquired a farm, 235 acres. They did so for several reasons. One of them is never mentioned because I think they are unconscious of it. It is the love for the soil that every Frenchman is born with. What they do mention is the fact that most of them having been in the Resistance, they yearned for the open and camp life. Also that they wanted to raise their own products. Finally, that no man should be entirely divorced from the soil. All, including the wives, have to work on the farm, during the year, three periods of ten days each.

As everyone has a month vacation it means that people work only ten months a year at the factory.

As for unanimity, they say it is the only guarantee of complete freedom for each one. In the parliamentary system the majority rule is an oppression on the minority. It is a primitive way of ruling. First, one authority, the king, then the majority tyranny. The human way is the full agreement. Agreement must be reached. Of course it requires time, thinking, giving up too-personal concepts, etc. Therefore, unanimity cannot be reached

spontaneously at the General Assembly. It would be artificial. It is prepared in the groups. It emerges, then, naturally at the General Assembly. If it does not, if there is one dissident voice with a countersuggestion, the motion is not carried out. The whole question is re-examined in groups.

It is surprising to see how comparatively easy is unanimity in a group of people whose interest is common. Obstruction for obstruction's sake would not make sense.

The unanimity principle is one of the chief characteristics of the present-day communitarian movement. It is also one of its aspects most criticized by outsiders, as we shall see later.

Boimondau has been in existence ten years now and is going strong even from a purely industrial aspect. To accomplish this in the midst of a society entirely different in structure, Boimondau has to be something more than a lucky anarchist realization.

People who have experience in industry and with groups of men always ask: "Who directs? If no one does, it won't last long. Nowadays a factory needs technicians, managers, executives. It is no child's, amateur's or dreamer's play." Boimondau is none of them.

The communitarian administrative structure, patiently built by Boimondau people, is the result of their daily exeprience and thoughts.

Ultimate power rests on the *General Assembly*, which meets twice a year. Only unanimous decisions bind the Companions (members).

The General Assembly elects a *Chief of Community*. Unanimous vote only. The Chief is not only the most qualified technically, as a manager could be, he is also "the man who is an example, who educates, who loves, who is selfless, who serves. To obey a so-called Chief without those qualities would be cowardice."

The Chief has all executive power for three years. At the end of this period he may find himself back at the machines.

The Chief has the right of veto against the General Assembly.

If the General Assembly does not want to yield, a vote of confidence has to be taken. If confidence is not granted unanimously, the Chief has the choice either to rally to the General Assembly's opinion or to resign.

The General Assembly elects the member of the *General Council*. The General Council's task is to counsel the Chief of Community. Members are elected for one year. The General Council meets at least every four months. There are seven members plus the Heads of Departments. All decisions have to be taken unanimously.

Within the General Council, section managers and eight members (including two wives) and the Chief of Community form the *Council of Direction*, which meets weekly.

All responsible positions in the Community, including section managers and foremen, are secured only through "double trust" appointment, that is, the person is proposed by one level and unanimously accepted by the other level. Usually, but not always, candidates are proposed by the higher level and accepted or rejected by the lower. This, say the members, prevents both demagogy and authoritarianism.

All members meet once a week in an *Assembly of Contact*, which, as the name indicates, aims at keeping everybody abreast of what is happening in the Community and also of keeping in touch with each other.

Neighbor Groups meet periodically. A Neighbor Group is the smallest organism of the Community. Five or six families which do not live too far from each other get together in the evening after supper under the guidance of a Chief of Neighbor Groups chosen according to the principle mentioned above.

In a sense, the Neighbor Group is the most important unit in the Community. It is "leaven" and "lever." It is required to meet at one of the families' home and at no other place. There, while drinking coffee, all the issues are thrashed out together. Minutes of the meeting are taken down and sent to the Chief of Com-

munity, who sums up the minutes of all the Neighbor Groups. Answers to their questions are then given by those who are in charge of the different departments. In that way Neighbor Groups not only ask questions but voice discontent or make suggestions. It is also of course in the Neighbor Groups that people come to know each other best and help each other.

I have perused a number of notebooks of Neighbor Groups. The informality and thoroughness of the minutes make it delightful reading. The penmanship is beautiful, as so often is the case in France. The neatness of the notebooks reflects the care of good workmanship and respect for the reader. All sorts of questions are brought to light, trivial ones and important ones. Except in very few cases, politics is entirely out of the picture. Groups discuss: what is communitarian spirit, gifts, festivals, visitors, marriage, news of everybody. Then comes the discussion of the Theme that has been proposed by the Chief of Community to all Neighbor Groups alike: remuneration, collective savings, countereffort, attitude in case of a general strike, etc. Then are discussed the suggestions to present to the Chief, matters to be brought to his attention. The groups also discuss proposed candidates to various posts of responsibility which make it easier for the unanimous vote at the General Assembly.

On the level of the Neighbor Groups, much immediate help is constantly practiced: baby sitting, care of the sick, share of vegetables grown in one's own little plot, taking charge of children while the mother has a baby, painting an apartment, exchanging books, etc. Anniversaries and national holidays find the members of the group celebrating together. In summer they make it an outing in the country.

The Neighbor Group brings everybody together, including wives and children who, not working at the factory, do not come in everyday contact with the rest of the Community.

At Boimondau, and in any Community of Work for that matter, nothing is static. In a small definite sector like Neighbor

Groups we can trace constant evolution. For instance, the Neighbor Groups were first and solely constituted by people who lived near each other. Then it happened that somone moved to another part of town, but continued to feel nearer his former group than to his new one. So it was decided that the choice of one's own group would be free, except that a certain pattern should be kept, that is, each group should be mixed as to religious and political affiliations and, of course, racial extraction. Ages should be mixed too. Representatives of different shops and services should not all be in one group. All this in order to prevent any kind of sectarianism or particularism.

Another change was in the attributions of the group. At first the group established the professional rating of the wives. But the groups had to give this up. No one had the nerve to tell Mrs. A that her cooking was not so good as Mrs. B's, or that Mrs. C brought up her children better than Mrs. D.

The Chief of Community is sometimes invited by Neighbor Groups. Then indeed does the wife who is "entertaining" outdo herself. On this point, the present Chief of Boimondau, M. Mermoz, writes: "While relishing a *blanquette de veau* [veal stew] one is more tolerant of complaints . . . And how can one resent violent reproaches while sipping a delicious cup of coffee."

The notebooks have nothing stereotyped about them. They are all different, reflecting the particular tendencies, affinities, tastes of each group. Initiative, creativeness, ability to think problems through, psychological discernment, all are to be found in those unpretentious, vivid, spontaneous notebooks, full of gaiety, tenderness, frankness and determination. There are no generalities, no big words. All remains strictly on a human level where greatness and simplicity go hand in hand. Members of the group do not discourse, they just think aloud. What is recorded is the dialogue of each one with his own self and with the others, all the dialogues put together, including familiar descriptive touches. Those people in fact do not write "minutes," they are not trained in parlia-

mentary rules. They just live and recount their living. Very precious handwritten notebooks which I touched with reverence, as when one is given the privilege of approaching others within their very humanity.

Here are some of the notes lifted out of the minutes at random: familiar descriptions, everyday worries follow concerns on main issues and problems of destiny. Everything is intermingled just as it is presented here:

If you use another's bicycle put it back in its place.

No one can become "somebody" as long as absolute obedience is demanded by a party.

The coffee is delicious.

Mr. P came to visit us [at the factory]. He is a boss full of good intentions. But we can't help feeling that his is a patronizing attitude toward his workmen. He's a delightful person for all that and he keeps his own secret account books on the side, as he confided to us.

We do not have the right to unload our children on our mothers-in-law. It is an easy and selfish way out.

What to do in case of U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. conflict? Remain French above all.

The Chief of Community will receive no one who is not shaved.

I find Boimondau a very difficult place to work.

D thinks that one needs to get away from the Community once in a while and be all by oneself. T thinks one needs to get away too once in a while but with one's own family.

The wine Mrs. M served was very good.

An arrangement for looking after babies and children while mothers attend courses on Thursdays is to be made.

No one has the right to let a man kill himself in order to learn how to live.

Mlle. Lise knits a pullover for Toto. Toto tries it on.

The possession of material goods and the use of power do not solve all questions.

We have received some books and lamb meat.

The Community should give everyone the means of developing his own vocation even though this vocation should lead him away from the Community.

Such is the tone and pattern of these notebooks, kaleidoscopes of the life of each and all.

The General Assembly elects the members of the *Court*. A Community of Work is not composed of perfect people, not even of a so-called elite, but of average men and women. So conflicts are bound to arise between them, or between two departments or between a department and a member. It may happen that the Chief of Community cannot iron it out. That is why a Court is necessary. So eight members are elected (unanimous votes, as usual). The Community has no set of laws. Verdict is based on and directed by the Rule, the common ethic minimum, and common sense. The Court does not judge the fault, but the man. Therefore, the same fault may bring different verdicts according to the culprit. What is to be kept in mind by the judges is the common good, on one side, and, on the other, giving the culprit a maximum of chance to make good. The verdict is rendered on unanimous agreement: judges and culprit alike. What is the good of a sanction simply submitted to and not really understood and accepted, say Boimondau people.

The General Assembly elects the members of the *Commission of Control*. They are members without any other responsibilities who keep an eye on everything and report to the Chief of Community. If something goes wrong and the Commission of Control has not brought it to the attention of the Chief, the Commission is responsible to the same degree as the department at fault. The Commission of Control does not escape criticism, witness the report of the year 1946:

The Commission of Control followed the financial situation carefully and often asked for supplementary explanation. However, it sometimes fusses over small details and does not make it its business to check upon the carrying out of the General Council's decision.

At Boimondau there are two main sectors: the social sector and the industrial sector. As we shall see later, the social sector is always present in any Community of Work. It is not necessarily

so for the industrial sector. At Boimondau the economic expression of the Community is a watch-case factory; therefore, an industrial sector has to exist.

The pattern for the industrial sector is as follows:

Men—maximum 10—form technical teams.

Several teams form a section, a shop.

Several sections form a service.

Members of teams are responsible all together toward the section, several sections toward the service.

Nothing very unusual in this except that one should be aware of what is meant by being responsible at Boimondau. It is not only from a technical point of view, but also from a human point of view:

> At different levels the responsibilities are human and not only technical. Thus the heads of services, teams or sections have to create, within the professional activities, the most favorable atmosphere for a production made to serve man and not to dominate him.

The social department deals with all activities other than technical ones. The social department is not made up of outsiders who devote their lives to that question, but of the members themselves who form the different social teams and are responsible for them. As we have already seen, 6, 7, 8, 9 hours of the working week are devoted to the development of the whole man, and paid like professional hours. For extra hours, a certain number of points are allotted. All members, including wives, are expected to carry on their spiritual, intellectual, artistic and physical development. In that respect reading the monthly review of Boimondau, *Le Lien*, is enlightening. Reports and commentaries on everything: football matches (competition with outside teams), photographic displays, visits to art exhibits, cooking recipes, ecumenical gatherings, reviews of musical performances such as Loewenguth Quartet, appreciation of films, lectures on Marxism, basketball scores, discussion on conscientious objectors, accounts

of days at the farm, reports on what America has to teach, passages from St. Thomas of Aquinas regarding money, reviews of books such as Louis Bromfield's *Pleasant Valley* and Sartre's *Dirty Hands*, etc. Sometimes the members also indulge in "taking each other for a ride" with humor but without malice. It is all lively, gay, strong. A resilient spirit of good will permeates it all. *Le Lien* is a candid picture of people who have said "yes" to life, and this with a maximum of consciousness.

There are 28 social sections, but new ones are constantly added:

(Teams listed according to numerical importance)

1. SPIRITUAL SECTION:
   - Catholic team
   - Humanist team
   - Materialist team
   - Protestant team
2. INTELLECTUAL SECTION:
   - General Knowledge team
   - Civic Instruction team
   - Library team
3. ARTISTIC SECTION:
   - Theater team
   - Singing team
   - Interior Decorating team
   - Photo team
4. COMMUNITARIAN LIFE SECTION:
   - Cooperative team
   - Festivals and Gatherings team
   - Movie team
   - Countereffort team
5. MUTUAL AID SECTION:
   - Solidarity team
   - Household Maintenance team
   - Bookbinding team
6. FAMILY SECTION:
   - Child Care team
   - Education team
   - Social Life team

7. HEALTH SECTION:
   2 registered nurses
   1 practical nurse for general information
   3 visiting nurses
8. SPORTS SECTION:
   Basketball team (men)
   Basketball team (women)
   Cross-country team
   Football team
   Volleyball team
   Physical Culture team (men)
   Physical Culture team (women)
9. NEWSPAPER TEAM

It may seem startling to some people that the Materialist team comes under Spiritual Section. But Boimondau materialists will remind you that materialism is not necessarily hedonism. Far from it. So why would they not get together for the hour of spiritual work? So well was it understood by all at the very beginning that the spiritual weekly hour was made obligatory. For this hour, in 1946, materialists and Humanists had teachers coming from outside. The tendency of the Catholic and Protestant groups was to get together and examine the questions pertaining to practical Christian life. Everybody went wherever they pleased on Sunday. But occasionally a Protestant minister would come and hold a service at the factory for the Protestant group. Or a priest worker would celebrate Mass in one of the shops for the Catholic group.

And now, how is it possible to work on all those teams and still make watch cases and a living? Because in a Community of Work when more machines are used and more perfected ones acquired, it does not mean turning men out while increasing production. It means increase of production, same number of workers, same amount of money or more and *shorter professional hours.* This is so because profit is not the goal. But that is not the only reason. One can imagine a society in which profit would not be the goal and where man would not be any freer. For instance, the goal

could be power, as it was in Nazi Germany. That profit be not the goal is indispensable, but it is not sufficient. The goal itself has to be defined. Communities of Work say that the goal is the *fullness of the development of man.* The machine is a big factor of freedom only so long as one preserves the attitude of reaching toward human plenitude.

I have talked about Boimondau with people who said: "It sounds too good to be true. But granting that it is, Boimondau must have a long list of people eager to join. How do they do the hiring?"

First, they do it as in any other factory in France: individual persons present themselves, or some of the members of Boimondau present someone they know.

The candidate is interviewed by the Chief of Community. If he is already a qualified worker a place is found for him so far as is possible in keeping with his technical capacities. He is also interviewed as man to man: his reasons for applying at Boimondau, etc. If he is not a qualified worker, he is put through standard tests.[3]

He then enters as a salaried worker for a minimum of three months. He takes part in all social activities and he studies the Rule.

At the end of three months he may ask to be received as a *postulant.* If he is not accepted, he has to leave. The trying-out period is not renewable.

If he is accepted, he starts his *novitiate*, which lasts at least one year. During that period he is not a salaried worker. He is remunerated according to his total human value, he is present at all activities, including the General Assembly, but cannot vote.

At the end of the second period his marks are examined, his candidacy is discussed in the Neighbor Groups, the General Council questions him on the Rule and his understanding of it. If he is not accepted unanimously, another period of training

[3] Test VI 2 Lahy (intelligence-logic); Technical intelligence test; Piorkowski.

is offered him. This is extremely rare because usually one who has made good for at least fifteen months is ready to be received into the Community.

The pledge of the Companion upon his entering the Community has already been studied here.[4]

Every three months the General Council examines everybody and decides whether he is still worthy of his status as a Companion.

Wives of Companions can become Companions too by going through the same three grades.

Within the Companions themselves there are the Productive Companions and the Family Companions. Productive Companions men and women are directly engaged in the economic expression of the Community. The Family Companions are wives, not working in the industrial sector. All members, Productive and Family Companions alike, vote in the General Assembly. Children, apprentices and postulants can voice their opinions, but do not vote. In case of sanctions, man and wife face the Court together, the fault being always considered the joint responsibility of both.

We have now to examine from a business point of view the system adopted by Boimondau, and its commercial results.

Definition of assets runs as follows:

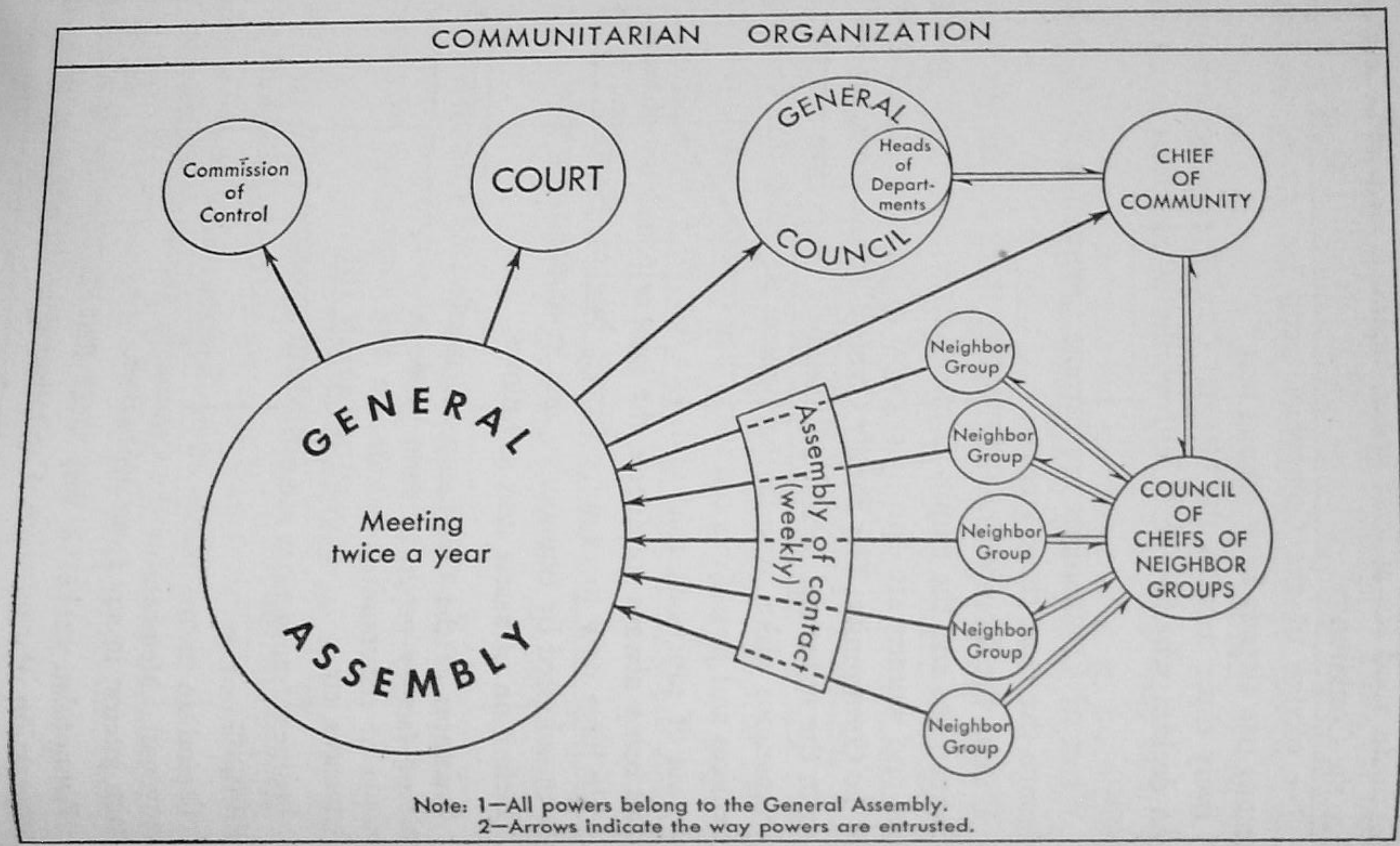
> Resources of the Community are constituted by the fruit of the sale of factory products, farm products, rendering of services to people or communities outside our own Community, artistic performances, etc.

Business transactions are carried out according to the following principle:

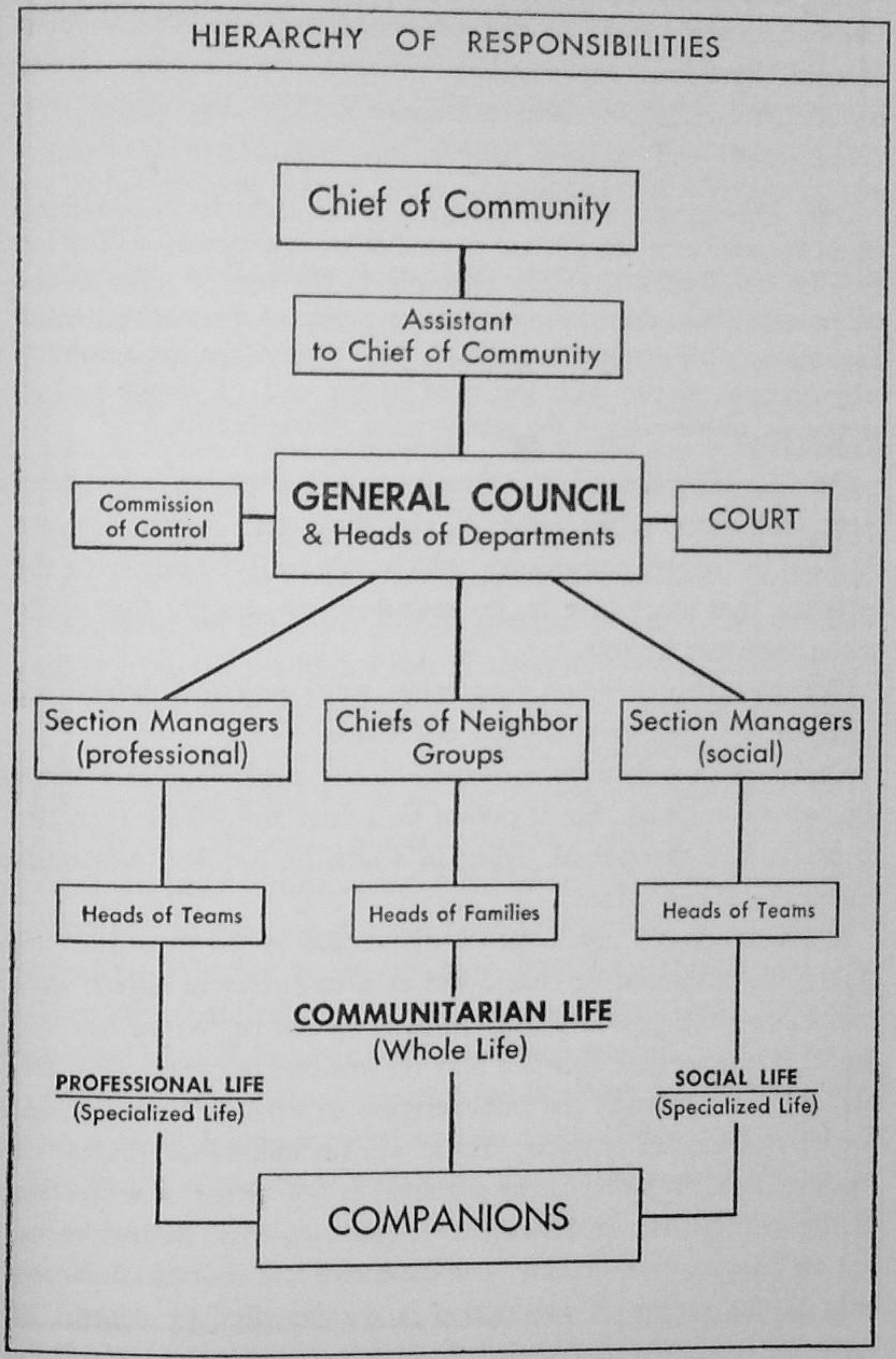
> Capitalism as the theory of the reproduction of money is done away with. Members of the Community pledge themselves not to claim interest in any form whatsoever.

Boimondau makes it very clear that its *objective* is not the suppression of capitalism. Capitalism does disappear in the new

[4] Pages 7, 8.



Note: 1—All powers belong to the General Assembly.
2—Arrows indicate the way powers are entrusted.


HIERARCHY OF RESPONSIBILITIES
Chief of Community
Assistant to Chief of Community
Commission of Control
GENERAL COUNCIL & Heads of Departments
COURT
Section Managers (professional)
Chiefs of Neighbor Groups
Section Managers (social)
Heads of Teams
Heads of Families
Heads of Teams
COMMUNITARIAN LIFE
(Whole Life)
PROFESSIONAL LIFE
(Specialized Life)
SOCIAL LIFE
(Specialized Life)
COMPANIONS

setting because it is simply dissolved. It is a result, not an end. Communities of Work do not want to despoil owners. They reimburse them gradually. But the reimbursed stockholders receive no dividends. "Money does not make money" any more; it is "dead work" and "abusive appropriation of collective savings."

Only effort gives value to money. It is not right for a communitarian to exact rent for a house beyond what is necessary to the upkeep of the house. The only principle in the use of loans is the guarantee of the value of the purchasing power of the money loaned. For instance, the accounts payable to the Companions are automatically brought to par with the raise in the cost of living and in proportion to the raise in the selling price of watch cases.[5]

On the prohibition of collecting interest Boimondau is in agreement with texts, often cited, in the Bible and in St. Thomas Aquinas. It is mere coincidence, which only tends to reinforce the evidence, that when men try honestly to think straight they come to the same conclusions.

However, this point of view raises many practical difficulties. Later we shall see how they are dealt with.

Doing away with private ownership and profit will cure many ills, says Boimondau, but it cannot be a final aim. What man has to create is a manner of living in which he has the maximum possibility of being free.

If Boimondau is not a group whose aim is the overthrow of capitalism, it cannot be considered as a co-operative either. In a co-operative the goal is profit, collective profit of course, but still profit. If anyone says this is a play on words, since after all members do share through the remuneration in what is usually called profit, Boimondau answers: There are no individual shares, no stockholders. Each one of the members is not owner of a fraction of the factory. The remuneration is based on total human value, not on business transactions. The collective and individual ownership of the means of production is accompanied by control of same, which is the important point in our present world where

[5] R. Du Teil, *Communauté de Travail.*

corporations as well as co-operatives delegate their power to salaried managers. Finally, having stated the principle that "Capitalism as the theory of the reproduction of money (money making money) is done away with," the Community itself has made it impossible for it to get rich. If there are ever any extra funds they are to be used for helping other Communities of Work to get on their feet.

Anyway, adds Boimondau, how could we be a co-operative since we are in no sense a reform of the structure of the enterprise. We do not start from man's technical activity, but from man himself. Whatever happens in the enterprise is only a result.

At this point some people say: "Then you are a phalanstery, something akin to the Owen colonies, or to those founded along Fourier's ideas, Brook Farm, the Phalanx of North America, Icarie, Oneida. But Boimondau answers: We are not a phalanstery in any sense of the word. We do not live together. We have not retired from the world in a sort of select and self-sufficient ghetto. We are not retracing our steps to a former state of civilization. We want machines—more and better machines—we like machines—on the other hand we are thoroughly integrated in the civic life of the nation, of our own home town in particular; we participate in all citizen activities at Valence. Another fundamental difference between us and the nineteenth-century communitarian experiments is that we do not stem from the thoughts and ideas either of intellectual or of religious apostles. Only experience born out of suffering has been and is our teacher.

What is the financial situation of Boimondau, or rather what was it when I paid my first visit in 1946? Bearing in mind the devaluation of the franc since then, this is what we find:[6]

In January, 1941, Marcel Barbu started with a capital of 300,000 francs.[7]

[6] Figures taken from *Des Hommes Libres*.

[7] This outlay was repaid to Barbu in 1946 with guarantee purchasing power, that is, 565,000 francs. In addition, in replacement of machines necessary at Boimondau 7,600,000 francs had been repaid to Barbu by the end of 1949.

In 1943 the Germans set fire to the factory and destroyed it. Members managed to hide some machines. In 1944 they started again from scratch.

In 1946 they evaluated their economic situation as follows:

Buildings and fixtures .....3,000,000 francs
Machines and furniture .....3,800,000 "
Stocks of raw material ..... 700,000 "
Stock of watch cases ..... 600,000 "

Production ..... 221,296 watch cases

Sales . . . all the watch cases made ..... 28,800,000 francs

Expenses . . . raw material 16% of the sales value
Production cost (about) ..... 8,280,000 francs
plus members' allotments.

Distribution . . . more than 45% of the sales value was distributed ..... 15,060,677 francs

Loans . . . new buildings and purchase of a new machine necessitated borrowing.
Friends came across with ..... 1,900,000 francs
On the other hand, the Companions themselves did not draw all the money they were entitled to so, that ..... 2,430,200 francs
were available to clear bills.

Social security. At that time the Community could not join the Social Security since it had no status in French law. So the Community itself assumed the social security of its members simply as an expression of solidarity. It covered it 100%. The amount for that year was ..... 628,217 francs
In addition the Community continued to include in the repartition the wife and child of a member shot by the Germans.

Savings were collective. There was no need for individual savings. 5% of the sale

volume was assigned to collective savings, before any distribution was made. This collective savings fund was necessary for buying new machines and for stabilizing the treasury.

Taxes and legal status. At the time the Community was outside French legality. There was no provision in the French law for such an organism. As a result, the Community was also outside existing fiscal taxation. The French Administration handled the situation with a great deal of understanding and tact. Temporary mutual arrangements were established pending the enactment of a legal status. The Community paid income tax in the name of all the Companions upon receipt of their income tax statements. It also paid the 5% tax on salaries.

Allotments. These varied according to the total human value from

4,400	francs	a month	for an apprentice-postulant to
18,845	francs	"	for a qualified Companion to
21,038	francs	"	for a section manager to
50,571	francs	"	for the Chief of Community.

Here it should be remembered that in these 50,571 francs the 8 Barbu children came in for the amount of 8,335 frs.

The allotments were about 10% more than watch-casemakers salaries in capitalist enterprises, to which should be added shorter technical hours, social advantages, full social security covered by the Community.

On the other hand, all heads of departments, including the Chief of Community, received less than they would have in a similar capitalist firm.

Prices. Prices were set by the government and the watch industry was not favored. The watch case sold for 72 francs in 1942 and for 163 francs in 1946, whereas the cost of raw material had increased from 2 to 7. There were 50 concerns in the industry.

Capitalist ones claimed they were losing money. Boimondau was steadily going up.

Before leaving Boimondau 1946 (we shall come back later to Boimondau 1950) I would like to refer once more to the committee that had taken charge of me. It was composed of four people, two materialists, one of whom was a Marxist though not a party member, a Humanist and a Christian. Materialists were atheists, believers in matter as the only reality. Humanists ranged from skeptics to people who did not think they could quite join the Christians, Christians were Catholic and Protestant. There were no Orthodox Jews. Jews came under either Humanists or materialists.

For the whole Community, members were divided as such:

Catholics	110
Materialists	70
Humanists	58
Protestants	32
Undecided	3

For the industrial producers only the proportion was as follows:

Materialists	48
Humanists	39
Catholics	35
Protestants	11
Undecided	2

Among the 273 persons there were 80 children and 15 persons under 21 years of age. Among the 178 full-fledged French citizens 11 were members of the Communist party and 167 were without any party. This does not mean that they had no political opinion, but no party suited them at the time. In 1945 the Community decided to present Marcel Barbu as a candidate for the Constituent Assembly. Lack of funds, and especially the fact the decision had been taken too late, did not allow for much of a campaign. Only 60 towns out of 380 were reached. And yet Barbu did get a seat at the Assembly. He had gathered 26,000

votes. Other parties with time and adequate facilities rated as follows:

Communists	34,000
M.R.P.	28,000
Socialists	19,000
Radicals	9,000

The people had elected Marcel Barbu because they wanted him to present a project for the legal status of Communities of Work, so that gradually all French workers could liberate themselves. No one will be surprised to hear that Barbu found everybody against him in the Assembly, from right to left. He realized that the time had not come yet to push the reform in Parliament. He left, thinking it more profitable and practical to help start other Communities of Work.

Of the 135 technical producers, 111 belonged to the C.G.T. (the split had not taken place yet) and 20 to the C.F.T.C.

So, in every way, Boimondau appeared like any other cross section of French life. There was everything in it, and no attempt at uniformity. But the singleness of purpose was such that it gathered everybody, and that everyone, from any horizon, considered it as the beginning of the real answer he had been looking for.

A union member writes:[8]

I was shop delegate in 1936, arrested in 1940 and sent to Buchenwald. For twenty years I have known many capitalist firms. . . . In the Community of Work production is not the aim for living, but the means. . . . I did not dare hope such large and complete results during my generation.

A Communist writes:

As a member of the French Communist Party, and in order to avoid misunderstanding, I declare that I am entirely satisfied with my work and my communitarian life; my political opinions are re-

[8] *Des Hommes Libres.*

spected, my complete liberty and my previous life ideal have become a reality.

A materialist writes:

As an atheist and a materialist, I consider that one of the most beautiful human values is tolerance and the respect of religious and philosophical opinions. For that reason I feel particularly at home in our Community of Work. Not only is my freedom of thought and expression left intact, but I find in the Community the material means and the time necessary to a deeper study of my philosophical conviction.

A Catholic writes:

I have been in the Community for four years. I belong to the Catholic group. Like all Christians I am trying to build a society in which the liberty and the dignity of the human being will be respected. . . . I declare, in the name of the whole Catholic group, that the Community of Work is the type of society that a Christian can wish for. There, every man is free, respected, and everything inclines him to do better and to search for Truth. If outwardly that society cannot be called Christian, it is Christian in fact. Christ gave us the sign through which it is possible to recognize his own: And we do love one another.

A Protestant writes:

We, Protestants in the Community, declare that this revolution of society is the solution that enables every man, freely to find his fulfillment in the way he has chosen. This without any conflict with his materialist or Catholic companions. . . . The Community composed of men who love one another fulfills our wishes to see men living in harmony together and knowing why they want to live.

A Humanist writes:

I was 15 years old when I left school, I left the church at 11, after my first communion. I had gone a little ahead in my schooling, but the spiritual problem was gone out of my mind. I was like the great majority: "I did not give a d—" At 22 I entered the Community. At once I found there an atmosphere of study and work like in no other place. First I was attracted by the social side of the

Community, and it was only later that I understood what the human value could be. Then I rediscovered that spiritual and moral side which is in man and which I had lost at the age of 11. . . . I belong to the humanist group, because I do not see the problem like the Christians or the materialists do. I love our Community because through it all the deep aspirations which are in each of us can be awakened, met and developed, so that we may be transformed from individuals into men.

Some of us may marvel at Boimondau. Others may have doubts and misgivings. Does not the greater part of the answer lie in the fact that the Community of Work rose out of bitter suffering?

CHAPTER II

The Earth . . . and the Fullness Thereof

> And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.
> —Acts 4:32.

"The Community of Work was born out of the revolt of proletarian people meditating on their own suffering." So speak Boimondau Companions, and so can speak all the Companions of all European Communities of Work I have seen. There was the general suffering from exploitation for generations, the immediate physical and material suffering from the war (three wars and invasions within the life of a Frenchman), the bitter moral suffering not so much from military defeat as from the giving up by the government of some of the most cherished principles, such as the inviolability of the right of asylum. Many among the present members of Communities belonged to the Resistance. Some were arrested, tortured, sent to concentration camps. Others were shot.

The unanimous refusal of Boimondau in 1941 to comply with Vichy's order for "la relève" (exchange of workers for prisoners) increased the feeling of solidarity among the Companions. Barbu was arrested, then freed. The police were fooled: the Com-

panions took away the machines right under their noses. Then the Companions took to the maquis on their Vercors farm. Those who could not get there worked elsewhere clandestinely. All resources were pooled. Women went back and forth among the Companions distributing the money earned by all, which had been divided into equal parts. In 1943 an offer reached the Companions: arms and ammunition would be given to them provided they would agree to use them after the Liberation against the workers who were then expected to try to overthrow the government. Of course the Companions refused. Later General Descours disavowed the offer made by his subordinate officer and he offered the Community arms and ammunition without any condition whatsoever. The farm became the Resistance Officers' School.

All through this period the Companions kept up with their educational and social program, they tilled the soil and made watch cases.

1944: complete occupation of France. The Germans burned the factory and Barbu's home. Barbu and eight companions were trapped and made prisoners; 2 escaped, 3 were rescued on their way to camp, 2 died in concentration camps, one was shot, Barbu was sent to Buchenwald. At the Liberation the Companions went back to Valence and rebuilt the factory. They did not know what had happened to Barbu. Perhaps he was dead. They elected a new Chief. In May, 1945, Barbu came back to them. Mermoz, the new Chief, stepped out saying: "Here is your desk." "No," said Barbu, "keep it." He then devoted his time and energy to the diffusion of the communitarian idea.

It must have been one of the happiest moments of his life when Barbu saw that the Companions had carried on without him. Truly they were a Community. A Community born out of revolt and meditation on their own suffering.

Such is the seal of the Communities of Work. If I do not refer to it again, yet it is there, present, underlying the whole spon-

taneous movement, even when not so clearly expressed as at Boimondau. One should not forget it even under the smiling southern sky.

The car goes up and down the hills, mostly up, full speed. The landscape dwindles below. At each hairpin turn I have to brace myself and hold on as hard as I can. My communitarian companion is a real French driver. Each time you think you are going over for good, just as in a movie. Meanwhile my companion speaks:

"It was in 1946. One of us, farmer, fruit grower as we all are in this southern valley of the Alps, got the idea about working all our lands together. In this country everybody has a small farm —five to seven acres. It's a lot of work and not much profit. Especially now, whether it is buying a horse or a tractor. So this friend—we have grown up together in the village—he goes around and he talks and he asks other farmers what they think of his idea. Many just guffawed. But a few of us did not. Six of us, to be exact. So we got together that winter and tried to figure out how we would put everything in common. And that's how it all came about. And the other farmers—they were laughing up their sleeves and saying it was not going to last one season. But now they are a bit sour, because not only does it last but it prospers by leaps and bounds. We say: 'Why you are sour? Do the same. Get together and have all things common.' "

So he talked good humoredly and matter-of-factly. It looked as if I was about to visit just a co-operative. Of course co-operatives are worth studying and some of them function somewhat as do Communities of Work. And, in France at least, co-operatives and communities are on friendly terms. But, for the time being, I was interested in the communitarian movement proper.

"Next turn, and you will see our orchards down below." And there they were, tucked neatly in that high circular valley, hemmed

in by the festoons of the Alpine peaks, the sun pouring down, and the air saturated with the smell of apples and grapes.

Over a cup of coffee, in the home of one of the members, they went on explaining:

Their aim had been "to produce more by using modern methods and by working together." So the first article of the Rule reads that "each member agrees to put his own agricultural setup in common under the direction of the co-operative."

Anyone who knows the average French peasant stands aghast. There must indeed be something in the air, that such a thing can take place in France. As we shall see later, it is not always as easy as that. But there, in that sunny valley, it all looked simple. The men talked about it quietly. They were between the age of 35 and 45; that is, older than most communitarians. They were modest, hard working, full of good sense. At the start they had thought only in practical terms. Their own exploitations were small, divided. They had to work very hard under unfavorable conditions to make ends meet. Leisure was totally out of question. Getting together would improve the situation. The momentous decision of the farmers of La Motte-du-Caire was taken without strain, as a reasonable solution.

The six of them had farms of different sizes. First they decided to level them all. An average would be decided upon. Those who did not have that average would pay the difference in money, and those who had more would be reimbursed. But as they went along they discovered that capital was not only land, or money, it was also human labor. Human labor in fact had a higher value than the rest. "I brought much land, but I do now less work than I did when I was alone and I benefit from the work of the others. I do not have to pay workmen now. And the one who did not have much land he has the use of the land of the others now but he has also extra work. You cannot be small about those things if you are going to work together. It is the same for the distribution of the fruits of the work. We do it in equal shares. We have to

make enough so that the share is sufficient to keep everyone contented."

The fact that they work their land and do not employ paid workers puts them in line with the Communities in communitarian form.

Their Rule reads that "each member agrees to work only the collective property, unless it is unanimously decided otherwise."

This does not mean that everything has been thrown in common pell-mell. Our farmers are no dreamers, they know the ways of man, of a Frenchman. Each keeps his own small vegetable garden, his few hens and rabbits. They leave it to the wife mostly to look after these. The work in common has liberated the wives from the hard field labor; they stay at home, look after the children, cook delicious dishes. But they are Frenchwomen, and though they are very pleased not to have to trudge behind the plow, still they like to cultivate a bit of soil for their own. And now they have it. And everybody is happy.

Very happy indeed. The atmosphere is amazingly free as we go around visiting the new buildings. Two big trucks from fruit dealers are there. Apples are being loaded. Afterward, and until late at night, the six Companions will go to harvest the grapes. But one would never believe that the day is so full of urgent work, the kind which does not wait since the rain or frost may come, so much at ease are the men.

"Each time [says the Rule] a co-operator does not come to work, he will have to pay the amount he would have received."

They have not had to apply this. And of course this does not mean sickness.

They had originally about 88 acres of land. They decided they could work more land together. They rented about 34½ acres. So now they have about 123½ acres. They do not want to have more than they can look after themselves. This was not an a priori. They just discovered that was the way they felt. So that by a sort of instinct they keep the whole thing to man's propor-

tion, communitarian way. Of course it means that they are not crazy about making a lot of money. There are other things they value more. At the beginning they did not know that. They had started out to "produce more," and they do. But now they see that that is not their aim. If it were, they could do it: they have the ability and the means; they could kill themselves working, expending and making "big money." But they are not interested. It is not even a matter of choice. They feel that way. They just want to live better, the everyday life, full and sunny, with work and companionship.

We went around, one of the wives holding a two-year-old by the hand. And once in a while, while talking to me and explaining, one of the farmers would bend down, take the baby in his arms, kiss her and put her back gently, smiling. A new barn, a new shelter, a new shed had been recently added. All the animals had been distributed on the different farms regardless of original owners, just for convenience. On this particular farm the three cows were in clover, there was a spotless new stable, and automatic drinking fountains, the thirty pigs seemed to have been scrubbed pink, and the hundred sheep combed. But the men were especially proud of their machines: a circular saw with electric motor, a mowing machine, a binder, a thresher, a plow, a seeder. But most of all, a Massey-Harris tractor. They had sold four horses out of six in order to purchase the American toy, and did they like it!

They were able to cultivate all at once the pieces of land next to each other. And yet, was there not competition sometimes as to which of the pieces that originally belonged to one of them should be attended to first? I asked. They said that was what the neighbors thought was going to happen: that they would quarrel. But it did not happen. Sometimes there was much discussion and they themselves expected the whole plan would go to pieces. But there was the work to be done. Soil does not wait, nor the harvest. And it was their common interest that the work be done, that day. And it always turned out that at night they were satisfied and had

forgotten their disagreement. A common interest does away with nonessentials.

I wanted to know how much money they were making before and how much now. Gently, firmly, and repeatedly, they evaded the question. After all, you can be a co-operator turned communitarian and still be a French peasant. Who knows? The government is so nosy . . .

Well, I did not care. It was evident that they were prosperous, and it was evident that they were happy. Their adjustment to each other was perfect. "It's because we are only six, and because we have different skills: one of us is a mechanic, another specializes in trees, the other one in grapes, etc. We were seven at one time, but one man left. He had always a chip on his shoulder. I tell you, he was sick. That was the trouble with him. When you don't feel well . . . And then he had too much pride. When you put everything in common, pride has no place. But he could not see that. So we gave him back his land. But we are still friends. Some people cannot work with others. It is not their fault. When he is hard put to it we still lend him the machines, or we go and help him out. One has to understand."

And they went on, as they supervised the loading of the trucks: "We have never been so free. One Sunday out of six only do we have to stay at home and look after the animals. And we can take Saturday afternoon off. And if one of us gets sick, the harvest gets in just the same. We just work harder. And all of us are responsible for everything including the tools and the machines. But for the repairs the fellow here is the one who knows best."

"Does one of you direct the work?"

"Why? We just talk it over. It is plain as day what should be done. I tell you what there is in all this. It is not only to produce more. The biggest satisfaction is to work together. One is not alone anymore. All of us are like one man. One man. One purse. We had to call it a co-operative; that's for the law. But it is more a Community. We care for each other. Before, during winter, each

one buried himself at home. Now we find things to do together. It's like one family."

So that was it. Starting from what seemed to them a sheer practical necessity, they had gradually evolved a way of living the spiritual aspect of which they cherished above all. It was done naturally, without friction, without struggle. Much hard work, a flexibility of mind, an openness of heart. Perhaps, also, the southern sky.

Another man volunteered: "If everyone did the same in France and in the world, there would be no problems left."

I said: "But it is not so easy. You six happen to be congenial. But think of the people who have different religions, different political allegiances . . ."

"But," they interrupted, "what would you have? So do we. I am a Catholic, he is a Communist, he is M.R.P., he is a radical, and so on. When elections come each one of us heads a different party list, and do we fight! We just tear each other to pieces. That's our right to our own opinion, but why should that prevent us from having all things common and working together? One has to understand."

I looked at the Communist with his quiet, serious, friendly face.

"And the pastor what does he think of the Co-operative Saint-Georges?"

The Catholic drawled slowly in his southern singsong:

"And why would he be opposed to it? Six buddies who get along together and share everything. Isn't that what he preaches?"

I do not intend to take the reader with me to every one of the Communities I saw. I only want to give a general idea of the movement. But in so doing I have to show the great variety of conceptions in the movement.

At first sight one may wonder why I chose to speak of the agricultural community of Essertines in Switzerland. How could a community that started half a century ago, which is based strictly

on Christian principles (members are all Protestants) and which practices common living quarters and one purse, be discussed in the same breath with the new Communities of Work. One might just as well speak of monasteries, or of communitarian religious experiments in America.

But Essertines is not a monastery. On the other hand, we cannot dismiss it because it has a religious basis, unless religion was used as an escape from real life. It was not so, since, precisely, what makes it worth our while to study Essertines is the fact that, founded fifty years ago, with a somewhat sentimental approach reminiscent of the Rappists or the Shakers, it has recently adapted itself to present-day living conditions. It has, so to speak, come of age as a real Community. This does not take anything away from the initial religious inspiration. On the contrary, it places it on firmer ground. At the same time it tends to link Essertines with all the new communitarian experiments. Incidentally the story of Essertines provides profitable lessons for younger Communities.

There was a time—until very recently, in fact—when it was not easy to pay a visit to Essertines. Up to 1940 it could be said that the members lived in a sort of elect spiritual ghetto. They were afraid of any kind of publicity. And they still are. But all communitarians shun it: they are not guinea pigs, they are living their own lives. What is new is that it is not curiosity that sends visitors to Essertines now, but a feeling of solidarity. They too are interested in communitarian living. Many belong to Communities themselves.

So it is that up the path to Essertines may come watch-case-makers, carpenters, boilermakers, electricians, radio engineers, Catholics, Jews, Humanists, materialists, atheists, Marxists, Hutterites of Paraguay, kibbutz members; probably only the iron curtain prevents some kolkhoz member from "coming through the rye."

Members of Rossier Community at Essertines are a little dazed. Half a century of isolation, of being considered hard-working,

harmless eccentrics, and within four years here is all this fellowship bursting over them from the four corners of the earth.

But one gets the feeling that nothing can upset those quietly radiant people. Their power of listening to another human being is great, their minds are gently open, and their sense of values has rectitude. And nowhere else in my tour did I find such absence of judgment, of condemnation, of others' ways.

For half a century, perched on top of the foothills back of the little town of Rolle, they have contemplated the whole stretch of the Lake of Geneva. The neat vineyards grip the slopes. The road goes up and up. Just under 300 acres of grapevines, wheat, potatoes, 286½ acres of grazing meadows, 50 cows, 110 pigs, 150 sheep. Several buildings, sheds, barns, stables, granaries, cellars with winepress and cidermill, a whole floor for drying and coloring flowers, hothouses, tractors, machines, etc. It may not sound very big to an American, but it does to a European, a Swiss especially.

Fifty years ago Jacques Rossier preached the necessity of communitarian life. He made two recruits: his wife and another lady.

Jacques Rossier reminds us of Noyes of Oneida, and of several founders of religious communities in America. Like them, he advocated communitarian life among Christians, referring to Chapter IV, verses 32, 34, 35 of the Acts of the Apostles.

So here they were, the three of them—Rossier, his wife and the lady—having decided to have all things common. What did they have to put in common? The Rossiers were poor, the lady convert had one hen.

All the members of the Community insist that it all started from that hen. And they salute the next step ahead as the acquisition of a goat. Gradually the three first communitarians were joined by others, everyone bringing all his possessions, giving up any wages, and living under the same roof. The "roof" changed several times. The trouble was that those who became enthusiastic about the communitarian idea had nothing at all. Several of them even had

what might be called in legal terms "liabilities," since they were widows with children. But everybody was ready to work. About ten years went by. Then someone, a charming lady who is a musician and is still a member of Rossier Community, and whom I had the privilege of meeting, became interested in the communitarian idea. She had a lovely home and a bit of land, Essertines, and of course she brought it with her when she joined the Community. So everybody moved in, including the goat.

They had ground to work, and they did work. Very hard. All of them. And soon they could get a mule, and with the mule they could go to market to Geneva and sell more products. The mule covered the eighteen miles in six hours. One of the women would go with the mule, starting very early in the morning. It was a long stretch. And sometimes the woman out of sheer loneliness would talk to the mule. But that was catastrophic, because the mule was so pleased at hearing a human voice that it would switch its tail and shake its head so violently as to upset the baskets of vegetables.

After the mule came one cow. The whole enterprise grew, through hard work and devotion. There were sixty people in a beautiful large domain overlooking the lake. Cultivating the ground proved insufficient for the support of the Community. So they added the industry of drying and dyeing flowers. There was no Rule, no statute. Trust was sufficient. They all respected, admired and loved M. and Mme. Rossier. Without knowing it, they lived under a patriarchal regime; or, if they knew it, it did not bother them. They could not foresee that it was going to create great difficulties for their community. In 1932 Mr. Rossier died, and Mme. Rossier in 1940. All of a sudden they were orphans, and all the responsibilities fell on their shoulders.

Over and over again in the past history of communitarian experience, both secular and religious, we find the same pattern. Especially in America. All goes well as long as the founder lives. Once

he is gone, the experience falls apart, except in Catholic ventures where the strong hierarchical structure makes survival possible.[1]

One of the most interesting aspects of Community Rossier is that they overcame their crisis. And they emerged on a firmer basis, both materially and spiritually, having outgrown the weakness of what might be called an idealist back-to-the-wood outlook. It was a bitter struggle.

After the death of M. and Mme. Rossier they found themselves up against the fact that the Swiss law does not provide for any community like theirs. They simply did not exist legally. They had to have a legal status. Having never educated themselves along those lines, being in fact ignorant of anything connected with management, they turned to outsiders whom they thought they could trust: a banker, a lawyer, and a minister. What the unworldly people of Rossier Community could not foresee, happened. It took no time at all for the committee of the three advisers to take charge of the whole domain, to the extent that finally the members of the Community could not even hold meetings on their own property. The fight was on. It lasted several years. Bewildered at first, then indignant, the members stood their ground, though it did seem at times that, according to the law, they had no ground left. Reading the exchange of letters one is impressed by the forcefulness and directness of the arguments of the members. They are bold, fearless, and yet extremely gentle, pervaded through and through by a spirit of nonviolent resistance.

But at last it did seem as if they were done for. They had, without realizing it, handed over their Community, bound hand and foot. They did not have a leg to stand on. Sure of their own case, the three advisers appealed to the Vaudois Cantonal Court to secure more docility on the part of the Community. Examining the situation, the Court was struck by its unusual aspect. And that was the beginning of the turn of the tide, which culminated in Febru-

[1] As pointed out about Boimondau, it went on in spite of Barbu's fading out of the picture.

ary, 1949, when the Community was given back all its rights, the three advisers were ousted, and a legal status was provided.

During the struggle many members had left; 23 remained.

The administrative structure recalls that of present Communities of Work: a Chief of Community, a Committee of Direction (General Council), a Council of Repairs (Court), a Commission of Control, the General Assembly, Assembly of Contact, Assembly of Work (Professional and Social Sections). Minutes. Daily entries—Novitiate.

The Rule, accepted by all, can be revised except the three following articles, which can "be improved upon in their expression, but without changing the meaning":

1. Rossier Community's ideal, motive and status is defined by the Chart as such: the aim is to make it possible for people of good will to bear witness to a better kind of living, in mutual understanding and collaboration. (Acts 4:32, 34, 35).
2. It belongs to the Community to settle all differences among its members.
3. The Community's aims are as follows:
   a) To work toward establishing the Kingdom of God on this earth; to devote ourselves to the service of others and to the welfare of mankind.
   b) To live the gospel practically.
   c) To prove that it is possible to live collectively a life of total selflessness on both material and spiritual planes.
   d) To live together, share our possessions, our joys and our work for the benefit of all.

Here we find the requirements for what is called an "integral community": community of habitation, meals together, no distribution of allotments. They write: "Everyone according to his possibilities and his needs." And they prove it. One member was particularly skillful in painting pottery. She was sent away to a school to perfect herself. A member especially fond of music is provided with tickets for concerts. Any talent is fostered and directed into the proper channel.

Like all Communities of Work they point out that their means of making a living, Essertines, is not the Community. It is the economic expression of Rossier Community.

Unanimity is also considered essential for anything pertaining to the Chart and the Rule. They emphasize that it is not a mechanical or artificial device for them: "Unanimity is not a voting system. It is a method of work." This attitude is common to all Communities of Work.

A special article might seem quite unique: "Marriage plans should be agreed upon by the General Assembly." And yet this is not so far removed from what happens in practice in an industrial Community of Work I visited, where the marriage ceremony is performed at the City Hall (French law), then religiously (if the parties want it) and then communitarianly, the fiancés pledging themselves to each other before the whole Community.

Beside working for their own livelihood, members of Rossier Community help other communitarian experiments in the following way:

1. Essertines is the meeting place for the Center of Studies and practical experiments in communitarian form of the city of Rolle.
2. It is a Center for familial and social training of girls.
3. It provides periods of experimental communitarian living for groups interested in communitarian life.

The scars of the years of struggle heal slowly. The amputation of so many members has compelled the Community to turn to paid workers. Members try their utmost to alleviate the status of salaried people. Yet it cannot be done completely. They cannot be absorbed into Rossier Community because they do not want that. To be an integral communitarian is a vocation. It is possible to foresee the adoption, on a large scale, of the general principles of the average Communities of Work. It may never happen, but it could be done. In such a setup, much is expected from each and all. But not too much. In the integral community one gives up everything. And as the members of Essertines told me: "It is really

nothing to give up one's own material possessions and to share everything. The great difficulty is the gift of oneself. More: the *way* the self is given."

So the people of Essertines are looking for young couples who would feel drawn toward such a life. The Community is badly in need of young arms and young blood.

I said: "But aren't you quite limited in your choice? How could you take anyone except a Protestant?"

We were sitting in the room back of the kitchen, on benches, at the long wooden table. The elderly lady-musician, the former owner of Essertines, had just played for us Brahms's "Berceuse" and "La Fileuse" of Mendelssohn. And now we were drinking tea.

"But why could not we have other people besides Protestants? We do not hold any religious service here whatsoever. Each one goes to the church he likes on Sunday, or does not go at all."

"True," I said, "yet I do not see how you could have atheists, for instance."

Someone said quietly: "It all depends: if they have an ideal . . ."

"Of course," said someone else. "What is required is to *live* the gospel."

A lady chuckled softly. "It reminds me of that man who came to visit once, do you remember? He kept telling me: 'I would like to belong, I would like to belong. What should I do? What capital should I have?' And I said to him: 'A heart.' "

In view of what is to come, I would like to point out that when I single out Essertines as religious I do not mean that other communities are materialist, in the hedonist sense that nothing matters except "Eat, drink, and be merry." In the communitarian movement everybody is concerned first and foremost with spiritual values. It is not the monopoly of those who are "religious." Those who are antagonistic to religion, may even have a keener sense of spiritual values. Not necessarily so, but it does happen in a Community as well as in the rest of the world. At any rate no matter

what one calls oneself, one cannot be a communitarian without a sense of spiritual values. As we saw in the first chapter, Boimondau understands this perfectly and lists under Spiritual Section all the allegiances of its members.

This explanation was necessary also lest words convey a certain compartmentalized, particularist attitude which does not exist in the communitarian movement as a whole, nor in the mind of this writer. Whenever I mention spiritual allegiance it is in an attempt to give a more complete picture to the reader. Above all, it is in order to convey the very variety of the allegiances which give the communitarian movement a truly universal aspect.

We have visited a Community with industrial expression, started by workers, Boimondau; a Community with rural expression started by small owners, Saint-Georges; a Community with rural expression, religious basis, started by a poor intellectual, Rossier. Now we shall see a Community with rural expression, started by big owners.

La Londe-les-Maures. The Moors must have stayed there a good long time in the eighth century—they gave their name to the place. They knew a heavenly spot when they saw it.

Five miles from the village of La Londe-les-Maures, along the Mediterranean Sea, lies a wine estate about 200 acres. The neat vineyards cover all the valley, going down gently like a broad river to the blue sea, which is cut here and there by the shapes of umbrella pines, like a children's game.

Wine from Domain Ott, the name of the owner, is famous. It is said to be the most expensive wine in France after champagne. It is wine of the finest quality, requiring ten years of processing before it is put on the market. The Ott family has been in the business for several generations. There are now four brothers: two at La Londe, one on another part of the estate at Draguignan about sixty miles from La Londe, one at Antibes for the commercial side. The two brothers who are in charge of the estate of

La Londe are those who are trying to transform La Londe domain into a communitarian economic expression.

Perhaps some of my readers, thinking of the owners of such an important firm, will imagine their home as quite a mansion. It could be important looking and richly furnished. It is not. It is a farmhouse. A very simple farmhouse, two stories high, spreading around the three sides of a courtyard. Inside it is bare of all non-essentials. The Otts are Protestants. Their home is comfortable but so simple that I would be hard put to describe what kind of furniture there is except for the grand piano. Everything is but a background for living. There is nothing material to "hold" one's attention, just the sun outside, the blue of the sky, and the feathers of umbrella pines. Perhaps if it were not in the South of France the farmhouse would seem austere. But here austerity is a rest, and it acts like a springboard for thought. Thinking comes out stripped of all frills, earnest, simple, direct:

"We were searching for a better way of life. Capitalism is anti-Christian, and therefore antihuman, or vice versa. Barbu crystallized the thought of many. We went to Boimondau several times, I, my brother, the men. There are lots of children in the Ott family, seventeen up to now. How many will be interested in cultivating the land? The estate will be divided. We want the workingmen to be in it."

The Ott brothers could have done it capitalist fashion: sharing of profits. Probably the men would have been satisfied and the Ott family could have pursued its own independent life. Nothing would have been radically changed. The "anti-Christian" capitalist structure would have been preserved.

The Ott brothers chose to throw in their lot with the workingmen. A community of destiny.

They explain all that lightly, as something so evidently just that there is nothing outstanding about it. It is all very, very simple. In fact there, in the midst of the work, with the children playing around, the workingmen calling the "boss" by his first name (a

"revolution" in France), explanations seem unnecessary. They even get in the way. People there are just all hard at it, creating, day by day, through the sweat of their brows, physical and mental, a road toward the new earth "où la justice habitera."

It is very difficult. It is a slow groping in the dark most of the time. For all of them: the Otts and the men. Contacts with other communitarian groups are helpful. Also visits from the dynamic General Secretary of the Communitarian Federation. Anyone in Europe who, in the second half of the twentieth century, goes communitarian is not starting all alone, like the communitarians of the nineteenth century. Others are on the same track, facts accumulate, practical conclusions are reached, experiences are cross-examined, results are tabulated. Nothing is done out of the blue, out of a hifalutin ideal, taken from a book. They are not trying to fit life into a formula. They take living conditions as they are. Applying to them a scientific method of investigation, they slowly change their pattern from a fundamentally inhuman structure to a more human one.

It is not done by one man. It is not done by a well-meaning owner, even one who has divested himself of all his privileges. It is done by all those who are willing to participate in the great adventure of becoming a Community of Work. Workers do not follow Mr. So-and-so in the communitarian movement of the present day. They themselves create the Community, gradually, through an awakening of their consciousness.

Wage earners who have been bitterly exploited wake up sooner. A "good" boss is a menace to the development of the desire for freedom, because of the tragedy that people can be happy in slavery.

It takes an indomitable love of truth on the part of an owner to work for the liberation of those he employs; that is, for communitarian liberation. Because the communitarian way is such—and therein lies, it seems, one of its outstanding features—that in it one cannot free others. They have to free themselves. The

romantic gesture of the southern slaveowner freeing his slaves, the generosity of an industrial corporation sharing profits, the millennium dreamlands of Fourier or Owen, the turning loose of people into the Icarian equality kingdom à la Babeuf via Cabet, has little to do with the present-day communitarian process. In these previous ventures, freedom was always a gift, handed over, one way or another. There was always a giver and a recipient. That vitiates the atmosphere from the start.

Liberty is not given. Liberty is won. It is not won in the abstract. Human nature is such that liberty has to be won against something: against oneself, against somebody else. Otherwise it is a house built on the sand of good intentions and escape mechanism. In the communitarian search there is no more getting away from psychological laws than from historical changes. That is why owners who go communitarian face special difficulties. The Otts are no exception. Therefore their experience is valuable to all communities which evolve out of a pre-established capitalist economic expression.

What is most likely going to be the reaction of well-paid, well-treated workers when confronted by the communitarian idea through the medium of their "boss"? "What is he up to? He must have some hidden interest." That is a natural reaction. It may not seem "fair" in the particular case because they have been well treated and they should have some trust in the head of a firm who has been honest. But we must always keep in mind that workers are not conscious only of what happens in their own small sector. They have in their blood the exploitation of a whole class of people for several generations. That speaks louder than their own limited experience.

After or even together with that distrust comes the withdrawal. They argue that they are all right. They have good wages. They don't want to be bothered. To become a Community of Work will mean more development but also more responsibility. They would rather stay as they are. The "freed" slave begging his master to take him back.

Still, by and by, some curiosity is awakened. The boss says they could make a try at it all together. And since it will not mean a lowering of their wages. . . . When workers make up their own minds to be a Community of Work they are ready to endure great sacrifice for it. But not when it is the boss's idea, of course.

Finally they agree to make a try. So they did at La Londe in 1947.

According to an average, covering several years, an evaluation was made of the general cost and the wages, altered by a lowering coefficient calculated on the basis of the present cost of living.

It is that amount which was given to those among the workers who had declared themselves willing to make a try at a communitarian form. Eight families and one of the owners constituted the team. At the start the owner relinquished any income as owner. He is paid only as head of the team. The other workers who preferred to remain salaried, are paid by the team. The team does the hiring.

The first year proved satisfactory from both a material and a social point of view. The allotments were higher than the regular wages. The team had the sole management of a large vegetable garden, and all the fruit of the domain. The human value was determined through mutual and open appreciation. Such a method has its good and bad points. In itself it remains a definite step forward, since everybody has to participate actively in it. It also places the accent on the importance of human relationships instead of on the making of things, even so heavenly an elixir as Ott wine!

So the first year went by. They tasted liberty, liked it, and wanted more. But the apprenticeship of liberty is a hard task. The men of La Londe discovered that.

They had worked on contract, so to speak, the first year. They decided they wanted to work as sharecroppers. I saw them at the end of their second year. I was there at their General Assembly. We were all sitting in a circle, men and women. The two brothers Ott were there. One of the brothers explained that this was the

end of the year, and that within a fortnight he could show them the accounts, which their delegate, who did know about accounting, could verify. Then they would know how much money they had made that year, and how much it meant for everybody. There was a long silence. Peasants do not talk easily. One of the Otts called each one by his name, asking if he had anything to say. It was evident they all did. But who was going to start? Probably the year before they had just passively acquiesced in everything. But already they had grown, and there were questions in their minds. Who would voice them? Finally a man said: "We don't like it." "Don't like what?" "To be sharecroppers." There was a murmur of relieved approval. It had been said surlily, as if the arrangement had been imposed on them. Yet they were the ones who had asked for it. Then several spoke up: Last year they had made money. Last year they could see from month to month how much they had left. And they had been able to save quite a lot. This year they had not known where they were going. It was all so far away, a whole year.

Matter-of-factly one of the Ott brothers asked, "What makes you think you made less than last year? We don't know. I don't know. We shall see within two weeks when the accounting is finished. You may have made more than last year. It is true that you may have made less. It all depends on the year. Whereas with a contract, if it is a good year, the Domain Ott has the advantage."

Ah, yes, the Domain Ott. Well, yes, there was still the Domain Ott. Domain Ott was not only La Londe, with the two brothers who were paid now like heads of teams. There was the Draguignan piece of land, and the commercial side at Antibes, and the two brothers who had not gone communitarian. At the present time there was no use kicking against that. The thing to do was to grow here at La Londe into a Community of Work which could eventually become autonomous.

Someone answered that the Otts had too many children. They would oust the workers. The brother said that, first of all, probably

very few Otts would remain on the land. That even with fifteen Otts left on the place, which seemed preposterous, there would be an average of fifty people not of the Ott family. What kind of status could be elaborated legally had to be studied by all. It was a common search to carry on together. It could no more be done overnight than it could be endlessly postponed. The Ott brothers were ready to examine with the team during the coming year what could be planned.

A man said: "What gets me is that you say we will know within two weeks if we have made money or not. But we won't. It's only an approximation. We won't know for ten years. It takes ten years to process Ott wine."

How understandable. Like children, they wanted the results right away. Ten years. Work of utmost refined civilization.

"What do you want? We have here a long and glorious tradition. It is a tremendous capital. Do you want to throw it to the wind?"

It was asked with a perfectly controlled voice, without a trace of impatience, pride, or indignation. The Ott brothers and their wives understood. To be able to wait ten years, it is a whole education in itself. How can people who have been salaried be expected to have it?

Then someone said the fatal words: "We should sell the grapes somewhere else, to people whose wine does not take ten years."

How the men had grown! Within two years they had come to this: to clamor for the right to wreck the tradition of their own economic expression.

"Perhaps someday we can do that," said one of the Ott brothers calmly. "I would not be surprised that, when we are free to do so, we choose Domain Ott as our customer. There is plenty of wine made in France. Only one Domain Ott."

They were silent and thoughtful as if they were just discovering what treasure they had within their hands.

A woman said: "As I tell my husband, the truth is that we did

not know anything about management. We thought it was quite easy. Now we know it's very difficult."

Mme. Ott said: "There is that. There is also that we have just begun to know each other, as human beings, not as employer and employee. There is bound to be a lot of friction against each other before it runs smoothly."

"Oh," said a woman, "I guess you are right. I think *you* are much better than you were last year. I feel much more friendly toward you."

A young man spoke up: "I have to say that I am disappointed. I did not come here primarily to grow grapes. I could have gone anywhere for that. I came because it was a Community on its way. And I don't see the Community. Just take the Assembly of Contact, for instance. I have been here three months and there has not been any."

There was a murmur of approval. "He is right. It was so nice last year, those Assemblies of Contact. One kept abreast of the work. One could say what was on one's mind at the time . . ."

"But," said one of the Otts, "you are the ones who asked not to have any this year."

They looked at each other in utter surprise. They had forgotten.

"Now," explained one of the brothers, "within two weeks, when we know where we stand, we can decide for next year whether we want to work on contract or as sharecroppers. And we must decide if we want the same head of the team or somebody else."

There was uneasiness all around. The actual head of the team, one of the Ott brothers, had been the one most active in pushing them on the communitarian road. He got up and said: "Go ahead. We are here to tell frankly what we think of each other, and not behind their backs."

All at once they had something to say:

"The Chief means well. But he is no good." "He can't help it. He is still too much the boss." "He asks for our advice, but he does as he pleases."

What an outburst. I could hear well-off sentimental people's indignant comments: "How ungrateful of them! He gives up all his privileges for them, he tries to educate them to be free men. And that's the way they act."

Thank God they did! They could hardly have paid the Otts a better compliment. And the Otts understood it. The revolt was indeed the true reward of their effort. The Otts had wished their workers free. But freedom has to be won against something. The workers were awakening to liberty, and the only channel left, since they had not originally of themselves started on the quest, was through banding together against the one who had shown the way. One may wish they had fought something or somebody else in order to come of age. But this book does not deal with wishes, only with facts.

One of the brothers got up and said: "I don't bear you any grudge." He had said it very simply, but with a touch of nobility that was part of his make-up.

The reply came back like a tennis ball: "We don't either."

Then there was a certain relaxing in the atmosphere. After a silence someone said: "There was a wall between us. Now there is a hole in the wall." And everybody smiled.

The next week they would vote for the head of the team for 1950. They would also designate two of them to assist the Chief so that from then on decisions would be taken by the three together.

Late in the night when everyone had retired I sat talking with the Otts. "It is not a matter of our persons, it is the business itself, the tradition. If they could only realize that." And we all came to the conclusion that they were beginning to realize it.

As for their sharp criticism of their first head of the team, it was natural. Had it been another, they would have picked on him. It was their only way of trying their new freedom.

And so it may happen that the proof that a head of a firm has really done his utmost for the liberation of the workers lies in the

very fact that they push him out. That eventuality has to be faced squarely by owners or managers who go communitarian. The communitarian movement is not for people who think there is nothing to lose in it and that, on the contrary, they will manage to come out on top. It is not a way of avoiding penalties for the exploitation perpetrated by one's own class. It may even mean that good people pay for the bad ones, since we are not alone and the acts of others, even when disapproved by us, are still our responsibility. However, I can say from what I have seen that workers are quick to recognize ability combined with fine moral standing. In the case of the Otts, which at bottom was not a personal matter, the men had sense enough to realize that at the present time only one of the Otts could do the managing. This year they have the other brother. And I would not be surprised to hear of their changing again.

As Mme. Ott put it: "Before, it was all easy, peaceful, and dead. Now it is very difficult, and alive."

A Community of Work growing out of a capitalist enterprise does not come of age overnight. The communitarian movement is an educational movement. Its motto is: "It is better to progress slowly together than fast alone."

Someone said: "What? You are going to visit Community L'Aurore? Don't you know they are all Communists? You won't be welcome."

As usual there was no time to write ahead, and I decided that a telegram would probably reach them after I arrived. And to call peasants on the telephone is unpractical, especially in France. It takes too long to put a call through, and, very likely, they will not be at home. I decided I would take a chance and try to reach the place at night when everyone would be back from the fields.

I reached Sainte-Tulle in a roundabout way from the place I was in last. It included getting a ride on a truck, then a walk of two miles, then a train. And when I got off at Sainte-Tulle it was pitch dark. I had never been in Sainte-Tulle before. I could just

make out that this was a country station. There were no lights, so I gathered the village must be some way off. I gave my ticket to the stationmaster and I asked if he knew M. Amoureux. That is the name of the Chief of Community. Promptly the railroad master answered: "The guys of 'L'Aurore'? 'Course. Everybody knows them. Want to see them?" I said I did, and how far was it, and how was I going to find the way? There was absolutely no one in sight at this station. But, behind me came a workingman, the only passenger apparently who had also got off there. The stationmaster said: "You're going to Sainte-Tulle, aren't you? Show Madame where Amoureux lives. You know the guys of L'Aurore, don't you?" "Sure," said the man without stopping. The stationmaster said to me: "Follow him. He will show you." I ran after the workingman, who was already almost swallowed by the night. I practically ran all the way to Sainte-Tulle, and it took twenty minutes to get there. I did not have any breath left for talking, and I did not want to ask the man to slow down because I realized he was in a hurry to get home and I was like an extra chore at the end of a hard day. Up we raced through the dimly lighted streets of Sainte-Tulle, and suddenly I lost my guide. I turned a corner full speed and just had time to locate him before I realized that I had plunged into a herd of goats. The herd blocked the narrow street completely. Yet I had to go on. Trying to make my way I pushed here and there, got hold of something and tried to throw it aside. It was the horn of a billygoat who hurried away, opening a channel for me. My guide had taken another turn. I dashed along on the cobblestones. There he was, knocking and calling at a garage door. No answer. "They are not there," he said. "We will go to Amoureux's mother." And already he was gone, I after him, and again we were swimming, I was, at any rate, in the midst of the herd. Very charmingly, without a moment's hesitation Mme. Amoureux offered to come with me. Yes, they were there all right. Only they had closed all the doors. So they did not hear the knocking, and from outside no one could see their light. We were back

at the garage. Mme. Amoureux opened the door and we got inside. It was dark. Before I knew it she had gone to the other end, at the left, and opened a door. A flood of light came through, and also a dead silence. Mme. Amoureux went up the steps and I heard her say: "Albert, there is a lady who wants to talk to you." And she came back quickly and called me: "Come in, madame." I hesitated, because the silence had not been broken in that invisible room and no one had appeared to greet me at the door. So I went toward that lighted unknown space wondering what I was going to find.

There they were, six young peasants, sitting informally in a small bare room, one of them behind a desk. And no one moved as I came in. They just looked. The light blinded me after the darkness outside, and my heart was pounding from the run. I hastened to tell them that the General Secretary of the Communities of Work had given me their name. Then slowly they got up, offered me a chair, sat down again, and waited. Mme. Amoureux had gone and it was up to me to explain why I was there at that late hour, on a winter night. The sentence "You won't be welcome" came into my mind, but I knew at once, looking at them, that the only reason why they were uncommunicative was because they were peasants, because they did not know about my visit, and because I was a woman. I did the best I could to triumph over all these bad points, and I think I overdid it in my anxiety. And when I stopped talking I had a moment of panic fearing they were not going to say anything and were about to make me understand that I was out of place.

But slowly, the discussion got under way, and they talked, each one presenting his views. It was all very clear and lively.

It was after the war that they had thought of it. They knew each other. They had gone to school together. After the war they did not have the animals necessary for farming. And none of them could afford to buy them for himself alone. So that winter of 1944-45 they talked it over at night.

It was relatively easy to decide that they would exploit their land in common, only they could not do it because of the age-old arrangement in that part of the country: sons work for their fathers without wages until they are twenty-one. Afterward the "old man" offers to split with him. "Afterward," that is, any time between twenty-one and thirty years of age. So first of all the young peasants had to settle that question. They could not exploit together something they did not possess. They had to figure out some sort of compensation to offer their parents. Considering the tradition so firmly grounded it did not look promising. And yet they did find a way out.

They offered their parents to rent their land. And, in addition, they promised an indemnity in goods for a value of 80,000 francs a year: 4,400 lbs. of potatoes; 1,500 lbs. of wheat; 660 lbs. of barley; 440 lbs. of beans; 220 lbs. of peas.

They had just finished explaining that to me when, from behind them, an elderly man got up. I had not noticed him before. He stood erect, and said in a forceful voice: "Yes, madame, it was as they say. But, if *we*, the old ones, had not been willing, they, the young ones, they could not have had it—their Community." The "young ones" smiled, nodded, and one of them said quietly: "He is right."

They made a provision that in case of the death of the father, the mother gets 40 per cent of the indemnity. At her death all indemnity ceases automatically; it cannot be inherited in any sort of way.

Members agreed to put all their available funds into the co-operative to help it start and acquire machines. That money constitutes the debt of the co-operative. In case of death of one of the co-operators, the co-operative will give the heir one-sixth of the capital of the co-operative, which is figured out after deducting all debts or mortgages. The heirs will never have the right to force the co-operative to sell material or buildings in order to get their money.

"That's right," said the others. "He got it in a nutshell. Fraternity." The old word, worn out with sentimentality and demagogy, sounded fresh and virile in their mouths.

I asked why they had called their Community Sunrise (L'Aurore).

"It seemed to us pretty. Also, sunrise . . . that's the beginning of light."

As they talked a young lovely-looking woman had come in, kissed one of the men and edged in beside him on the corner of the desk. Later she took charge of me going to the hotel. "We women, we like the Community so much. Before, we never knew how much money we were going to get at the end of the month. But now, it comes regularly. Also we can have a good time away somewhere with our husbands five Sundays out of six. And can get away entirely for a whole week every year, and in summer, mind you . . . No, we have nothing to do with the Community. You know, it's men's business. What makes it nice is that now we don't have to go out in the fields at all. We can stay home. Of course we take in some sewing. Just to help the Community get a start. You know how men are. They get so enthusiastic. But the beginning is hard. My husband, he is so happy with his Community. Like a different man. They are all the same. We women are certainly relieved that they did get it started, their Community. We did get sick and tired hearing about it that winter after the Liberation. . . . Wish I could put you up. It does not seem friendly to let you go to a hotel. But no one has an extra bed just now."

There she was, unassuming, simple and happy. She was sewing to help the Community start, but she had nothing to do with the Community. Oh, no. It was men's work. Understanding and devotion had come to her naturally, as they do to so many "communitarian" wives in France. Often I met men who complained that their wives were not communitarian, in the sense that they did not get together to do things as groups of women. It is true. Frenchwomen are not in the least gregarious. But what they are

not willing to go through and put up with in order that the men may work out their ideas!

And now I hope the reader will agree with me that there was absolutely no point in asking the Companions of L'Aurore whether or not they were Communists.

Rural Communities are apt to become integral Communities more easily than industrial Communities especially when the religious factor is strong. Such is the case of the Evangelical Community of Seysses, Haute-Garonne. The lovely old castle where the Community is housed belongs to the parents of the Chief of Community. But, unlike the Otts who were in business already when they decided to go communitarian, M. Denjean was not. He was a minister. He told me he became just tired of always "talking," every Sunday. For him, a Community is "the modern form of the church." Sermons do not amount to anything. The big industrialist who attends them and professes to be a Christian is no different from the pagan big industrialist. Either he does the same exploiting of workers, or else he turns paternalist, doing everything for the workers, even sharing profits, everything, short of giving up private ownership, which is the Roman Empire conception of ownership but not the Christian one.

A reform of the property concept is not sufficient. Neither are co-operatives, which are based on common material interest and do not take the whole man into consideration. The only way is the Community, and the Christian Community, since the people who have joined M. Denjean want to bear testimony to Christianity. This of course strongly reminds us of the American religious attitude in communitarian experiments of the nineteenth century. However, when talking to me the members insisted that they were not exclusive at all. They would welcome anyone who would bear witness to the *spirit* of the gospel. They just had had the visit of an orthodox Jew on his way to a Palestine kibbutz. He had remained with them several days. They had provided

everything for him so that he could eat kosher. He had attended all the prayer meetings and, altogether, they had commented on the Bible.

The Evangelical Community of Seysses holds that the communitarian life is not only the Christian answer to the world's problem but that it is the only practical one; that individualism and totalitarianism are going to die.

They are now twenty-five people, six families, six children and the rest single. They eat together at a long table in the beautifully paneled dining room of the castle. They have their separate private living quarters in the castle.

The estate has 123½ acres, elegantly landscaped like a small Versailles. The equipment is modern and quite important. A combine Massey-Harris, plow, reaper, disks for Massey-Harris tractor, a Map-Diesel tractor, a Somera motocultivator, cultivator for Puzenat tractor, an American hay-Deering, a Deering rake, harrow for the Puzenat tractor, a Citroën car, etc. etc. They made a start with 10 cows, 100 hens. When I was there they were beginning to raise sheep. The Community was only one year old. They had just been able to make ends meet that first year.

The Community keeps in contact with other Communities, whether integral, like Essertines and the Hutterites of England and Paraguay, or with the Communities of Work proper. They were very clever when fixing their legal status. They dug up some laws nobody had ever noticed and they had themselves classified as a Community of Earnings so that there are no taxes on individual earnings. They pay a license fee. The property still belongs to M. Denjean's parents. When it no longer belongs to them, the Community can become a Community of Earnings and Possessions (gains et biens).

Rozy-sur-Chavannes is no castle. As a matter of fact it is the farm that belonged to a former castle. A real farm, lots of low buildings around a square adorned with a heap of manure and a

john nearby. The road, full of ruts—the jeep was just the thing—ends in that courtyard, the hills on either side with beautiful trees, all so close that it resembles the hollow of a spoon. The road is the handle. The hollow the farmyard. And the hollow is the end of the world.

Inside one of the farm living quarters, it is almost bare: a large kitchen, flagstone floor, a wood cook stove, a long heavy wooden table with a bench on either side, a cupboard, a wide flat sink made of porous stone uneven and yellow.

The young farmer's wife, with the beautiful face of a peasant madonna, said: "This week is the first week that Pierre and I are alone. That table has been full all through the summer. So many people came to help and visit. I liked it. It was very gay. Yet I am glad we are alone for a bit: we were married six months ago."

Other men came in to greet me. They all lived in separate farm buildings. Two families, one child, three bachelors about to marry. Meals were separate for families.

They have:

165 acres of land which they rent
56 sheep
12 cows
1 bull
6 pigs
2 horses
2 pairs of oxen
1 tractor
1 jeep

"The important point," they said, "is to have enough animals and machines, belonging to the Community, as collective and indivisible property. The land can always be found, but there should be buildings on it."

How did it start? One of them, Pierre Camus, was the son of a railroad employee. He was in Paris studying for his master's

degree in mathematics. And all the time he felt something was wrong. It was not the Acts of the Apostles he had read, but the Gospels. And already he was dreaming of a communitarian setup, though he had never heard of any and did not know about Boimondau. When summer came he decided to take time off to think it over. What kind of work could he do that would make it possible for him to be out of doors and at the same time think? He read the ads in a paper. He saw that a farmer south of Paris was asking for a shepherd.

He went there. He was rather bewildered. The farmer said he would have to start herding the sheep, since this was the easiest. But even at that . . . "You know," M. Camus said to me, "I had never been so close to a sheep in all my life, except as a leg of lamb."

Once the summer was over he did not want to go back to his studies. He stayed and learned all about horses, care, riding, driving, shoeing, selling and buying. And after that he took care of the cows. And gradually he learned the agricultural trade.

Meanwhile he had time to think a lot, and he had become acquainted with the work of the team *Economie et Humanisme* (Economics and Humanism) which is a Center of study of the economic and human picture of the present world, and in which economists, men of science, engineers, philosophers and Dominicans participate.

But that was not the only thing that had happened to Pierre Camus. At the farm, there was a shepherdess, the farmer's daughter. And so it came to pass . . . Just like in an eighteenth-century print, only there were tractors and combines instead of gondolas and ribboned crooks.

The shepherdess had a bosom friend, another farmer's daughter. They were both in the J.A.C. together, which is the lively group of Agricultural Catholic Youth.[2] The friend married Pierre's brother.

[2] *France Alive.*

That brother had started as a recording court clerk. Then he had gone to an agricultural school, then he had had practical training for four years. Then, for four more years in Germany, while he was a prisoner, he had been on a farm. So when Pierre talked about a Community with an agricultural-economic expression, it was right up John's alley.

They were joined by two more men, one a carpenter, the other studying to enter an agricultural school.

They had 15,000 francs to start with in January, 1947. But they were not afraid. They were young, all in love, either with each other or/and with the Community. Everything was simple. The Chief had to be the one who knew the most about agricultural affairs. They had to save every penny, since they had been obliged to borrow. They tried to establish a minimum allotment for everyone. But the needs were different. They had to give it up. Then they established a scale of rating:

Physical effort outside with considerable spending of energy (for instance, harvest)	12 points
Physical effort outside without too much energy (shepherd)	9 points
Physical effort inside	8 points
Women's work	Fixed monthly allotment
Children	" " "
Responsibility	Monthly different rating

When I visited them they had not yet been able to rate the communitarian effort on the intellectual and spiritual plane. They were studying the possible modalities.

Already farmers around them were aware of the Community. Some people had come to buy sheep. They knew the man who shepherded them. Because of this occupation, they considered him very low in the farm scale. So they went to another one whom they thought more important to make the deal. This man said: "You talk to François about it." "But François, he is the shepherd!" "That makes no difference with us. He is the one

who sells the sheep." Slowly the people are getting used to such an equalitarian pattern. And they talk about it. Also the fact that they never know if the one who did seem to be the boss all during harvesttime won't be found herding the geese and the ducks tomorrow. Such neighbors! They certainly give you something to think about.

If I were to rate the responsibility of the one who keeps the accounts I certainly would be inclined to be generous. I have never seen such beautiful account books. So neat, so clear, so precise. It was quite exciting to follow the "life" of a quintal (hundredweight) of wheat from seed to sale or use. That is possible in these account books.

Every Friday the Community meets in Assembly of Contact, and everyone says what he has to say. And if anyone is sore about somebody else, he comes out clean with it. "Sometimes we nearly cut each other's throats. But afterward, it's all right. No hard feelings. Sometimes on Thursday we think something is all wrong. But we never do on Saturday."

They have adopted the rule of unanimity but the Rule itself has not been written down.

What made life easy, explained the men, was the fact that the women were country girls. If it had been the other way around, the men from the country and the women from the city, it might have been difficult. But as it was the women were happy. They knew all about living on a farm. They really knew more than the men. "We just could not swing it without the women."

Each family had a chicken coop. They had made a common vegetable garden. But this did not prove satisfactory. Taste for cooking was too varied. They thought that Community Saint-Georges at La Motte-du-Caire had the right answer: a single lot for each family.

They borrowed money from the Credit Union to buy the jeep. They have had to improve the cattle they took in charge, by proper and scientific breeding. They are in great need of mechanized material. But with all these difficulties each one is allowed half

a day besides Sunday for his own personal culture. And everyone has a yearly two-week vacation. They ask all their visitors to send them books.

Pierre Camus came in. His young wife set the soup on the table. He looked at me with a little hesitation and started to sit down. The young wife said: "I have talked with Madame, Pierre. It is all right. We can sing the Benedicite." And standing side by side, their fresh strong voices rose. They did the same at the end of the meal. "You see," they explained, "we want to be careful, not to embarrass anyone or make them think we just show off. This is not a Catholic Community in the sense of exclusiveness. It just happens that we are all Catholics up to the present time; but we could take anybody in. It would not be any problem. But as long as we are all Catholics we can do certain things together, like saying the Benedicite or singing Complin."

We spent a friendly evening around the big log fire. Speaking of their Community they said: "All the pleasure consists in being together." They had many questions to ask, especially about the other rural Communities I had visited. When I told them about L'Aurore Community they were moved and said: "We have to make a point to visit them."

Then we sang Complin, kneeling in a circle around the fire. And one of the Companions made a simple extemporaneous prayer asking that the Community be such a good example for the neighbors "that the desire for freedom may be awakened in them in order that they may arise toward You. Lord bless the Communities, expressions of the law of love on which rests the world."

It was very cold in my bedroom, and it was not courage that pushed me toward the washstand, but the conviction that in the morning I would have still less. And lo, there, on the old-fashioned French table was a pitcher of hot water.

Late in the night I read the "log," having bundled up in bed in such a way that only my eyes emerged from under the covers. Through the silence, peace came down showering its blessings. Already the serene, strong, happy rhythm of the Community had

got hold of me. I recalled the sort of nobility that accompanied all the gestures of the members of that Community, and their complete absence of tension as if they had no personal worries whatsoever. And they did not. Because for what was in their power there was the Community, and for the rest they talked to God.

In the early gray November morning when I slushed through the dung water in the yard to empty the toilet pail on the manure heap, I felt at heaven's gate.

Fourteen rural Communities of Work sent reports to the National convention held in Paris in January, 1949. If we add to these Seyesse Community and L'Aurore, which did not send reports, we have the proportion of seven communities of Christian inspiration in a total of sixteen. These numbers are purely approximate as it is difficult to know how many rural Communities already exist in France. They just live and don't report. So that the Christian proportion might be completely different if exact statistics were available. The reason for my visiting more rural Communities of Christian inspiration than others is only because, at first sight, they seemed more in line with the communitarian movement in general insofar as they placed the accent on man himself, whereas other communities seemed nearer the co-operative movement. But this should not be taken for granted in any way. We have seen, even so far, how a Community started on a purely practical basis discovers that what it cherishes most is spiritual value, even if members do not call it by that name, and the same is true of the Communist Community. Had I had time to visit all the rural Communities I might have found out that the "accent on man" was present everywhere, even when not audibly acknowledged. However, I want to speak here of what I have seen, and not of what I have only read about.

The present Chief of Community of Bouron is a Quaker. Bouron lies about three hours' train ride from Paris, southeast.

Lots of water everywhere, trees, hedges around the fields, a little like the Norman Bocage which the GIs will long remember, except that here we are far from the sea.

The road leading to Bouron is truly a king's highway with its sturdy elms on either side, so that one is not surprised when a beautiful seventeenth-century manor appears in view at the end of it. This is the main building, and for the present, everybody, except one family, lives there and eats there. It is just a matter of getting started and saving as much as possible. As they prosper, the members plan to give each family its own quarters. Whether they will still partake of one meal in common or not, they do not know. At Bouron there are no hard and fast rules. They just adapt themselves to the flow of life.

There are five farms on the estate. The domain, comprising 600 acres, had been deserted for ten years. It is all of one piece, which is rare in France. Within two years the Community has reclaimed 350 acres. It is an astonishing result, a truly communitarian one. For a whole afternoon I tramped with M. Schultz across plowed lands and fallow fields full of thorns, stumps, weeds. It was hard to realize that it was the same land: before and after. Yet anyone who had lived in the country knew that it was true, because the successive improvements could be traced, all types were still present—first the wasteland, then the land that had been cleared, then the land that had been plowed and manured and left to rest for the winter, then the land that had been plowed again and harrowed and disked and seeded. "That is the trouble with the land," said M. Schultz, "you have to wait such a long time to see results."

The trouble is also that the Community has not enough machines. This is quite a large domain for France and it could stand several up-to-date American machines. For instance, a seeder. All the seeding has to be done by hand. They have 17 acres of 1,000 fruit trees, which would give them a handsome return if they

could not only prune them but also spray them which they cannot do without a spraying machine.

They had when I visited them:

Tractors	2	(old Fordson, new Map-Diesel)
Plows	2	
Mowing machines	2	
Disk	1	
Harrow	1	
Jeep	1	(old)
Dodge	1	(old)

A harvester would have saved them a lot of extra unnecessary work. But, of course, they could not afford it.

However, they had steadily progressed since 1948, as the list shows below:

	1948 (spring)	1949 (fall)
CATTLE		
Cows	3	8
Heifers		2
Calves		3
Oxen		2
Horses	1	5
Pigs	3	41
Chickens	12	150
Ducks	3	100
Rabbits	6	25
Sheep		they were getting ready for them.
CEREALS		
Wheat	25 acres	100 acres
Oats	35 "	150 "
Rye	"	13 "
Barley	5 "	7 "

They contemplated using all the raw products for the Community, and creating commercial outlets for manufactured prod-

ucts such as sausages and patés and honey. Wool of course if the sheep proved satisfactory.

They were 28 people: 15 men, 7 women, 6 children. There were 7 families and 8 bachelors. They were all young, or at any rate vigorous. They all had had agricultural training, or were intellectuals who had never withdrawn from the soil entirely.

They paid the landlord 1 quintal of wheat per 2½ acres. The price of wheat is set by the government. It is around 2,500 francs, which brings the rent to about 262,500 francs a year, plus buildings, 70,000 francs. In the country in France you can do anything except keep the landlord waiting. He is a big worry.

They started with a capital of 1,500,000 francs, the result of savings, sale of personal property, contributed by all the members of the Community. Within two years they brought their capital to 8,000,000 francs through more personal property sale of first and new members, donations from friends, and a (3,000,000 francs) loan from the Crédit Agricole. They have to reimburse the Crédit Agricole within ten years, plus 5 per cent interest.

It is no wonder that they are very hard up, what with buying cattle, machinery, repairing the main building (they did it all themselves, inside and out), and living without any return from the soil for two years practically.

In addition they were most unfortunate at the start with some of the members: one was dishonest and another was as full of illusions as he was of good intentions. Then the Community collected a few "lame ducks," unsociable types and delinquents, who might have been no trouble at all if the Community had already been well established. But in the setup of present-day society, where Communities have to fight their way singlehanded, it is indispensable that at the start at least everyone be levelheaded and worthy of average trust.

That Bouron survived their two first years' ordeal is all to their honor. And the trial may have had an advantage: they learned a lot, at the beginning, not after fifty years, like Essertines.

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Why did we get together? In order to try to be logical with our ideal of justice, human dignity, fraternity, and in order to attempt to put into practice our philosophical and religious convictions.

We do not bother about the communitarian life being adequate and fitted to our time. This work is beyond our persons and comes from the call of our consciences. It is a bursting out of life. We are convinced that we are not doing anything new, we only try to revivify and translate an aspiration which has lain in the heart of man for thousands of years. We are but a link in the chain of uninterrupted manifestations through the ages, often misunderstood, sometimes bitterly fought.

Our action is therefore, above all, of spiritual origin.

So they wrote. Because of M. Schultz it has been said that the Community is Protestant. But this does not seem to give a true picture of it. Some members are Catholic anyhow, and the Community would welcome humanists, also atheists with an ideal. The spiritual basis is a spirit and not a set of beliefs.

What gay meals we had in the kitchen at the long table! If one had not known it, it would have been impossible to guess that they were wondering how they were going to pay the rent next week. And such good cooking too, in addition to homemade cider. It is not easy to make real French cooking for twenty-two people (the children had their meal earlier), and that with a bad stove and little money.

Before eating someone called for silence, and for a few seconds everyone meditated. They use silence again as a means of getting together spiritually on Sunday morning. Communion in silence is akin to communion in music. There is no reason for anyone to refuse it, on dogmatic grounds. At the close of the silence someone reads from the Gospel, or from philosophers or religious men who had the communitarian spirit. The Sunday I was there, the selection was from Gandhi. Occasionally someone talks. A few weeks before I came the Community had received the visit of a priest-worker. On Sunday he joined the circle of silence in the living room. After a while he talked. They told me no one will

ever forget it. It was so simple, so direct, so genuine. It made them feel all one.

Sunday dinner was particularly excellent, and everyone was jolly, especially because it ended with the distribution of the one pack of cigarettes allowed weekly to every smoker in the Community.

The women take turns in the kitchen and have divided among themselves the housework. Also the care of the children. One of them is particularly successful with the youngsters, so she looks after them most of the time, which does not mean that the parents wash their hands of them. Far from it. There is a great deal of informality and tenderness going on, and the children seem extremely happy in this Community life.

Several members of the Community are nonviolent resisters. Also, different nationalities are represented at Bouron.

Up to the time I was there no Rule had been drafted. They said they preferred to live the Rule first and write it down afterward. In this they are no different from other rural Communities which we have reviewed in this chapter. Rural Communities do not have the same urge to set down their common ethical minimum as do industrial Communities. Nature and work with the soil are powerful elements of stabilization.

No mode of distribution had been established either. Money lent by members was credited to them, without interest but with guaranteed purchasing power as is customary in Communities of Work. The Community was able to give shelter, board and immediate necessities to its members. That was all at the time. They will tackle the problem of remuneration when they have funds to distribute.

The days I spent at Bouron were winter days, but they were all warmed up by the friendly atmosphere. In the evening there was a great deal of singing. One of the members played the piano. He had studied in a Swiss conservatory; but cutting wood all day is hardly good for a pianist's hands. We discussed that point, and how it did seem a sort of waste of talent. But a young lawyer

(LL.D.) who had recently joined the Community with his bride explained that, of course, no one thought, in the Community, that Antoine (the pianist) should cut wood for the rest of his life, or that he, the lawyer should do only manual work. It was just an emergency. In order to get started. In a little while the Community would *need* Antoine's music, and the lawyer's culture. Though intellectuals and artists would never be allowed in a Community to relinquish all manual work, still their special capacities would be used and fostered. Someone said that the Gospel expressed this very adequately: "Man does not live by bread alone." Alone. Meaning that bread is necessary, but not everything.

"That is why," they went on, "we do not get together because in that way we will eventually make more money, but because a Community offers the maximum chance of complete development of a human being. As a matter of fact if we ever come to make much money we will use it to help other Communities get started."

Once more it was evident that in the communitarian movement the development of the human being and the help to others toward liberation is the great incentive.

Communities analyzed up to now were essentially rural in their economic expression. We have now to study a Community where rural and industrial expression alternate.

In the late thirties Abbé Poutrain, who lived in the northern part of France, was sent to the Champsaur Valley in the High Alps because of his health. He was told to take it easy.[3]

But how could he? He found a peasant population of about 12,000, suffering from a deep-rooted inferiority complex. Their spiritual life was based on ignorance and fear. He says: "I wanted to make saints of them. I found out you have to be men first."

The local conditions were new to him. He was used to the industrial north of France. Here the peasants were sacrificed to

[3] This was originally printed in the *Commonweal*, March 24, 1950.

the soil. Property was so divided that no one had enough to make a proper living the year around. In many cases they could not even marry any more: the man did not have enough land to raise a family, and the land of the girl's father had to support the rest of her family. As a result, the youth either took to the city, wholly unprepared, or else stayed in the valley and lived an atrophied existence waiting for it to come to an end.

And, of course, the valley was dying out. Significantly enough, Abbé Poutrain did not think in terms of holding back the youth in the valley. His was not a back-to-the-soil outlook. On the contrary, he says: "The exodus was healthy in itself. Had it not taken place, we would have had to make it happen. To try to tie down the youth to the soil would only make the youth's chains heavier, and, rightly enough, the youth would have despised us." What he was after was a "liberating crusade."

To "choose" to emigrate to South America, as hundreds of them did every year, was no choice at all. What else could they do if they had still some ambition and energy? But they left the valley as unqualified workers and ready prey to exploitation. Those who stayed worked but three months a year, during the summer. What was needed was a re-evaluation of human work in the valley.

How to get this "liberating crusade" under way was a problem that stumped Abbé Poutrain for several years. He fumbled a good deal and learned a lot by trial and error. Was it because he was so clearly against any kind of servitude for the young people that gradually there took shape in his mind the plan by which the young people themselves could shake off their chains? In 1943, he finally hit on what he thought "not necessarily the best, but at least the surest and shortest road."

Meanwhile the war and occupation had taken place and Abbé Poutrain had joined the Resistance. He was caught and sent to Buchenwald. Even in the ghoulish place he could not forget the problems of the Champsaur Valley.

When the war was over, everyone in the Champsaur Valley

thought Abbé Poutrain was dead and they set a time for a Requiem Mass to be said at Gap, the nearest town. That very day the radio suddenly boomed the news: Abbé Poutrain had been recognized in a prisoners' train passing through Lausanne. The Mass for the Dead was changed to a Te Deum.

Then he picked up where he had left off. The thing to do was "to create economic conditions which open into Christianity."

The valley had no railroad, no industry, and its methods of agriculture were medieval. If the youth were taught a trade of industrial production which they could use either when they left the valley or during the nine months of idleness for those who stayed in the valley, it would be the first step toward liberation. The next step would come from the very result of the presence of an industry with modern techniques within the valley. It would create tensions between the industrial group and the purely rural one.

I remarked to Abbé Poutrain that he could have found a far-sighted capitalist who, together with some able executives, would have set the whole valley to work. Abbé Poutrain shot right back: "Of course. But I certainly did not want that. Who can still believe that economic conditions created by capitalism open into Christianity?"

Abbé Poutrain wanted to bring together the peasants working at an industrial occupation and those working in the field. He wanted them to share together the full responsibility of their own lives, and understand that "the evolution of the valley lay in their hands."

"To make a whole valley grow, not by pouring in money, but by a gradual awakening of consciousness."

Furniture making seemed to be one of the industries that would accommodate itself to many workers during winter, few in the summer. Though of course it should be understood that this was not going to be an ersatz occupation but a genuine enterprise which by its sound commercial value and its communitarian aspects would force the peasants to think all over again about

their living conditions. At this time it had become evident to Abbé Poutrain that only a communitarian way of living would create economic conditions which would open into Christianity, since it was built on the meaning of the value of the whole man. Abbé Poutrain could not be the practical executive of it. He was lucky to run across a young man who was a cabinetmaker, having graduated from the famous Boule school in Paris, and was also deeply interested in youth activities and in the communitarian movement.

So Pouzol came up to the Champsaur, from his Faubourg St.-Antoine in Paris where all the furniture dealers live. He was to take charge of the plant, and help Abbé Poutrain to wake up the young peasants to communitarian life. So that they, and the other peasants with them, would come to realize that there is "no individual well-being without collective well-being, and that private well-being should open into collective well-being."

However, no matter how fine the plan it could not get under way without money. Not capitalism, but capital. Abbé Poutrain called first on the notables a few miles around: doctors, lawyers, professors. Twenty persons in all who agreed to lend the prestige of their names to the formation of a Society legally constituted which would act nominally as the proprietor of the plant but would receive no dividends. (They contributed 300,000 francs to form the society.) Furthermore, it would be understood that, as the workers came of age they would be allowed to enter the Society so that they would eventually outnumber the original founders, thereby ensuring in time the workers' ownership of the means of production.

Of course not even a small plant can be started with 300,000 francs. Having obtained the necessary legal and moral backing, Abbé Poutrain next called on the peasants of the valley: "What about that money in the wardrobe, under the sheet? And that box buried under the cherry tree?" It was natural enough that they would not trust their savings to the banks or to the government or to an outsider who might eventually own the valley. But what

about lending it to the Société La Drac-Séveraisse? Yes, what about it? The Society was going to help a group of young peasants to start a furniture plant. Was there a better place for the present savings? "And"—this was in order to break all resistance and hesitation—"you can have your money back whenever you wish."

So it started. The plant—6500 square feet, with 12 up-to-date machines, a shed of 6500 square feet, with 5300 cubic feet of lumber, a store for display, a truck. The plant was not only the professional center it was there also that the young men began to hear about developing into a Community of Work.

The financial situation was a source of much worry because it was not stable. The peasants-lenders of money would come down any time, and declare: "Monsieur l'Abbé, this is the day of the cattle fair at such and such a place. And, of course, you will understand, that money we lent you, we would like it back. Guess we will have to take it right now, since we are on the way to the fair." What was the 3 per cent to them? Safer to buy a cow now even if it meant selling it again later. That way also they would surely find out if they could trust Abbé Poutrain. Had not he said that they could have their money back any time?

But Abbé Poutrain was not to be put out. "You would like your money right away? Here it is. Come around again when you decide to sell that cow." And a smile and a handshake. And after they had gone, he would quickly jump into his old car. "Now whom shall I call on to replace that money?"

The peasants kept up their probing campaign for several months. Then gradually it died down. Abbé Poutrain breathed a little easier. And so did Pouzol. After all, lumber had to be paid for.

The first year was nil financially. The men were learning. From the communitarian point of view it did not seem that there would be any result. The men were not interested. At the weekly meetings they would sit unresponsive and mute. It was a year during

which Pouzol thought he would go crazy hearing his own voice all the time. There was no reaction to any suggestion. They did not seem to care in the least. Then a man from another town applied for work, and as he was trained already and therefore could help the men, he was taken in. It developed that he and his wife were talebearers, and they initiated a campaign of nasty innuendo about Pouzol, and a wind of ill will and discontent settled on the plant. Pouzol was powerless; he could not get hold of the men and he could not dismiss the man without running the risk of all the men leaving too.

He decided to explain to them in the meeting that he could not go on like that. Probably that meeting would be the last.

In the usual passive silence the meeting proceeded. And when the situation lay open on the table, suddenly the men woke up, stood up, told the troublemaker *he* had to go, came up to Pouzol, shook hands with him and told him they wanted him to stay and there was going to be no further monkey business. Pouzol told me: "They could see I needed them." And so the Community of Work Boisalpes was born. The young peasants had taken their own destiny into their own hands. Like those of La Londe-les-Maures, they had won their first collective step into liberty by fighting against somebody. The relationship had to come to rest on equality. Pouzol could not be the only giver. It had to be an interchange. As long as they only needed him nothing could be built. He had to need them too. It had to be two-way traffic.

After that things started slowly to develop.

Commercially they turned out beautiful peasant-style furniture that anyone, either in a modest house or in a palace, would be proud to display. Sales volume in the second year was 3,000,000 francs; the third year 6,000,000. Now, in 1950, they are on the way to making 1,000,000 francs a month.

More and more young peasants want to join. At long last they feel they are not entirely dependent on the soil. Whether they come for a few months or stay all the year around, when

they go back to the farm they take with them the atmosphere of a place where work is done by modern technical methods. In order to compete against that attraction the older peasants have to consider how they could modernize their agricultural methods.

But the young furniture makers do not only bring new technical methods back to the farms. They also bring a new spirit—the communitarian spirit. Not to think of oneself only, but of the collective good, to work together, to put things in common. One shepherd for several different herds, the stock of winter kindling wood for the whole village gathered by all the men together and hauled on one truck, the purchase of one tractor for a whole group, etc., etc. And the older peasants come of themselves to decide that the young ones who stay on the farm will be paid the same wages as the ones who make furniture.

The whole setup has developed considerably. There is one artisan plant, one center of furniture making, one professional center which boys enter as apprentices at the age of fourteen, one center for girls is to be opened soon, a co-operative for the utilization of agricultural machinery is taking shape.

The peasants have lent over twenty million francs to the Société La Drac-Séveraisse. There are about three hundred families in the valley. The plant employs thirty workers the year around. This means that 10 per cent of the families are already engaged directly in the Community of Work. In the near future, the plant may be able to use two hundred workers during the winter.

People talk of starting other industries in the valley, the kind that would accommodate themselves to alternating activities. The whole valley is stirring.

Probably many young people will choose to go away after they have learned a good trade. Some have already gone. The aim is not to hold anyone back. Significant though is the fact that some who went to work elsewhere and got higher wages have come back after a few months. Their contention was that wage was not everything. They were bored. Just to do one's own professional

job, all day long, for somebody else, was terribly dull, no matter the wages. Nothing to compare with the Community of Work of Boisalpes, which is collectively their own and where education goes hand in hand with professional work (courses in geometry, drawing, French, economics and social life, which they asked for, like Boimondau's Companions): "That's the way to live. Other places you just exist."

When I was there they had at long last perfected their Rule. They had spent a long time studying the Rule of Boimondau and other Communities. Their Rule does not differ much from the Rules of other Communities. But the way they express it does not lack originality. Their declaration of principles reads as follows:

> We have decided to leave this torn-away, disorganized, rotted world in the hands of those who are trying to halt its destruction. We have resolved to construct quietly, without publicity, a healthy living cell, in order to bear witness to other men that it is still possible to live and to build.

This sounds almost like a group of perfectionists retiring within their own perfect little ghetto. But the men of the Community of Work Boisalpes quickly add:

> Our action is based on the economic evolution of the Champsaur, on the equilibrium between industrial and agricultural production, and on the alternating of these activities. We consider the Champsaur the natural community in which our own Community of Work is integrated.

Regarding the financial situation they are explicit:

> We acknowledge the legal backing of the Society La Drac-Séveraisse and accept the Society as temporary owner of the means of production, for which we agree to pay the Society a just rent. This is an exceptional arrangement which does not mean we disavow the principle that the means of production belong to the Community of Work, since in our case it is labor which buys capital.
>
> As implied, no dividends will be paid since the community is opposed to the capitalist system and particularly to the reproducing of money by money.

The common ethical minimum and the pledge of each companion resemble those of other Communities. The aim of the Community of Work is expressed in forceful and unequivocal terms:

The aim of our Community of Work is to make possible for man a fullness of growth.

Knowing that man grows fully only within a group, that selfishness is a dangerous and nonlasting means to help oneself, considering that solidarity is the surest guarantee of security, the companions pledge themselves to work for the creation of new Communities.

I saw the Companions. To get to them I took a car at Gap. We went up and up. The landscape's dimensions grew by the second. I have seen the Grand Canyon, the Rocky Mountains, the Yosemite Valley, but the grandeur of this took my breath away. I could not keep my enthusiasm to myself. "How beautiful!" The peasant woman sitting next to me did not answer. She looked at me sideways, cautiously. She had a basketful of vegetables on her knees. Probably she contemplated all this beauty every week as she went to market, which meant she did not see it at all. We went through a mountain pass, then through another higher one, and rolled down full speed into the Champsaur Valley. I got out. In the village of Pont-des-Fossés the women were standing by their doors. The arrival of the daily bus, that's something! The postman told me where to go, and I went through the village, greeting everyone on my way. They answered, with glances of curiosity. "Surely," they thought, "she is not from around here." But I felt pretty sure the furthest they could guess was Paris. Certainly not New York, especially at that time of year.

The postman said: "The lovely wooden house, the last one on the road." He was right. It was lovely, all new, built like a Swiss mountain chalet, behind an enclosure of crossed logs. I turned the corner of the house and there was the yard and the shops and the shed.

I visited there two days, with Pouzol, with the men, with Mme. Pouzol and the children. It is evident that any economic venture

which is not nowadays backed by tremendous funds has a hard time getting started, whether it is capitalistic or communitarian. This is true even of the large national "plans" set up by some countries. Boisalpes was no exception. The men were not having it easy; to get under way meant sacrifice. They were willing. The atmosphere of the plant was not only one of careful workmanship and steady zeal, it was also one of freedom and joy. Again I noticed that air of quiet self-assurance, the ample carefree swing of the bodies, the spontaneous gaiety that all communitarian workers seem to have. As if apprenticeship in liberty conferred dignity, a sort of nobility of carriage and a healthy lightheartedness.

The one who had the hardest time was of course Pouzol, in true-to-form communitarian fashion. The head should always be the one who takes the biggest cuts and who is paid last. Mme. Pouzol was willing. She was wholly willing for herself. But there were the children. "I tell my husband, I would not mind anything if it were not for the children." Echo of the refrain I heard over and over again in the Communities of Work. Wives do not ask anything for themselves: no luxury, no comfort, no security. For the man's sake they can put up with anything. But not if the children are to suffer. And yet, and yet . . . "My husband got discouraged last year . . . Of course he could have a large salary anywhere else. And what with all that whispering campaign going on. But I told him: We got to stick it out, all of us, even the children."

Pouzol does not want to be Chief of Community. As soon as possible, a peasant of the valley will be elected. Pouzol can help them to start on their way economically and professionally. And Abbé Poutrain is the spiritual inspiration.

Up a mile I went on the rocky road to visit with Abbé Poutrain. He met me as I entered the village of St.-Jean St.-Nicolas, a powerfully built man in his forties with the slow hand gestures of a French country priest. It was cold up there, but the sun was splashing all over and the snowy lace of the peaks of the Alps cut neatly into the deep blue of the Provence sky.

"I have come a long way. I have had to learn not to pull at the

leaves, but to attend to the soil. Wheat requires a certain climate. So does the soul. It is openness toward the neighbor. Modern industrial techniques have something to teach man. Man should understand that his liberty and his plenitude cannot be based on outmoded individualism but on persons united communitarianly. Man should, of himself, start toward developing communitarian life. If he does not, the possibility of going on individually will be taken away from him anyway. Having not learned communitarian life within a Christian atmosphere, man will find himself regimented by force into a kind of collectivism which will not recognize in him any value save the one to participate in the creation of an ideal type in X time. The ideal type, the hypothetical man to come, master of himself, having integrated within himself all the forces dedicated to the feudal lord, to the boss, to God, is a myth, more implacable than all the previous idols. However, one should not become communitarian because one is afraid of Communism. Economic doctrines of Communism should be utilized. They are rational. They are not sufficient. To declare them sufficient is to alter the human balance. We have to go beyond Communism, so that if Communism triumphs tomorrow we can be, right within it, an element of progress and renovation. Spiritual progress does not take place apart from economic progress. Religious concern cannot be imposed upon people nor added on. It grows out of an atmosphere, a climate, not out of discussions of doctrine. Our work is nonconfessional and with no political intent. The value of a work of love lies in itself."

I said: "The liberty, the plenitude, sometimes I think it will never come . . ."

He said, gentle and determined: "The liberty and the plenitude, we have to work for them with all our heart and strength. They are without end. There is not going to be one grand day when they will be all set. 'When two or three are gathered together in my name . . .' When we get together to make humanity bloom, He is in the midst of us."

When he had gone in his old jalopy, I sat on a rock and jotted down what I remembered that he had said. Then I went down again to admire the furniture. I wished I had a place in France and could furnish it with those simple and beautiful pieces. As a matter of fact, by the end of my tour I could have furnished a whole house with communitarian products! To say nothing of the food possibilities.

Though Boisalpes makes outstanding furniture, it is not artisan work, in the sense of going back to the use of individual tools or individual machines. The structure of the plan has been made at the start along modern technical lines so that it could gradually gear itself to industrial production. Pouzol said:

"When can we get into full industrial production? I don't know. In this communitarian business, and with the present economic conditions, one should not be surprised at anything. It may come very slowly, or all of a sudden. We cannot just produce and neglect the human side. On the other hand, we all have to make a living within the present industrial structure. A constant equilibrium is to be searched for."

Out of this short survey of the few rural communities we can see how complex and varied the pattern is.

A few families get together to exploit in common their own individual estates: Saint-Georges, L'Aurore.

A few families, with agricultural training get together on one estate and exploit it together: Rozy-sur-Chavannes.

The owner of an estate with a commercial outlet persuades his workers to go communitarian: La Londe-les-Maures.

A Christian intellectual gathers people who have no agricultural training and want to live Christianity as it was in the primitive Church: Rossier, Seysses.

On a Christian basis but without doctrine or dogma people with agricultural training get together on an estate and cultivate it: Bouron.

Through the presence of a Community of Work, whose inspiration is born of a Christian exigency, a whole valley is set toward a re-evaluation of human work: Champsaur.

These different starts can be roughly divided into two: People who have land and go communitarian afterward. People who go communitarian and get land afterward.

It is far too early to tell which is best. Except for the Christian intellectual experience, nothing has been in existence long enough. Therefore, what we know more about are the shortcomings of the Christian intellectual experience. Its danger partakes of its intellectual background: the return to the soil, the back-to-the-woods movement is often artificial and a sort of escape. The experience is handicapped by lack of technical knowledge. Outsiders are prompt to criticize it on the ground of its Christianity; dream, illusion and impracticality being synonymous with Christianity. This does not seem to hold since there have been prosperous rural Communities in both the Protestant and the Catholic world. One does not have to be a Christian to lose contact with reality. Dreamers, sentimentalists and utopians are found everywhere among unbelievers as well as believers, as a perusal of the communitarian movement throughout the centuries amply demonstrates.

However, it seems that it could be said, generally speaking, that if people go communitarian before they have land they have the advantage of a common ideal, on one side, and the danger of illusion and lack of technique, on the other.

If people have land first and go communitarian afterwards, they have to overcome a long-ingrained distrust and individualism, but, on the other hand they are free of illusions and have technique.

As for the difficulties inherent to the transformation of a capitalist enterprise into a communitarian one we shall study them again later in connection with industrial Communities. Sufficient to say here that, in a certain sense, the transformation in the case of a rural Community is both easier and more difficult. The owner

who has lived on his estate and looked after it commercially has been near his workers in everyday life. This has advantages and inconveniences. In a way he is not so far removed from them as the industrialist; on the other hand, his presence as Chief of Community within the same background may raise delicate problems of adjustment.

Another remark to make after studying rural Communities is the fact that unity of spiritual concern is more frequent than in industrial Communities. Not so much unity of dogma, especially in France, but unity of outlook, and this by a natural and a sort of instinctive grouping, not by predecided segregation. This might not be true if the rural Community were as large as the industrial ones. It is probably more difficult to get along in close relationship with two dozen people than with two hundred, so that instinctively one eliminates the possibilities of trouble. However, this seems to hold true for Communities approaching integral Communities, with common living quarters, and not for Communities where the families are dispersed on their previously private estates.

Rural Communities have caught the attention of the Secretary of Agriculture in France. The government was represented at their last convention in January, 1949. The government delegate said:

> In the French economy all forms of co-operation are highly interesting. Among them the most complete ones should hold our attention, that is, the "Communities of Work," because they take into consideration the whole man . . . This form of association and co-operation plays an important social role, since, in many cases, it promotes a rejuvenation of agriculture and makes it possible for young people to be on their own. But, besides this, there is the moral side of it which gives the most beautiful human qualities a chance to develop.

One might be surprised at this endorsement by the government, and wonder what is behind it. The fact is that, in France, if there are many places where communitarian sense has died out as it did

in the valley of the Champsaur, there are also many places where it never vanished completely. In old France, some rural Communities lasted centuries, and something of their spirit still lingers about and could be awakened. Not only co-operatives, like those of cheesemakers in the Jura, but regular Communities. Some of them claimed twelve hundred years of existence, like the one of Pinon in Auvergne which was dissolved in 1925 and could trace the registration of its existence in the charts at the time of Charles Martel (eighth century). All property and fruit of production, including women's dowries, was put in common forever. The Master was elected by the General Assembly, men and women, for life. A Mistress was elected too. She could not be the wife of the Master, nor his sister, nor his mother. The Master directed the work in the fields and the running of the estate in general. The Mistress looked after the organization of the dairy, the chicken coop and the general household. She also looked after the education of the children, who were brought up all together. They had fixed the number of heads of families to eight. If there were more, they went away and settled somewhere else like a swarm of bees. But as the Pinon Community had many children there were sometimes as many as sixty people. They took their meals together. The French writer, Henri Pourrat, tells us[4] that "the women did not sit down; they ate standing up, bowl in hand, attending to the men, according to the antique custom; but they were treated with great respect and they had been educated in city convents."

The Community produced everything "except iron and salt," which was acquired through barter.

At election time (even in that patriarchal form there was some democracy) after they had sworn fidelity to the new Master and discussed the business of the Community they would recall their tradition: How, far back, long before the year 1000, a father had told his children never to divide and take away for themselves alone whatever they had. And to teach their children to do the

[4] *L'homme à la bèche* by Henri Pourrat.

same forever. And the children had promised and had done it and so had their children, and the children of their children, and so on, down through the centuries. "They put together the strength of their arms to defend themselves and to work, their grass in the same barn, their wood under the same shed. They were strong and hospitable, they lived well and will go to Paradise."

So runs the tradition. Also that one day a traveler inquired from the present Master if there were not discussions and quarrels sometimes. The Master agreed that there were. "What do you do?" inquired the traveler. "What sort of sanctions do you use?" "Never thought about it," said the Master. "Of course sometimes there is a little friction, especially between women, but I never let them go to bed on their sourness. At suppertime everyone has his say at the table; I make them touch and drink a tankard and with a prayer all is in order."

The old rural Communities died gradually from various causes which we cannot study here. However, one of them should be mentioned because it bears directly on the legal status of the present rural communitarian experiences. In 1818 the Napoleon Code stated that "no one can be forced to remain with unpartitioned property." This, of course, was the road opened wide to individual property. Whereas in a Community personal property still exists, but not individual property.

Without going back to outmoded patriarchal legal forms, it is necessary, says the present-day rural communitarian, that a new legislation be enacted, which should enable rural Communities to pursue their liberating movement within the framework of the law.

At the January, 1949, convention the General Supervisor of Agriculture related his visit in 1925 to the last Mistress of one of those old French rural Communities. As he apologized for having taken so much of her time, Mme. Ferrier answered: "At our place, we never lose time since we do not try to make money." This seems a terse summing up of the old communitarian spirit. People

wanted to live modestly; they distrusted wealth. They got together neither for material profit nor even for work itself. What they were after was to live better their everyday lives.

The present-day European communitarians are the same, and especially the rural ones. Commercial profit is not their goal. Work is not their goal. Ideology is not their goal. Leisure is not their goal. Just life, and "the fullness thereof."

Modern techniques, a keen awareness of the solidarity of all workers the world over, may give a certain definite style to the present-day rural Communities. Who can complain? The 1789 revolutionary song of the peasants of Limagne still rings true:

Amis, changeons de chapeaux
Et buvons à la santé
De la co-co, de la co-co,
De la communauté![5]

[5] Friends, let us change hats, and drink the health of the com', of the com', of the community. Cited by Henri Pourrat in *L'Homme à la Bèche.*

CHAPTER III

Machines and Men

> The opposite of destitution is not prosperity. It is value. What is to be done is not to produce wealth but to give man, humanity, the universe, proper value.
>
> —L. J. Lebret

EVERYBODY knows that in the present setup of the Western world a huge capital is required to start anything, that any small independent enterprise will find it practically impossible to stand on its own. Large concerns, trusts, do not leave much possibility to a small outfit to make good.

This is true of any small economic expression, whether capitalist or communitarian. In fact experience seems to prove that when bad goes to worse the small communitarian setup fares better than the capitalist one. Yet the odds are too great to place any confidence in this symptom. So that what should be considered is the present-day picture in general: huge concerns in which thousands and thousands of men spend their days as wage earners.

It is very valuable that a few of them break away, and as pioneers start exploring into a more human mode of living. But it is evident that it would be an illusion to entertain the thought that, by and by, new plants started by communitarian workers will of themselves grow into such proportions as finally to compete with the capitalist market and absorb it. It cannot happen for many reasons, the most obvious being, first, that the competitive

era of capitalism is gone; second, that workers do not find capital easily. Creating an entirely new economic expression may be possible after a war, a revolution, when demands are high or when everything can be reshuffled. Otherwise, if real progress is to be made it should be started with that which already exists. In this case, by transforming a successful capitalist setup into a communitarian one.

Is not this akin to expecting capitalists to commit suicide?

I have seen a few transformations in progress. Let the reader judge.

It was in January, 1947, that in the north of France a prosperous building contractor decided to go communitarian. I saw M. Pierre[1] in March, 1947, for the first time. In *France Alive* I recounted the meeting:

"Capitalists are crazy," he said. "They think that if they go communitarian,[2] they will lose everything, right down to their car and their bath-tub. Actually, if they really knew their business they could easily be elected Chief of Community at a high salary. The workers want chiefs who have experience and ability.

"I heard a talk given by the founder of Boimondau and I was so enthusiastic that I spoke about it all night to my wife. My business was doing very well, but the workers were not really happy. It made no difference when I raised the wages all around. I could feel their attitude. They arrived late to work, did as little as possible, collected their tools fifteen minutes before closing time. As a matter of fact I had been thinking over the whole problem for years. The men were not living real human lives, and when the founder of Boimondau declared to the Catholic corporations' heads that they were guilty of grave sin if they did not go communitarian, I could see the seriousness of the whole thing. I am not a Christian myself. I suppose I am a Humanist. But I could see eye to eye with him on what he said . . . What interested me was the fact that the idea could be adapted to different circumstances. I could see that some-

[1] This is not his real name, as he prefers it not to be known.

[2] The word "communal" was used in *France Alive*. Since then sufficient number of articles and discussions on the subject make it possible to use the proper word "communitarian."

thing could be worked out in my own business. But I had not foreseen how hard it would be to convince the workers to take hold of the idea. It was not easy to wake them out of their torpor and make them want to be free through their own efforts, rather than look for freedom through state or party legislation . . . It took me months to win their confidence. It was a long time before we could all lay our cards on the table. When they insisted that there must be some profit motive lurking back of my proposals, I said that they were perfectly right. They wanted to do good turns for others now and then, and I did too. I wanted to do them a good turn, and at the same time I could profit from it. Taxes would be less, for one thing. Then, since everyone was looking for a broader, more fraternal way of life, why shouldn't we all try to do it together voluntarily, instead of waiting for some violent governmental house cleaning, which would curtail our freedom and subject us to tyranny."

"Supposing," I asked him, "that at some time in the future a new Chief were elected in your place. Then what?"

"That does not worry me too much. In the first place, it won't happen at all until someone comes along who has the experience needed for the job, and that's a long way off. But, if it should come about, I should not want to work with men who didn't want me as their Chief. Besides, I shouldn't be so badly off. All my life I have had so much more than any of these men. Probably I should start all over again in some other place."

"You do run a risk, then."

"Surely. That is the only way to live."

Almost three years later I was back at headquarters, and at a glance I could see all the material improvements. The place had expanded, offices and buildings added, new construction going up. It was all very busy and alive. "Why not, why not?" beamed the Chief of Community, the former owner. "I told you three years ago that I was through with Malthusianism."

"Three years ago you did not know if it would work. And now?"

"It is the only, only thing to do. It is the interest of the heads of firms to do it. Prosperous firms, understand? You don't go communitarian because you have failed economically as a capitalist."

We argued about the transformation being advantageous to heads of firms. If it was, why did not many more start on the path?

M. Pierre said: "It is like this: you believe in God and I don't, for instance. You won't convince me. No matter what the evidence. Christians say it is a matter of grace. So is communitarian understanding."

"All right. But let us take a concrete case. Yours. Are you better off as Chief of Community than as a boss?"

"I certainly am. As a boss I work for taxes and, as a result, I slip into Malthusianism. Most depressing. Whereas as Chief of Community I can go to town. You can see for yourself how it looks around here now."

"Yes. Only you did not have to go into Malthusianism. Though taxes would have taken a good deal of your profit, you could still have augmented your personal profit in a way exceeding what it is as Chief of Community."

"Listen, what is the good of augmenting one's personal profit all the time? You don't take it with you anyhow. I live well. I am satisfied. I prefer to have fun in taking risks which help others. Piling up profit for oneself is dull. When I was young it was a real adventure, because of competition. One had to have initiative, judgment, boldness. That's what made it interesting. But nowadays . . ."

"One needs a mercantile spirit more than a pioneer spirit," I finished.

"And if you are a born pioneer like me, what do you do? You go communitarian. Mind you, I don't think it is the solution of the whole world problem. But it is the first step in the right direction. And I always claimed that the communitarian setup was no danger to the capable boss. Workers want technicians and men of ability. As for the people who do nothing but cash dividends, they are going to find out one of these days that money is nothing any more. If they want to go on living in an illusion, what do I care?"

"Don't you think that the fact that you have no children changes the picture for you?"

"Always that question. Everybody's question. I am not a dreamer. I deal only with realities. I work with conditions as they are. It is useless to wonder what I would do if this, if that . . . I plainly don't know what I would do. But I know very well what the given conditions are now and that I can act on those."

The Rule of the Communauté de Travail de Bâtiment du Nord has many points in common with the rules of other Communities. It also has its own particular color. The imprint of the strong and practical personality of the former owner is undoubtedly great, all the more because he has to deal with some elements who have not yet developed as French citizens of long standing, men from other countries where the education level is particularly low. Other communitarians who go to visit this Community mention the dictatorial attitude of the Chief of Community but they also mention the difficult situation he faces because of the lack of culture of the workers. It is impossible to start in the same way with people who have had little or no previous training at all in liberty and initiative.

M. Pierre maintains that he will make communitarians of his men because it will be more advantageous for them to be so. He says he can prove this and that men are what they are. This brings up heated discussions between him and other communitarians who maintain:

1. That men are interested in something besides immediate material profit. 2. That if M. Pierre's men are not so it is for two reasons: a very low standard of living in former countries and communitarian initiative coming from the boss. "All right," answers M. Pierre squarely, "so what? I have to work with the situation as it is."

The reasons given in the Rule for growing into a Community of Work are somewhat the same as other Communities':

> Ideal human team owning its means of production, with remuneration calculated according to total human value, a maximum of individual security, and collective and individual engagements to work always toward a greater development of each member and his home.

Some basic principles have a physiognomy of their own:

The professional activity has to be prosperous at least as much as it would be in a capitalist setup. M. Pierre's point of view is that this is the only sound basis. He does not believe in starting from nothing without any hope of a profit rapidly becoming equivalent to the one of a capitalist enterprise.

Workers are not compelled to join the Community. They can work as salaried people in the enterprise. However, the proportion of communitarians cannot be less than half the total number of workers. Salaried workers are paid union wages. Communitarian workers are paid union wages plus a bonus for surplus output, plus a share in profits according to social value.

Of course here discussions flare up with other communitarians: differentiating through money between communitarians and non-communitarians spoils the communitarian spirit at the start. Dangling a "reward" for joining the Community is not ethical. M. Pierre argues back that he does not see how compelling all of them to join the Community of Work would be more in keeping with the communitarian spirit. And that as far as a "reward" is concerned, it is as good a psychological basis as the heaven promised by religion. Whereupon a few nonreligious and a few religious communitarians are up in arms. The first ones argue that it is precisely what disgusts them with religion. The others claim that people who are religious because of the promised heaven are not religious at all. M. Pierre comes back with his usual "I am working out my own problem."

As for the collective property of the means of production, since the firm existed prior to the Community, the Community decided to reimburse the former owner the value of his business. This is being done by man-hours. When the Community comes of age an official document will be signed stating reciprocal obligations.

Reimbursing is along habitual communitarian lines. The question is: when will M. Pierre consider that the Community has come of age and can own the means of production?

M. Pierre says he does not know, because he does not have his head in the clouds. He is a hard, successful businessman. There is much to learn to run a good business; management is not improvised. It would be sheer folly to turn over the whole thing to the workers before they could handle it properly. It would be to wrong them in fact, and put them at the mercy of the first ruthless dictatorial individual who came along. To tell the proletariat that they can take over, even to let them do so, without having seen to it that they are ready, is dishonest. Of course, on the other hand, to use the argument that workers are incapable of successful ownership and management for perpetuating the present capitalist structure also is dishonest. The thing to do is to work together actively for a change of structure. This means a considerable educational effort. Also some definite policy. For instance, the remuneration is calculated as follows:

Union wages	plus	
Surplus bonus	30%	to the more efficient team
	20%	to all the Community members
	20%	to management
	30%	to the Community itself

So that 80 per cent goes to the workers.

This means that though extra output is most profitable to the efficient team yet all other communitarian members benefit by it.

In the sharing of profit 50 per cent goes to the Community members and 50 per cent to the Community Fund. This fund is increasing steadily whereas M. Pierre's capital is not.

Distribution of profits. Calculated according to social value; professional activity 150 points maximum, intellectual activity 150 p.m., moral activity 300 p.m., family activity 300 p.m., communitarian activity 400 p.m., adversity 1,000 p.m.

The usual criticism made against Communities of Work "that it pays to be good" finds here a glaring emphasis: 400 points on communitarian activity, this rating (see number 5 below) being used to determine the communitarian coefficient which multiplies the general rating.

Each activity is divided as follows:

1. PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY (maximum total: 150 points)

Age	20
Years of work	2 x number of years
Attendance	20
Output	20
Quality of work	20
Studies	20
Efforts	10
Progress	10

2. INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY (maximum total: 150 points)

Instruction	100
Experience	45 (intelligence)
Lectures	1 x number of hours
Studies	2 x number of hours
Efforts	20
Progress	10
Courses	4 x number of hours

3. MORAL ACTIVITY (maximum total: 300 points)

Frankness	80
Good behavior	40
Courage	40
Temperance	40
Good example	40
Selflessness	40
Friendliness	40

4. FAMILY SETUP (maximum total: 300 points)

Position	0 for the bachelor
"	50 for the married man
Dependents	50 for each person
Birth	200
Marriage	200

5. COMMUNITARIAN ACTIVITY (maximum total: 400 points)

Neighbor groups	200
Assemblies	100
Communitarian responsibility	100
Communitarian instruction	100

Communitarian spirit	100
Propaganda	100

6. ADVERSITY (maximum total: 1,000 points)

Illness	4 x number of days
Death	1,000
Casualties	variable
Losses	"

There is as yet no General Assembly and no Court because it requires, says M. Pierre, "educated communitarian members with sure reflexes. It is a question of time." However, the General Council, composed of the Chief of Community, the assistant manager, and three workers proposed by the Chief of Community, is elected unanimously.

Assemblies of Contact and Neighbor Groups function normally.

Teams have developed recently: Economic team (co-op of consumers); Mutual aid team (solidarity basis *not* charity, insists M. Pierre); Library team; Leisure and Tourism team.

The question of remuneration of women has not been taken up. This is a difficult question anyhow in all Communities, let alone in this particular case. M. Pierre thinks it will have to be taken up much later. A favorable time might be when the question of new homes will have to be examined. Like other French communitarians, M. Pierre does not favor the idea of a grouping of the communitarians in a model city. He believes in integration within the civic community. But regarding plans and comfort for individual homes, he thinks women would be most helpful.

From a business point of view the experience is favorable. The personnel has doubled since 1947: 40 people now, 25 Community members. M. Pierre considers he did not lose anything; as for the other members, they have gained considerably, speaking only from the financial point of view. In addition to their union wages they have received yearly from 20,000 to 70,000 francs individually, in total human value.

Interest and happiness in the work brought better results for the

client for whom Community of Work is now synonymous with an excellent job carried on with "swell guys."

From a communitarian point of view, the main drawback lies in the fact that the workers do not have any guarantee of future ownership of means of production. They have to gamble on M. Pierre's living long enough to see it through. "Well, after all," says M. Pierre, "that's the only chance they are taking."

M. Pierre maintains that the Communauté de Travail de Bâtiment du Nord is only a precommunity, and he won't be committed to anything else for the time being. His caution and his sound business ability constitute a valuable contribution to the communitarian movement. And even his bluntness and authoritarianism cannot make anyone doubt his loyalty in his search for truth and justice.

Transformation is a ticklish business. It is difficult in the case of private enterprise as is M. Pierre's. Yet it is infinitely more difficult in a case of the typical capitalist enterprise, a limited company.[3]

It seems logical that if the initiative does not come from the workers themselves in such a setup, it will have to come from the manager or the director. It is difficult to imagine that it could come from the stockholders themselves, who are absentee owners interested only in returns. However, though they do not take the initiative it is possible to secure their agreement for a gradual transformation. Witness the Community of Work S.I.C.A. at Lyons.

In 1935 M. Monel, managing director of S.I.C.A., a limited company for industrial production of cookstoves (wood, coal, gas, bottled gas, electricity), became convinced that there is "fundamental and irreducible antagonism between the interests of capital and the interests of the workers.

"On one side: a tendency to pay as little as possible for work and sell the product as high as possible.

[3] Exactly: société anonyme.

On the other side: a tendency to claim higher and higher wages for less and less work."

He came to the conclusion that the whole system was bound to collapse and that it was high time to experiment along new lines.

M. Monel is a quiet-looking, efficient businessman. He is an engineer. He is as far removed from a demagogue as from a dreamer. His conclusions are drawn from strict logic, and if they coincide with justice it is because they are scientifically correct. M. Monel is not a philanthropist nor a reformer. He is a man of intellectual integrity. If you are, you may discover that, starting from another track of thought, you come to meet on certain points still considered by many as sentimental or subversive. For instance, just as carefully as if he were showing me the improvements on his latest cookstove, M. Monel explained to me that property as an absolute right was false; that we would have to come to a better concept: the one of management for the good of all; and that the only guarantee of such a use was in collective ownership and control. That, he said, was the moral side of the question.

From a social point of view it had become evident that work cannot be subordinated to money. Money should place itself at the disposal of work for the greater benefit of consumers and producers.

From this it follows that the manager cannot be the capital appointee, least of all the capitalist himself, but that he should be the elected chief of a production cell composed of capital-labor.

The economic side of the question resides in the indubitable fact that there is no spiritual progress without economic freedom. Since economic freedom is unthinkable within the present-day structure, which permits the exploitation of man by man, it is of the greatest importance that man find a structure within which he can accomplish his own liberation.

This is what I understood as the gist of M. Monel's attitude. What does it mean in practice?

It would be a help to the reader if I could give here a clear

financial picture of S.I.C.A., capital, shares, number of stockholders, sales volume, etc. Unfortunately, that is not possible. Not that there is anything to hide, but because money matters are not divulged as easily in France as they are in the United States. French people are always surprised, for instance, at reading quotations in American newspapers mentioning the amount of taxes paid by this or that person. However, we know that S.I.C.A., founded in 1930 and evolving along communitarian lines since 1935 (five years before Boimondau), is still on the market with a sales return of 80,000,000 francs in 1948.

It employs from seventy to eighty people.

Successive degrees in membership are established along about the same lines as in other industrial Communities. Because of the capitalist setup, the remuneration presents itself differently:

A newcomer is salaried.

After three months, if he wishes and if he is accepted by the Community, he is paid communitarianly, that is, according to his total human value, every month. He is called a registered member. At the end of each year he receives his share of yearly profit as registered member.

After five years he can apply to become associate member in the management. If unanimously accepted, he can turn his own share of profit into the enterprise. At the end of the year he receives his share of profit as a worker *and* as a shareholder. It is always difficult for the workers to grasp the advantage of this. From ingrained habit they prefer cash to investment, even in their own enterprise. Confidence and vision are built slowly.

Gradually the shares of the Community members multiply. Whereas, the shares of the original stockholders do not multiply but simply increase in value.

This is how the transformation is slowly accomplished. How did M. Monel persuade the stockholders to give up the possibility of multiplying their shares? He did not tell me. Am I right in thinking that he himself had a large proportion of stocks and was

not only the managing director? What is certain at the present time of S.I.C.A. is that this structure works and seems fair to everybody concerned: the original capital, which took the risks and managed alone at the beginning, keeps getting a return, fluctuating according to business. On the other hand, as risks lessen and there are more associate members, returns gradually increase for the Community.

This is a pattern which offers several possibilities of ultimate economic liberation for both labor and capital. It is premature to say what form it will finally take. One can only foresee that the time may come when the shares held by Community members will outnumber in value those of the first nonworker participants. The Community will then be able to reimburse gradually the original outlay. It seems that the original capital would then become free from the enterprise and could be invested somewhere else where most needed. Capital would then become a sort of service such as M. Monel seemed to visualize. It should be paid but would not entitle to ownership or control. Only time will tell if such will be the result.

Having briefly stated the economic setup of S.I.C.A., we should remember that the aim is not collective profit (collective and divisible in this case). It is what the Rule declares:

> All workers should find, within the structure of their work, equal opportunities for human development, and particularly those elements indispensable for their own education.

This is the reason why an economic structure which is fair, which safeguards the dignity of man and gives him the maximum of possibilities, has to be sought. It is with this object in view that ownership and the fruit of the work must become collective.

This communitarian concern for the whole man and his fulfillment is mentioned over and over again at S.I.C.A. It is stressed that the reform of the enterprise is not prompted by an effort at better business but by a concern for man.

The total human value is the result of the professional value and the social value combined.

Neighbor Groups are active and so are the teams.

The common ethical minimum has been streamlined to "sincerity."

Sincerity in the search for truth.

Sincerity with oneself, by fighting against all vices which degrade man and hold him in slavery: pride, avarice, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, laziness.

Sincerity in our relationship with others: through respect of promises, respect of their person, their reputation, their possessions, their opinion.

Sincerity in calling each other down in a friendly manner for faults which hamper the Community.

Sincerity in accepting a calling down.

Sincerity in agreeing to refer all differences to competent Community Assemblies, that is, to the communitarian council."

"Does it work?" I asked.

"It does. The best proof is the bad years. It is nothing to be communitarian when all is well. The communitarian of the bad days is the only real communitarian. Liberation is not achieved without responsibility. We saw it in 1948 during the crisis. Ten per cent went away. They were the ones everybody wished to see go."

And M. Monel went on explaining that there are two erroneous attitudes to face. On one side, the first associates who are ready to improve the workers' condition because in the back of their minds they think efficiency and profit will result. That it will pay. On the other side, there is the workers' attitude: they cannot grasp why the rating of an engineer is so different from an unskilled worker. Both attitudes reveal the necessity of understanding the problem of human value.

At S.I.C.A. communitarian spirit of friendliness is easily developed between men, regardless of responsibilities on the job (manager, engineers, chief of service, foremen, men). They go

out together, fish, ski and discuss their ideas as Frenchmen love to do. "You would be surprised sometimes to hear what comes out. Lately, a very fine man who is a member of the French Communist Party became interested in the Trappists. At one of our outings, he told us about them, and what he knew and what he had read, and everybody contributed what they knew and what they thought about Trappists. I wish it were as easy to get the women together. It is difficult especially when they have children because of differences in educational backgrounds."

"Do you ever regret having started on the communitarian path?" I asked.

"No. I would not change for the world. What we are doing is not much, but we are alive. The communitarian training is good for everybody, not only for manual workers. The boss, the capitalist, or the manager who goes in for it cannot afford to look back for one moment. It is a constant divesting of oneself, not only of one's own wishes, but of one's own conditioned reflexes. One should never, never expect gratitude, for instance. To do so is to have misunderstood the communitarian movement. You have to be ready to die for the liberation of the proletariat by itself without expecting any recognition whatsoever."

"And by so doing liberate yourself?"

The limited company S.I.C.A. is a capitalist setup of moderate proportions. Is it possible to go communitarian within the framework of a large enterprise?

The limited company L'Union Laitière of Geneva, Switzerland, is worth studying in this respect, and all the more since it is a co-operative. It was formed in 1933 when two rival co-operatives, one of producers (Laiteries Réunies) and one of consumers (Société Coopérative Suisse de Consommation), which had bitterly competed against each other for years, understood that collaboration was better and decided to merge. They became L'Union Laitière.

L'Union Laitière sells over fifteen million quarts of milk a year.

About 800,000 pounds of butter. It has 80 stores. It employs 800 people. There are 81 milk routes covered by about 105 milkmen.

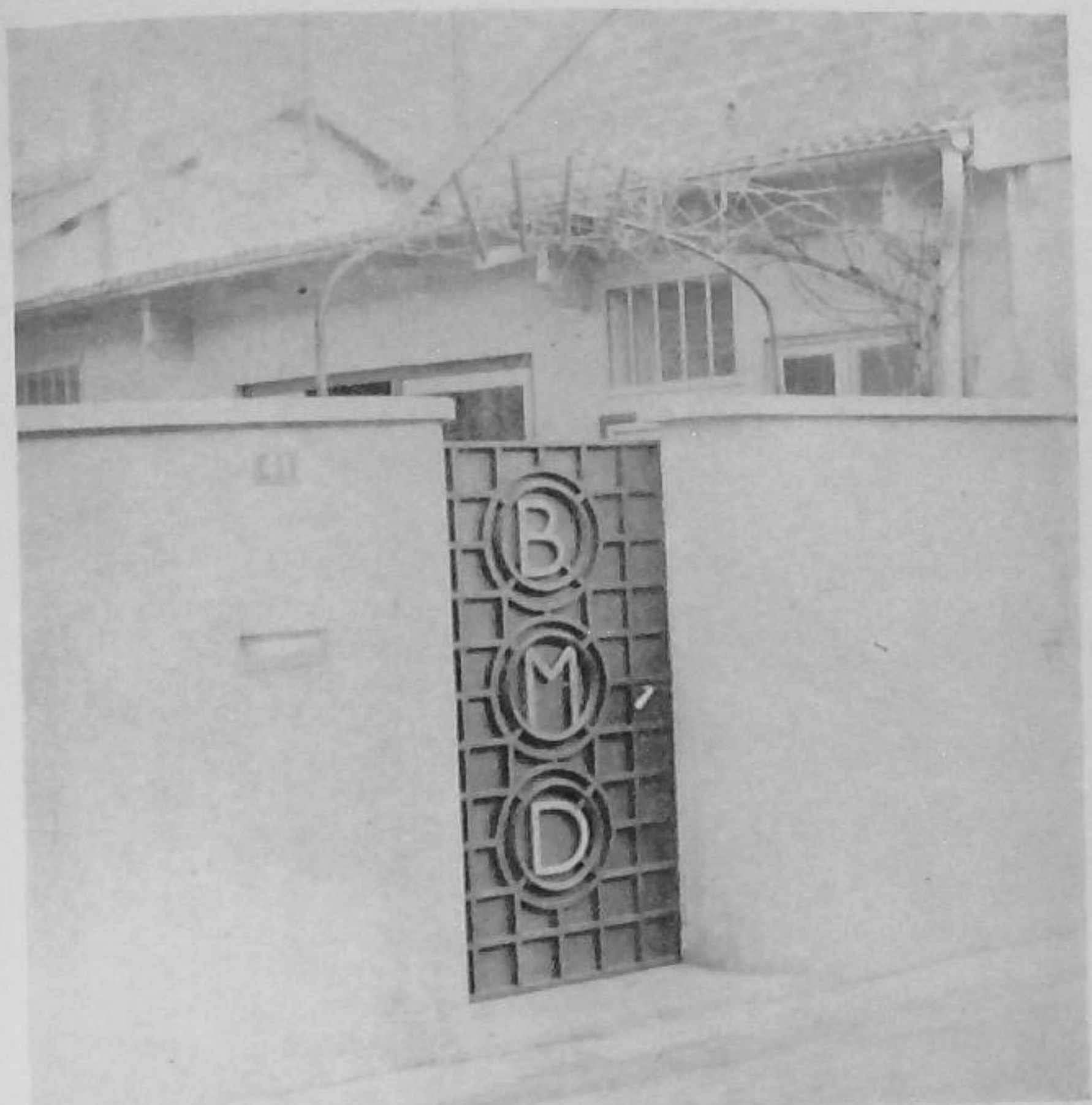
The Union Laitière is not communitarian but it is out of it that the Communauté des Vendeurs de Lait was born in 1946. So that now the whole setup of the Union Laitière is composed of producers-co-operators, communitarian milkmen, consumers-co-operators.

Some people question the word "Community" in the organization title, since it exists within a large enterprise and therefore cannot have its full independence. Yet the very fact of its existence opens the road to greater and more complete communitarian realization.

In Geneva, milk is still delivered by a pushcart. A few bicycles are used with a trailer, and in the suburbs police dogs are put to work. Milk is not bottled. Cold storage for one sector is organized in chosen spots from which the milkman can radiate easily and come back to refill his cans. One milkman serves from 3 to 400 customers daily. Housewives leave pitchers outside their doors. The milkman fills them. In some Swiss towns there is no delivery at individual doors, but there is in Geneva. The milkman has to go up and down many stairs. There are no elevators. Also the milkman has to read the scribbled orders of housewives, keep track of their bills, collect money, mostly at the end of the month, and, in addition, try to push the sale of other products such as cream and butter.

The work is hard and lonely. Milkmen start on their route around 2:00 A.M., some at 1:00 A.M., and they shift for themselves the best they can in the dark deserted streets covered with snow or sleet, or under downpours of rain. Sometimes it is so bad during the winter that they practically have no time to go to bed for two days. To this physical fatigue is added the responsibility of money and accounts, to say nothing of the obligation of being considerate of the sleep of people and pleasant to them when they are up.

In such a setup there is little chance to develop a feeling of

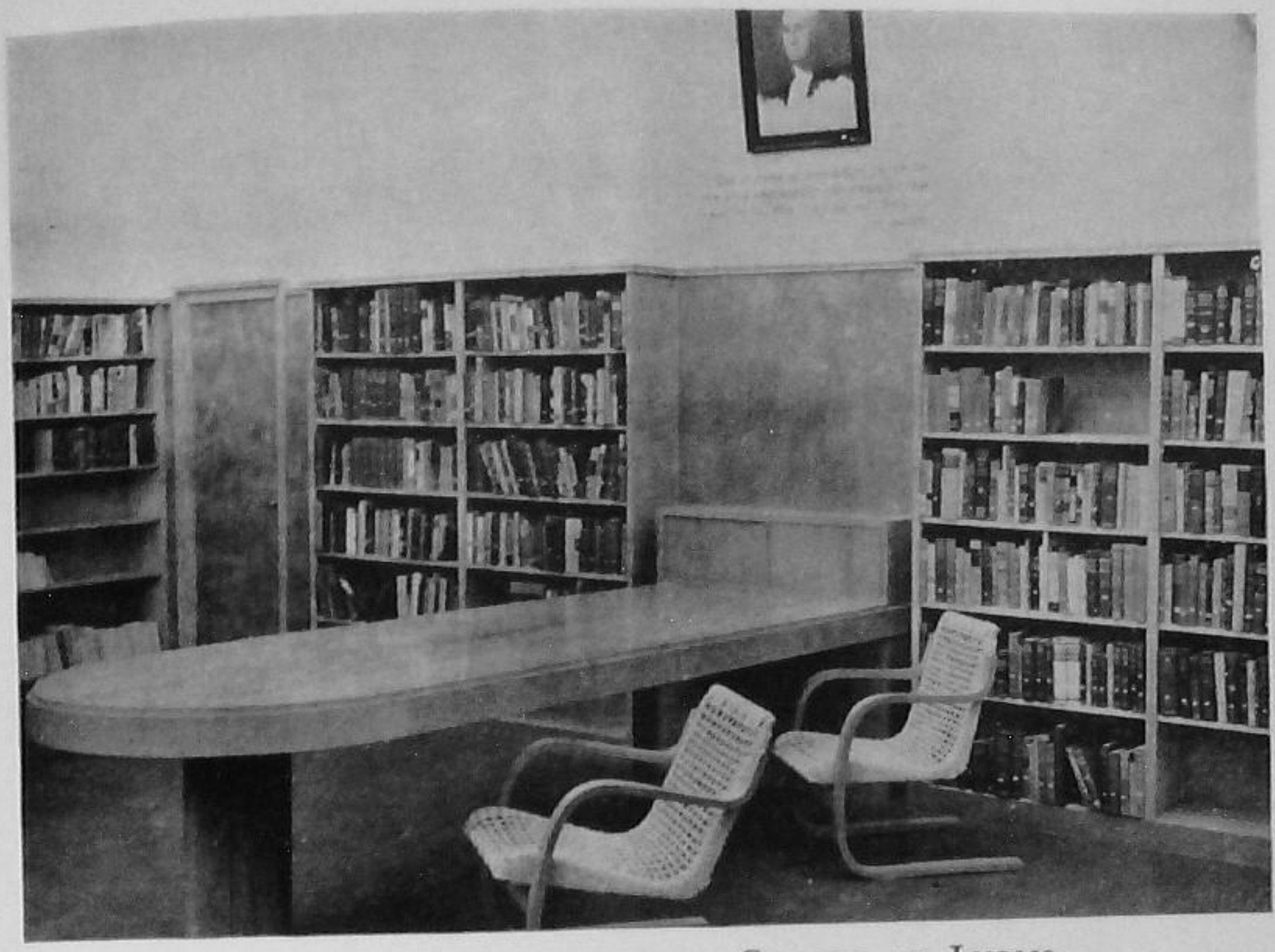


BOIMONDAU
The door to freedom

BOIMONDAU
A course on an intellectual subject in one of the workshops. Study is part of the day's work, and the companions are paid for it

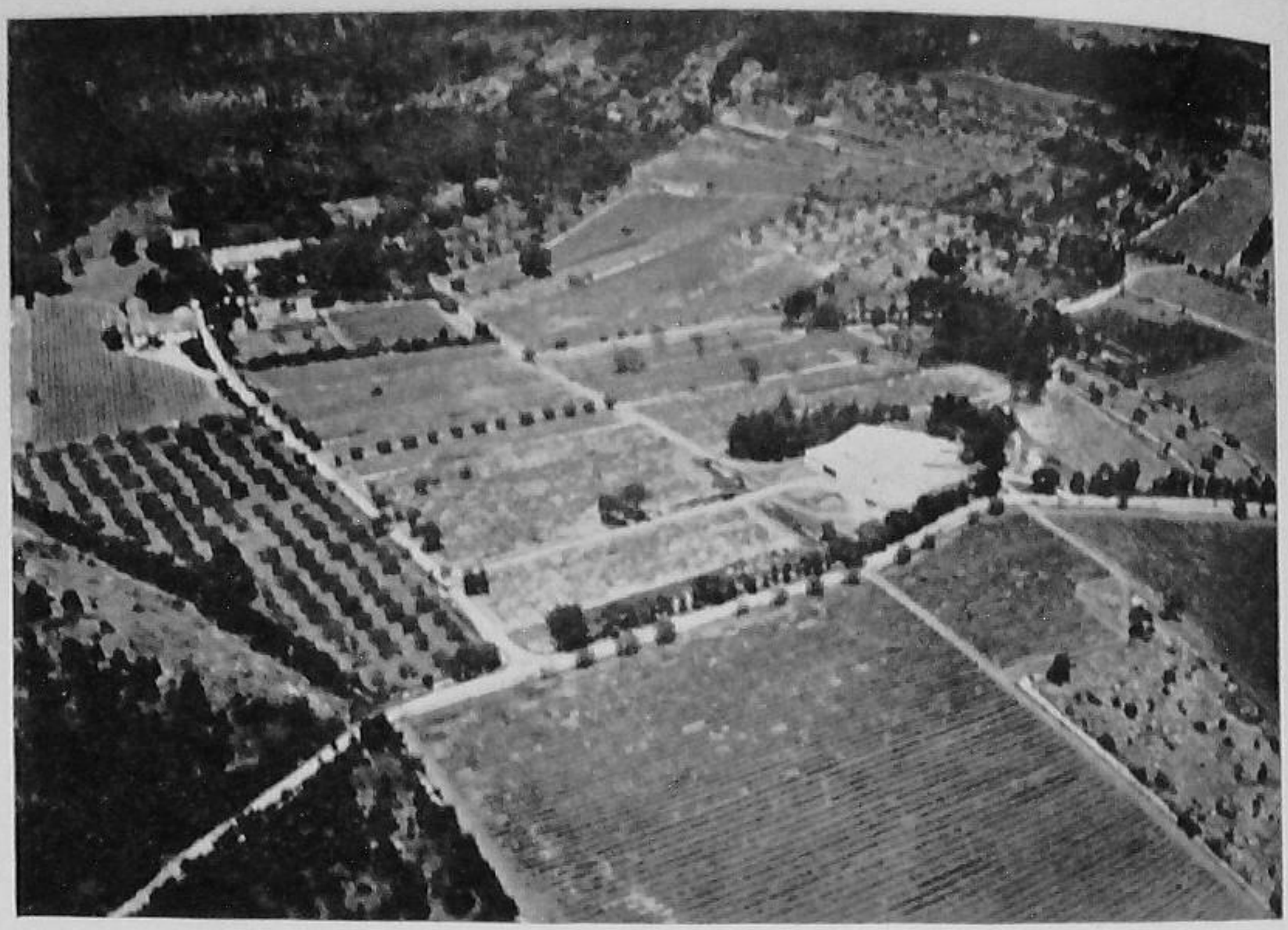
BOIMONDAU SOCCER TEAM

YOUNG BOIMONDAU COMMUNITARIANS ON THEIR WAY TO "WORK"



AMERICAN INFORMATION CENTER AT LYONS
Furniture and paneling were designed and built by Community of Work
L'Habitat

COMMUNITY BOISALPES
Young peasants of the Champsaur Valley who say: "The aim of our Community of Work is to make possible for man a fullness of growth"

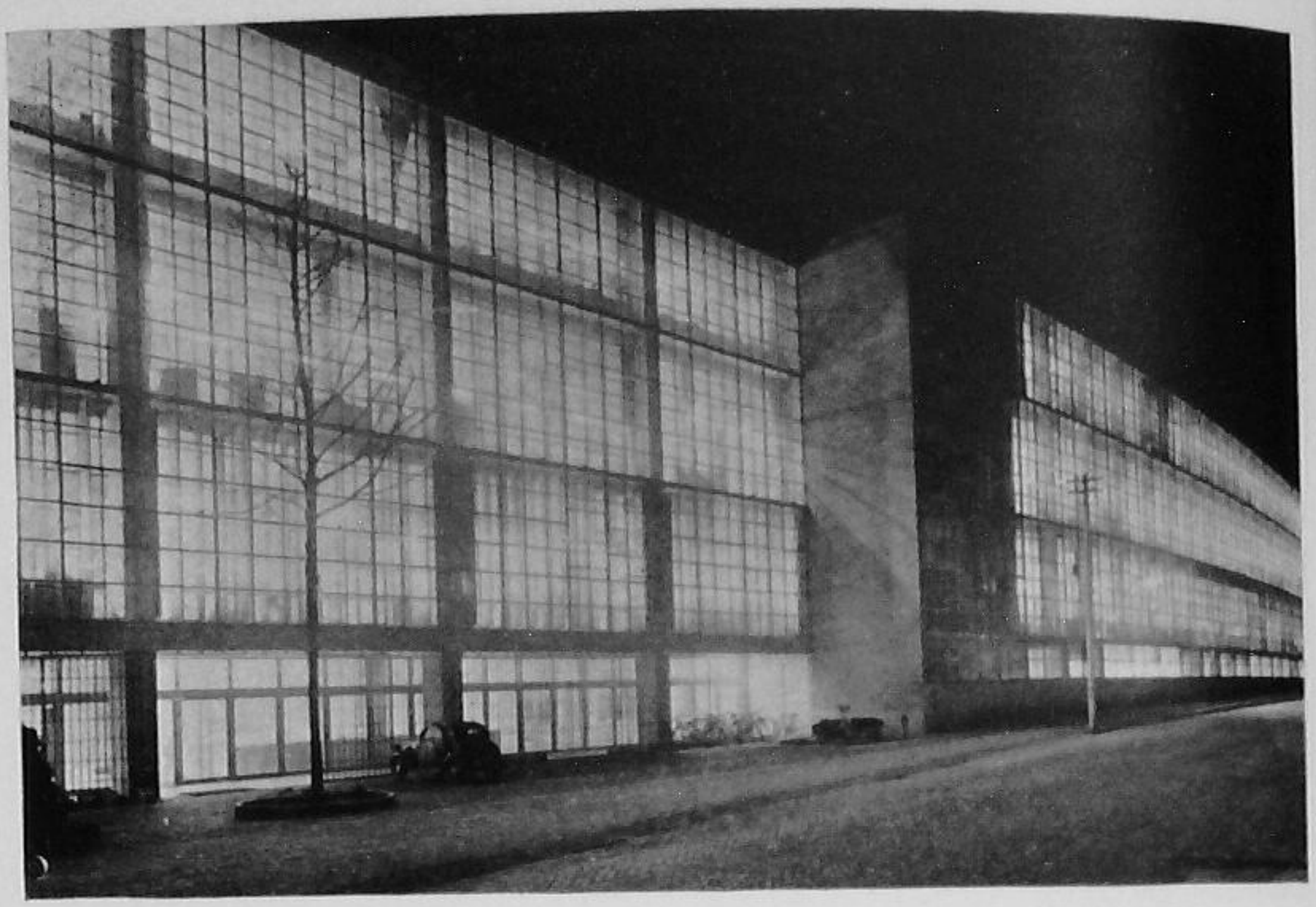


DOMAIN OTT

COMMUNITY ROSSIER

A Geneva Milkman on His Route
He is a member of the Milkmen's Community of the Union Laitière, S. A. Geneva

Les Compagnons de la Musique
The creators of the famous "animated" French song live in communitarian form



NIGHT
Olivetti factory

OUTSIDE OLIVETTI FACTORY
The factory paper, edited by staff and workers, is read at closing time

BOURON
Main farm building

BOURON COMPANIONS
"We came together in order to try to be logical with our ideal of justice, human dignity, fraternity and in order to attempt to put into practice our philosophical and religious convictions"

Courtesy Alpha-Imago, Paris

THE LITTLE PRINCE OF SAINT-EXUPÉRY
as presented by the theatrical troupe, Le Cheval Arlequin, a group working in communitarian form. Saint-Exupéry is the favorite author of the Communities of Work

"L'ENTENTE COMMUNAUTAIRE"
The Federation of the Communities of Work is located on famous Mouffetard Street, "La Mouffe," Paris. The man at the extreme right faces the building

solidarity with other milkmen. And yet the first Community of Work in Geneva was started by milkmen.

M. Louis Maire, the distinguished doctor in economics, president of L'Union Laitière, and well known at the F.A.O. in Washington, always had the preoccupation of developing a structure which would do away with wages. In 1945 he wrote a book, *Au delà du Salariat*, in which he explained his ideas. In 1946 he came out with a plan for a practical realization among the milkmen. He found help and enthusiasm among his executives such as M. Pellaton, the manager, who is president of the oldest patriotic society of Geneva, Société des Exercices de l'Arquebuse et de la Navigation, founded in 1474. He also met with understanding on the part of the men. He only had to make a suggestion. They did the rest of the work, that is, they formed themselves into a Community.

M. Maire summarizes his objectives as follows:

1. *Freedom within the job.* This freedom which does not exist for the salaried worker either in a capitalist or in a co-operative enterprise.
2. *More justice in the distribution of the fruit of the work.* Wages constitute a payoff; money takes care of all; everybody washes his hands of everybody else: the employer of the employee and the employee of the employer.
3. *To re-create a human community in which joint responsibilities make it possible for man to be his whole self and not only a producer.* Thereby introducing a collective concern instead of the selfish individualistic conception.
4. *To bring back the notion of service,* which can exist only when rights and responsibilities coexist.
5. *To make a clean break with the system of salary* and install a structure of associated work.

M. Maire's choice of words is somewhat different from that of the French communitarians. Yet they belong to the same trend of thought. The accent is on man, the whole man; freedom, that is,

rights and responsibilities, equitable distribution of the fruit of the work; a collective concern.

All this has found practical expression in the Communauté des Vendeurs de L'Union Laitière, and this, within a large, established structure. Neither M. Maire nor his associates consider the experience perfect. It is constantly developing. Its vitality, its momentum, to say nothing of its foremost commercial importance in Geneva, make it a strategic point in the European communitarian movement.

One morning in late 1949, two milkmen, the president of the Community and the secretary, who had finished their route, took me around Geneva in the hope that we would still catch a few milkmen on the job. And we did: pushcart, bicycle trailer, even one imposing dog who would not let us look at butter while the milkman was in a house. The pushcart has been built after studying baby carriages, so that it will be as easy as possible to handle and at the same time will not shake the milk. The milk is put in three containers on the bottom shelf of the cart. Above is a box with bottles of cream, and butter, and the ladle and measure for the milk. The milkmen are dressed in blue jeans. They are sturdy young fellows with the frank expression of people who live a great deal out of doors.

I asked why they had not motorized the system. They explained that they would have to raise the price of milk, and no one in Geneva would stand for that. The milk, delivered, cost about 48 Swiss centimes (about 13 American cents) a quart.

It is lucky for the 105 milkmen that the Geneva housewives are so thrifty. Otherwise the walking milkmen might be out of work. But who knows, now that they are a Community, they may find a way to employ everyone even with automobiles, by simply cutting on the time, as they do at Boimondau and in other Communities. However, they do not have to face that problem for the time being.

Yet it was the necessity of reorganizing the whole service that

led M. Maire and Dr. Fauquet,[4] then president of U.L. to present the milkmen with a project along communitarian lines. There was a deficit of 100,000 Swiss francs every year in the service. It was evident that many of the bills remained uncollected, and that there were not enough sales. One solution for efficiency was to do away with lazy or careless milkmen, eliminate some routes and increase others. The other solution was a development along the line of thought that "labor is not merchandise."

The idea was launched in a meeting at which not only the milkmen but the secretaries of the unions were present. So that it is out of the collaboration of the milkmen, who had already a sound union training, the union secretaries, and the management of the Union Laitière that the status of the Community was elaborated. However, when it came to the actual constitution of the Community, the management refused to be present so as to assure the maximum of freedom to the men.

How does the Community function? Without going into administrative details it can be said that the Union Laitière does business with the Communauté des Vendeurs de lait, and not with individuals. The Community is in full charge of the organization of the work of milk delivery. Hiring and discharging are done jointly with the Union Laitière. In connection with this I was told that the Community was much harder on the lazy elements than the Union Laitière. This is a remark common to all enterprises in transformation which I have visited.

Monthly remuneration is fixed as follows:

A basic salary has been maintained for "timid people." It is
255 Swiss francs with a 5 yearly raise of 10 francs a month
+ 1 centime per quart for all sales over an average of 300 quarts a day
+ 2 centimes per quart for monthly sale exceeding the estimated route sale value.

[4] Well-known economist, author of *Le Secteur Coopératif*.

In addition the Community itself receives:

quarterly, 0.5 centime per extra quart

yearly, an allotment on service improvement, calculated on the difference of the previous year overhead and sales volume and the present year

All in all the average allotment of a milkman varies from 700 to 800 Swiss francs. He used to deliver 300 quarts of milk. Now he delivers 500.

Of course L'Union Laitière benefits by this. And though L'Union Laitière is a co-operative, some people may find that the basic principles of the Community of Work are not observed. Undoubtedly they are not at present in full swing as at Boimondau, for instance. But any step, within present-day frames, toward the practical recognition in work of the value of man is important. "The modern world is at a momentous turn . . . we do not have the right to avoid it, but we should cross it resolutely and honestly." So speaks M. Maire, and that is what he and the Communauté des Vendeurs de Lait are trying to do.

It was to be expected that once the milkmen had full charge of their organization, losses would diminish. A fund was established. Every milkman contributing 300 Swiss francs. This fund is to cover unpaid bills, or possible disappearance of milkmen with the route money. The fund should never sink lower than 50,000 Swiss francs. It is fed by depositing 1/16 of 1 per cent of the monthly sales values of the Community. At the end of the year it may be decided that part of the fund can be liberated for communitarian purposes.

And what is the result communitarianly? It is hard to say unless one has seen the milkmen, spent a few hours with them as I did, heard them talk, observed their behavior. People who can plan their work together, who have a collective interest, who are expected to take initiative and responsibilities, are very different from high wage producers.

The General Assembly at the Brasserie du Crocodile (Crocodile

Café) is a lasting memory for me. And a happy one. Men who take their own lives collectively in their own hands, who all together, step out on the adventurous road of freedom and plenitude, it is good to be with such men. One hundred milkmen together. I had never seen so many at one time! M. Pelatton was there, upon expressed invitation from the Community, and also the secretary of the union. I had to wait outside in the hall until the committee of the Community had agreed to let me in.

The meeting proceeded in order and with a good deal of liveliness. All sorts of questions were examined, while everyone sitting around the café tables sipped wine or beer. Not milk! There was the question about the containers with noisy covers. And how to sell more butter. Printed announcements? Talk? A milkman, a young one, advocated making drawings on little pieces of paper. But some milkmen did not know how to draw. Another said he was always successful with his sale of butter. The way he did it was to write in longhand: "Don't forget that I have butter." And it worked. I believed him, looking at him! It was finally decided that all methods were good and should be used, as some of them were better for different customers, and each milkman had his own style. Milkmen had to use a little psychology, and not do like the one who went so far as to wake up customers at four o'clock in the morning in order to sell them butter.

In a Community of Work, problems remain at man's proportion. There was a milkman who was a good salesman but had no sense of solidarity. The minutes of the meeting conclude: "To be put under the press," meaning he will be called down, and probably given a choice piece of the Community's mind.

Or the one who, at the wedding of his brother, got drunk. "A way to act not worthy of someone who makes his living with us. To be put under the press."

And the one who has not made ends meet again, and always has an excuse.

There is the case of the one who is always late in the morning,

and indulges in running away. He has been called down three times. The motion is that since he has not reformed he should be put out. But a milkman suggests that he be told that this is the very last time and that if it happens again he will find himself automatically on the street without the General Assembly having to deliberate about his case. It is adopted.

Then there is the one who quit last year and asks now to be taken back. The Community decides against it: first, because he was not completely satisfactory and, second, because "if he is a weather cock there is no reason for the Community to be one too."

Discussions take place about old-age pension, about the Community being godmother to two orphans from a deceased milkman.

Then there is discussion about what to do with the yearly Community profit return. Many want the whole thing divided and distributed at once. A few suggest part be distributed and the other set aside for a collective fund. This is fought against. Once more it is the agelong inborn reaction of people who have had to make the best of the present opportunity, knowing there was no security whatsoever ahead. The old reproach of the bourgeois comes back to one's mind: "Those people are impossible. They never save, even when they can." But how could they? Today there is work, tomorrow there is none, without their being able to do anything about it. It is inhuman to expect that under such conditions people will do anything except enjoy the present day to the maximum. And this ingrained habit speaks aloud even under new conditions. As it also does at the Communauté des Vendeurs de Lait. Finally there is a compromise: part of the profit distributed, part set aside for a collective fund.

The collective fund is one step toward turning one's thoughts to collective interest. Making the rounds that early winter morning with M. Delacuisine, secretary, and Paul Juchli, president, we talked about the possible use of the fund. What about a country place for the Community? No, it was better to take one's

own vacation away from the Community. What about freeing oneself entirely from the "fixed" monthly amount? What about just saving it in case rationing should have to come back? The three of us had many suggestions! "Too bad," they said, "you did not meet M. Maire. He is in your country [Washington] while you are here! You could have talked things over with him too. We can. There is no limit with him, and he knows what he is talking about."

Other questions came up at that General Assembly: What to do for a funeral? Better send 100 Swiss francs to the widow than flowers. Then festival arrangements were discussed. One milkman got up and complained that, sometimes, at banquets some "guys ate more than their share." For instance, last time he was at a table where someone helped himself *four* times to chicken, there was hardly any left for him. Plans for Christmas and New Year celebrations and summer outings together with the families came up. Someone having suggested a Christmas party dinner, another milkman protested: "I am not religious. But, just the same, Christmas is not for a rollicking time. That's New Year's. Things should not be mixed up."

This is all in keeping with the communitarian atmosphere. It deals with the life of men, individual and collective, with human relationships. It includes material profit and goes beyond it. It is apprenticeship in liberty.

This apprenticeship in liberty is not a sham, but it could easily be that. It is not because an established firm goes in for a workers' board, a workers' council management, in fact any of the variations of the French "Comités d'Entreprise" (Industrial Councils) that it is worth studying. In many cases these moves are only a pretense. Not necessarily out of deliberate ill will on the part of the heads of firms or stockholders, but because of a dislike for the effort necessary to educate workers. So a semblance of representation is granted. A committee of workers is gathered. So-called consultations are held periodically. Workers are shown

the accounts and their advice is solicited. Results are appalling. Not having received any preparation whatsoever, the workers do not know what it is all about; their suggestions are neither here nor there; they do not understand about management and cannot read the accounts. Of course they complain of not being taken seriously, and of not being put in charge. "Put in charge!" managers chuckle behind the workers' back, "when their incompetence is so flagrant that even those toy committees we let them play with are a liability to us. They just don't know what they are talking about. If we would let them have their way production would go to pieces." Reluctance at educational effort, but also deep down, perhaps unconsciously, contempt for man, only too glad to find ample justification.

How far removed from this attitude is the Union Laitière. First of all, for years it encouraged the men to belong to the union in order to get union training. Then later, the fund that had been created to cover debts was handed over to them to administer. Then for appointments to the best routes delegates from the workers were consulted. As the milkman Paul Juchli; president of the Community, says: "The fact that we had to deliberate with members of the management was the apprenticeship for the Community set up." Finally, the suggestion about the Community.

And the Community is truly in charge within the limits of the contract, as M. Maire's[5] outlines it:

> The Community is endowed with real and well-defined powers. It is not a consultative organ. Article 1 of its statutes recognizes it possesses sovereign power within the very large limits established by the statutes.
>
> The Community has legal competence equal to that of the Direction in matters of hiring and firing of its members.
>
> Remuneration agreed upon is shown by accounts available to the control of the Community.
>
> [This includes the accounts of each milkman and also the Union Laitière accounts. Methods are simple. Union Laitière has been classified as "transparent," also as a "glass house."]

[5] *La Communauté des Vendeurs de Lait.*

Remuneration combines individual and collective interests.
In the organization of the work the schedule and timing are no longer fixed arbitrarily. [Constant ameliorations are studied especially in connection with the night schedule.]
The Community and its members are truly integrated in the larger group formed by the agricultural producers, the salesmen, and the city consumers.

To those who claim that production would go to pieces if the workers were in charge, or even if time were taken to educate them, the Communauté des Vendeurs de l'Union Laitière gives the lie. Started with 94 members in 1946, it has now 105 members, which means that new routes had to be covered. The average monthly sale has been stepped up from 700,000 quarts for each milkman to 980,000 quarts.

Another interesting point is the fact that it groups 100 people within an enterprise which employs 800 men. One of the objections raised against taking communitarian steps is that it would not work in large setups. Communitarians always replied—and Hyacinthe Dubreuil advocated it[6] long before the present-day communitarian movement—that a large enterprise was no determent. The thing to do was to have several autonomous groups linked by representatives for the general interest.

In a certain sense the Communauté des Vendeurs de l'Union Laitière realizes that, since it is one group within a large setup. Moreover, it has already happened that, without being solicited, the Community has asked to be kept in touch with the problems of the whole enterprise, and in one case when the Union Laitière was hard put temporarily because of federal decisions, the Community voluntarily stepped in to ease the situation by giving up some prerogatives, which of course were resumed as soon as it seemed fit.

M. Edgar Milhaud in a foreword to M. Maire's book on the Communauté des Vendeurs, speaks of the "Equitable Pioneers of Rochdale" whose centenary was celebrated all over the world in 1945. And he adds that perhaps some day there will be a cele-

[6] In all the books of M. Dubreuil, especially *L'Equipe et le Ballon.*

bration for the "initiative of the Equitable Pioneers of Geneva . . . This experience . . . confirms the major postulate of the new age: to build an economy to man's measure."

M. Pierre was the boss. M. Monel persuaded his associates to go communitarian. M. Maire improved on an already good co-operative setup. But sometimes one associate sees the light and the others do not. Then what?

That's what happened to M. Descat in the north of France. He had studied the Encyclicals of Leo XIII. Then he had become acquainted with *Economie et Humanisme.*[7] Then with Barbu. The road seemed clear to him. He would transform his school paper supply factory into a communitarian enterprise. But his two associates could not see it. M. Descat found it impossible to go on as before. He took out his share and with a few workmen started communitarianly. Then came a general economic crisis in France and things went from bad to worse for the new Community. The bank that had lent them money because of M. Descat's good reputation refused to back them up further. M. Descat sold everything he possessed, all his shares and stocks of any other outfit, even his stamp collection. And somehow, from day to day, they have made it. They meet their obligations, and had a sales volume of about eight million francs in 1949, which of course is very little. But they are on the way up. Whatever they can spare is distributed equally and as soon as it comes in. The Chief of Community himself delivers goods after work on his bicycle. The atmosphere of the small factory is very friendly, more like a big family. They have no Rule. They have not found it necessary. They are emphatic in speaking of the Community as a group of families, not of producers. They are all Catholics who have taken the social encyclicals of the Popes seriously.

It was Rerum Novarum for M. Descat. For M. Mermod of Geneva it was Moral Rearmament. M. Mermod inherited from his

[7] See p. 72.

father a prosperous factory making shoe polish and cleaning products. He did the best he could by his employees, and yet he knew they were not satisfied. It bothered him greatly because, as he put it, "one has to be a Christian in one's own daily life and search for fair solutions."

So he went to Caux, where Moral Rearmament meets, and told his problem to one of the groups. How his factory was not working as it should, how his employees were dissatisfied, etc. After listening to him, the group said: "The trouble is evident. You say 'my' factory, 'my' employees. What do you expect? Think it over."

M. Mermod went home. What they had said irked him. After all, he had inherited the factory from his father. Yet, there was no chance of his getting out of trouble unless he was willing to think over again what up to now had seemed all set. And how was he to go about it?

He prayed, and decided to gather together the employees.

He said: "Out with it. What is it you want? Wages are good, working conditions are good. Yet you seem dissatisfied. What is it?"

The answer came pat: "We don't know anything about the business. It's *your* business, not ours."

Well, after all, it *was* his! Yes, but the Moral Rearmament . . . M. Mermod saw it clearly: "One has to decide whether to stay on the side of the disease, or on the side of the remedy." He decided for the remedy side, that is, work in association with his employees.

M. Mermod does not think that his realization can be called a Community. He is right. It is not that, not now at least. But since it has been in existence for barely two years it still can develop a great deal. M. Mermod is cautious, but he is very sincere also, and one feels sure he will act according to the unfolding of the light. Thus his experience can be studied as a pre-community, or a near-community. Whatever the term used, it is a move in the right direction.

There is an Industrial Council which meets every week during working hours. I happened to be present at one of the meetings: Four people, three manual workers, one white-collar man. This was quite an innovation at the beginning, the white collar worker was more embarrassed to be with the manual workers than M. Mermod was. But this small wall has crumbled.

The Industrial Council does not limit itself to the welfare of the personnel. It reports on the progress of each service, makes suggestions, discusses production, publicity, purchase of new material, etc. It is a council of management. There lies the real and human improvement accomplished by M. Mermod, much more than in the sharing of profits.

This means education for everyone involved, the workers, of course, and also M. Mermod. "I have had to learn not to think out everything by myself." It is not easy when one is an able executive. But, contrary to what people might expect, this sharing in the making of decisions does not impair production. Probably because from then on, for everybody, it is "our" factory.

All this M. Mermod explained to me before the Industrial Council. Nobody seemed self-conscious during this public confession. Yet, the woman who represented the packing department, a motherly person sitting next to me, with a kerchief on her head, confided to me that the "first times she came to these meetings she felt awfully embarrassed."

But it has all worn off. Members of the council seem quite outspoken. According to one of the workers, "We don't keep anything back. Sometimes even, we give each other a piece of our mind, but that's because we want to find a way out."

All the people employed had good union training before. The right to strike has been maintained because of solidarity.

There is a quarterly meeting with the General Assembly of all the employees during which the Industrial Council explains how things stand.

Appointments to the Industrial Council are made jointly by the workers and the management.

Up to the present time no step has been taken toward ownership of the means of production. As long as no definite attitude has been evolved it is difficult to say if M. Mermod's efforts will go beyond benevolence and if the setup will come to rest on firmer ground than sentimental mutual good will. However, it seems there should be hope along that line because of M. Mermod's apparent sincerity and because workers started on the communitarian path make plenty of discoveries of their own.

At the close of the meeting, M. Mermod had some terse remarks to make. "Here, in the Western world, it is not the iron curtain, it's the silver curtain.[8] As for our Community, if Community there is, it is neither to the left nor to the right. It is above."

Obligingly some members of the Industrial Council took me through the factory which had just closed. Machines to make shoe polish, the old machines, the new ones. "Isn't it a pity you won't see them running. Can't you come back?" Friendliness, people who take it easy, who do not rush out at closing time as if the place was on fire, people with dignity and quiet contentment. People whose days are not filled with just the making of money, but with the development of a human style of living.

People bitten by the communitarian idea sometimes find a very roundabout way to make a demonstration. M. Jozon was a successful engineer, employed in a good firm. He had some money of his own. He decided he would leave his job, and create a "Société anonyme à responsabilités limitées," out of which he would evolve a Community. And he did find capitalists willing to join him. They all agreed that when the Community comes of age they will be content with just having their money back plus a *set* risk-return of 50 per cent. If you are not weighed down already by a limited company, why go to the trouble of creating one? Why not the Community first? For several reasons not too

[8] Ce n'est pas le rideau de fer, c'est le rideau d'argent. (Play on the word "argent.")

far removed from those which prompted Abbé Poutrain in the Champsaur Valley. Capital is necessary. In our present world it is easier to secure it for a limited company than for an outright Community. Also such setup provides the time indispensable to communitarian education.

That last point is important. It is the most difficult one. M. Jozon holds that if the communitarian idea is any good it should be applicable to any group of workers, not chosen ones in any sense. That is what he has done. So it means first waking the workers out of their slave torpor. It is quite a job. It takes time. The limited company provides it.

The Community of the Société Générale d'Entreprise Electrique is not yet two years old. Already there is active participation on the part of the workers. They have mastered the difficulty of management, they can read the accounts. They have learned that if they oppose any plan it is all right but they must have another one to offer.

They have no written Rule because they prefer just to live it.

Remuneration shows a special feature: the minimum is not based on professional value, but on social value (it cannot go below union wage and is even somewhat higher). The professional value is added to this in order to determine the total human value.

The Société Générale d'Entreprise Electrique installs electricity all around Paris, in factories, large buildings, etc. It has more work than it can do. M. Jozon says: "There is no crisis in production. It is all in the distribution. Because of profit. The Community of Work is the height of the Christian conception."

I said: "Why don't more people see this?"

"You are a woman," said M. Jozon. "Do you know what happens when a husband buys a washing machine for his wife, for his French wife at least? At first she is delighted. Then the next Monday, when he comes home, he finds his wife exhausted. 'What is the matter?' he asks. 'It's washday.' 'Yes, but now you

have an electric washing machine.' 'But the washing machine does not take in all the dirty clothes at once. So I have to make several washings, practically all day long.' The man says: 'But you don't have to do that. Now that you have the machine you can wash one batch of clothes every morning, and you won't even notice it.' Well, it is simple enough. But a woman won't do it. She always has good excuses to prove to you it cannot be done. Now, if it is so hard to convince one woman about as easy a thing as a washing machine, what can you expect from capitalists?"

"But," I said, "all women are not like that, so . . ."

"Agreed. Neither are capitalists, since some of them do go communitarian now. But the majority, the majority . . . What they have to learn is this: Up to now they were businessmen. Now they have to be men."

Information concerning the workshops R.G.

Registered Name: S.C.O.P. Frames R.G.

Workshops: 52, rue Bichat, Paris 10. Telephone: Nord 49-13
Shops in sympathy with the organization: 7, rue Bonaparte, Paris 6.
Dan 41-77 61 Avenue Kléber, Paris 16. Pas 08-45

Main office: 52 rue Bichat.

Chief of Community: Gault Maurice.

Co-operative Society of Production in communitarian form, having flexibility of both personnel and capital, successors to the limited company Frames R.G., themselves successors of Gault Emile, founder in 1869.

Economic aim of the S.C.O.P.
Manufacturing of artistic frames, frames for paintings, water colors, modern and ancient drawings. Reproduction of antique frames, pier-glass, mirrors and consoles. Gilt baguettes modern and antique and all gilded decorative objects. Frames for photographs, large and varied collection. All repairs, cleaning and restoration. All types of decoration.

Production
The S.C.O.P. actually is composed of 60 companions, apprentice-companions and postulants, all with professional artistic training. S.C.O.P. output represents 60 per cent of the total output in Paris and suburbs. Monthly sales volume approximates between 1 and 1½ million francs. Workshops and equipment would permit increasing production by 70 per cent.

References
Picture Galleries: Charpentier, Bignou, André Weill, Wildenstein, Gérard, Rosenberg, Elysée.
Artists: Dunoyer de Segonsac, Matisse, Vlamynck, Dufy, Rouault, Friesz, Van Dongen, Derain.
Decorators: Leleu, Ramsay, Chalom, Courtois.
Stores: Lancel, Heinkele, Kirby and Beard, les Grands Magasins.
Banking Reference: De Baecque, Beau and Lantin, 9 rue Rougemont, Paris.

So reads the card filed in at the center of the communitarian movement "L'Entente Communautaire."[9] It would be hard to find a sounder firm anywhere, financially and professionally. It is known all over Europe.

On a gray December morning I crossed the St.-Martin Canal in Paris. This is an industrial section, in the northeastern part of the city. It is an old section. Though it is a busy one, the canal winds around leisurely, and in order to cross it one goes up a few steps and walks on the canal lock. There is room barely for one person, not too fat, so, by mute mutual consent, pedestrians alternate: first those on one side, then the others. It is all very polite, gentle and surprisingly efficient. R.G. plant is just off the canal, inside an old court on the rue Bichat.

The reception room of this famous place would astound many American visitors. It is old, shabby, no comforts whatsoever, not even a chair. But the walls are covered with the most beautiful collection of picture frames of all styles, material, sizes. The intensity of the activity of R.G., its accomplished workmanship, its bursting creative ability, its long tradition—all this, on these

[9] Federation of Communities of Work.

walls. The room is saturated with it. It is alive. No use indeed of any kind of "show," whether with a coat of paint or some comfortable chairs and lamps. The show is there all right, on the walls, as substantial as bread and wine.

Since 1869 the Ateliers R.G. have been known, not only for their first-class professional technique, but for their fair employment practices. No one has ever been dismissed because of bad times. Steadily, for over three-quarters of a century, the owner-managers have improved conditions to the best of their possibilities and to the maximum of their vision. When the present Gault took over in 1930 he meant to do always better. He launched a fine program which he carried through: a meeting hall for parties and dances, a play room, a bar, a social emergency fund, paid vacations, share of profits at the end of the year. And yet he was not satisfied. What he was doing was paternalism, and he was after justice. For several years he studied all the attempts made at the suppression of the exploitation of man. He became familiar with such organizations as the Association Capital-Travail, Sociétés Ouvrières, Les Coopératives de Travail, etc. But nothing seemed to fit what he was after, until he ran across Barbu. Then he knew for sure that there was the right approach for the present day, the only one "which makes possible the liberation of the workers immediately [the liberation always *promised* to them]."

For two years he studied the Community of Work. He made several trips to Boimondau. He brought with him executives and workers from his plant, men and women. Upon each return he would gather together all his personnel and explain what he had seen and the executives and the workers would also give their reports. But nobody was enthusiastic except the big boss, Gault. Finally the men told him: They were all right. The Community he was talking about would mean a lot of responsibility for them. They preferred to rely on him. Gault's firm had always been fair. They were satisfied.

Work Le Bélier, which itself used Boimondau's as a basis, except that Neighbor Groups have been replaced by Study Groups because in Paris people live too far apart. Decisions are taken unanimously only as far as possible; if however no agreement is reached then a two-thirds majority carries the day.

Some points are stressed in this Rule more than at Boimondau:

Our Community of Work is not a new form of enterprise nor a reform in order to harmonize the relation capital-labor.

It is a new mode of living in which man should find his fulfillment, and in which all problems are solved in relation to the whole man. Thereby it is in opposition to present-day society, where solutions for the one or for the few are the usual concern.

. . . the consequence of bourgeois morality and capitalist system is a specialization of the activities of man to such a degree that man lives in moral misery, physical misery, intellectual misery or material misery.

Often, in the working class, men suffer these four kinds of misery all together, and, under such conditions, it is a lie to speak of liberty, equality, fraternity.

The aim of the Community of Work is to make possible the full development of man.

Companions of R.G. declare that this is possible only within an atmosphere of liberty, equality, fraternity.

But it should be acknowledged that, very often, those three words bring nothing to our mind except the picture on currency or the inscriptions on front doors of public buildings.

LIBERTY

A man is really free only under three conditions:
Economic freedom
Intellectual freedom
Moral freedom

Economic Fredom. Man has an inalienable right to work. He has to have absolute right to the fruit of his work from which he should not part except freely.

This conception is opposed to private property of collective means of production and to the reproducing of money by money which makes possible the exploitation of man by man.

We also declare that by "Work" should be understood everything of value man brings to society.

Intellectual Freedom. A man is free only if he can choose. He can choose only if he knows enough to compare.

Moral Freedom. A man cannot be really free if he is enslaved by his passions. He can be free only if he has an ideal and a philosophical attitude which makes it possible for him to have a coherent activity in life.

He cannot, under pretext of hastening his economic or intellectual liberation, use means contrary to the ethics of the Community.

Last, moral freedom does not mean license. It would be easy to demonstrate that moral freedom is to be found only within strict observance of the group ethics freely accepted.

Fraternity

Man can blossom only in society. Selfishness is a dangerous and non-lasting way of helping oneself. Man cannot separate his true interests from those of society. He can help himself only by helping society.

He should become conscious that his own inclination makes him find an increase of joy with others.

Solidarity is not only a task, it is a satisfaction and the best guarantee of security.

Fraternity leads to mutual tolerance and to the determination never to separate. This makes it possible to take all decisions unanimously on a common minimum.

Equality

We condemn those who declare demagogically that all men are equal.
We can see that men are not equal in value.
For us equality of rights means to put at the disposal of everyone the means to fulfill oneself completely.
Thereby we substitute a hierarchy of personal value for the conventional or hereditary hierarchy.

The pledge of the Companions shows some special careful thinking:

Art. 10. Companions pledge themselves not to judge the behavior

of a Companion without having solicited from him, in a friendly way, an explanation.

Art. 11. Companions pledge themselves never to criticize a Companion not present.

Art. 14. The woman Companion is a human person, just as the man. Therefore she is entitled to the same fundamental rights.

What is meant by ownership is clearly defined:

Means of production are social property. They belong to present and future society. As such, the Companions who are its trustees have the obligation, not only to keep them in good shape, but to transmit them improved and developed.

It is as if society was owner and delegated the management and control to a Community. A setup somewhat in the line of thought of the Jewish National Fund.

The ethical common minimum also has some features of its own. The reader can reread Boimondau's and compare the following points:

We shall not lie for our personal benefit.
We shall not kill except in order to save a human life.
We shall not take the property of our neighbor if he came to it justly, and if taking it is not necessary for the common good.

If this last rule sounds communistic, it should be remembered that the Church Fathers[10] subscribed to this conception of property drastically subjected to the common good long before Karl Marx. Christians hurried conveniently to forget it, and when it was voiced again centuries later, by socialists, everybody thought it new.

About responsibilities, the Community emphatically points out that it does not mean privileges:

Outside their responsibilities, those who are in charge are just Community members. The greatest equality should reign among all members.

[10] St. Ambrose, St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great, among others, made scathing statements on the subject.

On unanimity:

Experience proved to us that when the main causes of conflict are removed, which are opposition of interests, ignorance, distrust, destitution, injustice, then unanimity is easily secured. Communitarian life creates a climate of confidence which facilitates unanimous accord.

On politics:

Each one is free to belong to any political party he chooses or not to belong to any.

Each member of a political party pledges himself to make the greatest effort so that the Community be known as a cell of unity and respect for all, and to avoid that the Community fall under the leadership of one party.

In politics, the Community should be what it is on the philosophic plane: a complete society where what is asked of everyone is to be sincere and to work from a common minimum basis.

On the Chief of Community:

There is no personal candidature. Any member can propose a candidate.

The Chief is elected for 3 years. He can be re-elected three times. The same Chief cannot therefore remain at the head of the Community more than 12 years.

The making of picture frames is more or less a de luxe enterprise. When people have little to spend they do not buy pictures nor do they frame the pictures they have. So R.G. Community suffered greatly in 1949. They cut down on hours. Then the General Council decided that they had some "deadwood" among the workers. Five should be dismissed. Gault himself was crestfallen. There was no such precedent in the history of the firm. He wondered how it was that the workers could be so hard on each other. He came to the conclusion that *as a class*, for generations, they had never been spared. So they acted the same when given a chance. His heart was heavy. The five were given three months' notice and paid time to look for another place. Then the next week the General Council received a letter, signed by three

indignant young workers: "If your criticisms are right, who is at fault? You, first, and all of us. We have not assumed the responsibility for educating them, even with the few possibilities we have. And who knows if with time they will not turn out better workers than any of us?"

Such is the blessing of a Community. Decisions can be revised. That letter made it possible for the General Council to bring the matter up to the Assembly of Contact. As unanimity on the matter could not be secured, and mind you, everyone was present including those who had been expelled, the subject was put into the hands of several Study Groups. The result was a plan whereby those unskilled workers would receive special training on Saturday mornings. If they made good they could stay. The course is paid to the Companion-instructor by the Community, but the time spent is not paid to the student-workers so that they, as much as the Community, give evidence of their good will. So all ends well, but Gault took the opportunity to give the Community a piece of his mind: "If you dismiss anyone in order that the others may have work, you are no better than the capitalists. You do exactly what they do. In a Community, everyone tightens his belt, so that everyone can stay."

At the next raise of salary, the staff would not take its own share. Unemployment grew in France. The Council General posted: "If you wish to look for work somewhere else temporarily you can do so. The Community's door remains opened to you if you come back."

R.G. workers are very highly specialized men, and all other smaller picture-framing outfits are anxious to lure some of them away. Yet it was better to tell them they were free to go than to have them discontented with the feeling they were tied down to the Community. Some did go away; but they came back. "Nothing should be artificial," says Gault. "One has to have balance, a broad back, a creative and efficient mind, and a heart."

Results of the first year in communitarian form are mostly social:

A restaurant: Veal stew the day I was there (which smelled heavenly), French fried potatoes, a glass of red wine, and a cooky: 80 francs.[11] For 50 francs the members could fill a lunch can to take home at night. The Community paid any surplus expense.

Fatigue vacations: especially for the old employees (one is 80). Older people have a tendency to think that if they stop they will lose their jobs. So now they can take one, two, three days off now and then when they are tired.

Retirement plan: A fund fed by the young workers, on the principle that the old employees have made the firm what it is.

Emergency fund: Administered by the Mutual Aid Group. A loan can be secured and all facilities for paying back. If the situation is too difficult, the Community just turns it into an outright gift.

Health: A compulsory annual medical visit and a bimonthly one by a physician who comes to the plant.

Sickness: Two-thirds of the salary paid, and all medicines.

This is only a beginning. Because of the general crisis in France, it has not been possible to start any studies within the work schedule. But this drawback is only temporary. R.G. is sound. Gault would have had no trouble finding other capitalists to associate with his firm. But he was after justice with the same energy that some people are after money. On the other hand, his son's ambition is to live in the country. Therefore, when the Community reimburses Gault he plans to use that money to enter a rural Community of Work together with his son.

The firm makes 20,000,000 francs a year. It could easily do twice as much. Now that the Community is launched, time and energy can be used for the development of a market which is eager for such worth-while articles as the Community is able to make. And this includes the United States. Because this is work

[11] Same meal outside 300 francs.

which can be highly developed but not industrialized, it is not in competition with American frame makers.

"Then," says Gault, "when orders pile in again, don't you see what we can do? The Community can afford to give everyone the possibility of becoming what he has the ability to be. This year we had an apprentice, fourteen years old. If the Community had had money, that boy could have become a concert pianist."

We made the round of the plant, four stories high. From the rough boards to the finished products, going through the drawings, the molding shops, the putting together, the gilding, etc. Each piece bears a number, from start to finish. Books show all expenses, the selling price, and, opposite, what is taken in. It is very simple so that all workers can understand, and at the same time follow what happens to a piece of wood they have had in their own hands.

The atmosphere is gay and free and, at the same time, concentrated, as is general with highly specialized workers. But what dominates the atmosphere is friendliness. Gault himself is sold on dancing, taking an occasional drink, and having a good time once in a while: "I love to work hard, but I love life."

"So, it does seem," I said, "that the workers are all won over to the Community?"

"Most of them, yes. But it is slow work. I guess some of them still think that in some ways it is to my own advantage.[12] But what of it? It is natural that they have that reaction. The proletariat has been fooled so many times. But all in all we are progressing. Before we were a Community I always insisted that they belong to the union. Now we still strike, but it is out of solidarity. Only we have to do it wisely or else, being a Community, we might work against ourselves. On May first we decided to parade as usual. I am all for it. I didn't go because it hurts my feet now. But I said: 'We will eat, drink and dance when

[12] As Chief of Community, Gault gets 50,000 francs a month, which is very little for his position. It is true that he may have other personal savings, but so do most of the other members of the Community.

you come back. Go ahead. Long ago, in my youth, I too followed the red flag and sang the Internationale. What is truly important now, for all of us, is to build.' "

This reminded me of the talk I had with one of the women members of the Community who had shared the cot next to mine in the dormitory, at the time of the yearly communitarian convention in October, 1949:

"It is difficult to explain. Now, because of the crisis, we do not have more money than we had before we were a Community. We have introduced a few extra advantages. But that is nothing, because it was always good at R.G.'s. Only, before . . . it was all done for us. Now we are the ones who have to think of each other. That's the difference."

Gault says: "The crisis, it is not bad, if we hold on. A Community takes root when the going is hard."

Mr. Philip F. Dur, American consul at Lyons, is head of the American Information Center. The Center had to be equipped with bookcases, tables, chairs, newspaper racks. A plan for the whole thing had to be drawn up so that the store which houses the Center in the heart of Lyons' business section, be both attractive and of practical value. In view of the work to be done Mr. Dur interviewed many contractors and furniture makers with projects and estimates. One day he interviewed men from a firm called L'Habitat. That's what the card said, a card in two colors, well designed and proportioned. Its full title was L'Habitat, Coopérative Ouvrière de Bâtiment à Forme Communautaire: Community of Work in Communitarian Form for Building Purposes.

I do not know whether Mr. Dur noticed that title at the moment. I know that he thought the plans and estimates brought by those men were the best he had seen, and that he gave them the job. I know also that up to now the Community is on friendly terms with Mr. Dur, which is rather comforting in view of the

way relationships get entangled nowadays over any name starting with "com."

It is no small pleasure at the Information Center to see George Washington presiding with dignity over an ensemble entirely created and made by communitarians. Under the picture is a quotation from Washington:

Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair: the rest is in the hand of God.

There is food for many thoughts there. I let the reader choose his own. But one thing is certain: Washington went to the limit of his understanding of justice. Therefore, it is fitting that today his picture be part of communitarian decorators' work.

And they certainly gave him a beautiful background. The whole plan is a delight: space, air, light, comfort. Beauty of design, perfection of finish. And what daring! There is a long, oval table with *one* leg. The chairs are made like skis, covered with woven raffia. The radiators are ingeniously concealed. No question about it, the Community did a good turn to the American Information Center, and the Center did a good turn to the Community by giving them the job.

Like many other Communities of Work, L'Habitat was born of the Resistance. The Chief of Community, M. Plaisantin, was a manual worker, who had made good before the war, had educated himself and had become the head of a small prosperous firm. Then came the defeat, and the occupation. M. Plaisantin entered the Resistance. Is it because of his name, because of his mild look, and his modest, self-effacing attitude, that it is hard to realize that M. Plaisantin played such an important role in the liberation of France? But that is a fact. He was one of the mainsprings of the Resistance.

It was in the Resistance that he conceived another style of living. Probably the comradeship experienced there and the devotion of the individual to the common good were responsible.

Then he heard of Boimondau and visited it. Toward the end of 1945 he had convinced four other men who had a little capital. They put everything in common to form a co-operative which developed into a Community with all the usual characteristics of Communities of Work: family groups, education, total human value, etc.

When I visited them they had not made up their minds yet about total human value. They were examining some aspects of the question. Such as the fact that a nonqualified worker should have enough according to his need, but that a qualified worker represented more to the Community because it was harder to replace him. Also that one should consider the range of value of each person. Somebody may give his maximum communitarianly, but that maximum is small. Also some people naturally inclined to community life have little value professionally. And vice versa. All these problems are acute in a Community because at present a Community is alone in its setup, right in the midst of a society with an entirely different structure.

Specific concerns of each community differ somewhat according to conditions. At L'Habitat it certainly is most important that business be sound and prosperous. M. and Mme. Plaisantin head the numerous children of the Community with ten of their own.

Hence, also, the importance of family groups. In accord with the Department of Education the Community acquired an old schoolhouse in the country and put it in shape. It can house fifty children together with their families, a kindergartner, two camp instructors. It is not a children's camp, but a family camp where as many as 250 people meet on summer weekends. Many friends of the Community go up there to visit. All races, all classes, all spiritual allegiances. I was told that the children especially seem to strive in this community atmosphere, as always seems to be the case. Ideas are many and varied. In 1949 the members decided on a weekly spiritual meeting in the evening. Reading. Meditation. Songs. Above all silence, which unites all. However, Christians

were allowed to pray aloud if they wanted to. They were only asked to limit the length of their prayers! Everybody, regardless of specific religious, philosophical, or political allegiance found these meetings refreshing.

I had the privilege of meeting Mme. Plaisantin, sitting at the long table where ten children can eat. She is a small, charming woman, ready to put up with anything, except the fact that the Community affair does not allow much time for her husband to devote to his children. And, like all Frenchwomen, she does not believe in the rearing of children by mothers alone.

This is a difficult proposition. Wives of pioneers seem destined to sacrifice. And, as usual, the hardest sacrifice is the one involving the children.

An increase of business would facilitate some better arrangements. The beautiful work done in several of the Lyons shops, and especially at the American Information Center, should bring other customers.

L'Habitat is interested in everything that furthers co-operation and human relationships, and as such it is one of the most open Communities to world currents, and it seems anxious to keep this characteristic.

It is as impossible to make an exhaustive study of the transformations from capitalist economic expression to communitarian ones as it is to study all the new economic expressions. However, without going into details, mention should be made of two important capitalist structures which are being transformed into communitarian ones:

The S.E.C.S., which builds water gates for dams, electric power, and water falls. They are specialists. Their only competitor is Schneider. The Society was formed in 1932 and the communitarian group established in 1944. It was in 1948, after repeated contact with other Communities of the Paris region, that the communitarian aspect affirmed itself.

At present there are thirty persons. The Community is legally constituted as an Association to which the shares belong.

Remuneration according to human values decided upon by all the Companions in General Assembly. Equal share in the profits distributed. Education, etc.

They are prosperous and, at the same time, eager to build beyond the purely economic sector, that is, to be a Community in which the accent is on total man.

The other transformation to be mentioned here is the Constructions Chalonnaise, south of the Loire, where they make horizontal presses for grapes. M. G. Bernier had suffered for many years from what he considered an outmoded economic structure: "Capitalism was good: it liberated man from serfdom. It does not meet the need of the workers of our age who feel, often dimly but unmistakably, that they are exploited." In 1948 he reorganized his firm and was able to convince the original small stockholders together with the workers that a new setup could be tried. Perhaps one of the characteristics of the Chalonne experience is the good will of those stockholders, refusing their share of profit until a proper wage had been allotted to the unskilled worker. More than the possibility for the workers to become stockholders themselves, and to share in the profits, is the active participation in management, and a remuneration proportionate not only to efficiency but to the good will of each one. In addition nothing is hard set, and the door remains open for a gradual transformation into a full Community of Work.

M. Bernier belongs to L'UCE-ACT—L'Union des Chefs d'Entreprise—Action pour des structures humaines. "Union of heads of firms for action toward human structures." This Union should be mentioned here, though it must be emphasized that it does not belong to the communitarian movement proper. Some people within that group are very near the communitarian movement, but for the time being at least they do not constitute a majority. However, this group reveals that not only workers but

some owners, industrialists, managers, are aware of the necessity of finding a new style of living along lines which will take into consideration the meaning of the value of man.

Alexandre Dubois, who heads the group, is a distinguished businessman who runs a stainless-steel factory of two hundred workers. In his own plant his innovations are as follows:

Workers receive:

Union wages

plus: *Before* any profit is evaluated for the company, an amount representing the value of work put in the production of 1kg of steel, is distributed to all.

plus: After cost, overhead, and dividends are taken care of, what is left is distributed according to the hierarchy of responsibilities.

This system means two things: (1) The stockholders have to get used to the fact that the share for labor is taken care of *before* anything is set aside for them. (2) The workers have to get used to the concept of just remuneration of labor instead of bonus in profit.

Looking every inch a "grand bourgeois," M. Dubois tries to convey in words the discoveries he has made through a lifetime of research based on intellectual integrity and a thirst for truth and justice. In fact, his search is far from being over. He continually moves on.

When I talked with him his position was that, once you have seen how monstrous the present system is—that is, the right of controlling the means of production through money—you wonder why it has taken you so long to perceive this and why everybody else does not see it too. "An economic enterprise does not belong to anyone, no more than does the obelisk or the Arch of Triumph belong to Parisians. Capital should receive a payment, but no ownership rights. To go on with the old system now is to court suicide and catastrophe, the way feudal lords went bankrupt when they refused to move along with the new economic expression, capitalism. The direction of history is what it is, and

one should, especially a Christian, be grateful to Karl Marx for having understood it. Men have been created to complete each other. You, I, we are all one. That's the communion of saints."

Since some of the transformations from capitalist to communitarian economic expression that we have studied here are activated by members of the UCE-ACT, mention had to be made of the organization and its leader, Alexandre Dubois. He and a few others within that group do not pursue their effort as a means of avoiding a complete resetting of the social pattern. Neither do they fool themselves into thinking that what they do can be anything but an approximation as long as this complete resetting is not carried through. They want to help build tomorrow's new social structure. Their present-day efforts are concrete contributions. So are the other transformations presented in this chapter. It is as such that they are studied here, as are all experiences and points of view reported throughout this book, regardless of personal likes or dislikes of this writer. As stated at the beginning, it is a matter not of passing judgment but of learning about people who, at the present time, are trying new ways.

GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
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ice for the workers and their dependents, a nursery and a kindergarten with a swimming pool tucked away among the trees, teachers familiar with progressive education methods, a convalescent home in the mountains, two camps, one by the sea, an agricultural center, small apartment units, apprentice scholarships, 90 per cent of their salaries to old retired workers, etc. etc.

But Adriano Olivetti wants to go further. He does not want people to be just submissive and happy recipients of good things. He wants them to take their lives into their own hands. How can it be made to happen?

Olivetti thinks it can start from a group of men whose common interests, moral, material and social, have been awakened. It has to revolve within a certain definite geographical space determined by nature and history. The unit must remain within human proportions. The Community of Work is included within that unit.

The Community foreseen by Olivetti is not the commune, which is but an administrative unit. The Community is the group of people who can talk to each other about direct, common, collective problems. Their responsibility is immediate and active, their liberty is constantly won and developed in daily practice. It is not handed over with a grand and deceptive right to vote for a list of people practically unknown. Such a right may please the individual; it is not a fulfillment of the person. Mr. Olivetti goes on explaining why respect and understanding of the person is secured neither in present Western democracies nor in Communism, nor in technocracy or corporatism. He does not favor either the "authoritarian democracy of the Catholic party," which presents solutions "false and hypocritical to speak of in the same breath with Christian civilization." He does not favor Communism, which "in the name of liberty goes on gradually to betray liberty." He does not favor the Christian socialists, because "they are too vague."

Head of one of the foremost industrial European concerns, Mr. Olivetti is not only a very prosperous man. He is also a philosopher and a scholar. He is familiar with the personalist philosophy,

and what personalists contribute to the present search for a better way of living. Together with mentioning the works of Maritain, Mounier and Rougemont, Mr. Olivetti refers also to the Catholic conception of the Fathers of the Church as in line with his actual preoccupations. He is keenly aware of the "vocation" of the person, and that is why he is putting so much mental and financial energy toward the political development of the communitarian pattern in Italy.

Catholic Adriano Olivetti stigmatizes a "false Christianity consisting in hypocritical homage." Whereas the essentially Christian society, founded on the Community should "make a clean break with moral and economic duplicity: the law of profit and the feudal regime in agriculture and industry."

The Community which Mr. Olivetti wants to promote rests on Judeo-Christian tenets; not as dogma, but in essence, being founded on the sense of the brotherhood of man through One God, the Father, and the value and dignity of the human person.

> The superior law of the Community is the Gospel . . . no discrimination of races or nationality. . . . Catholics and non-Catholics, believers and unbelievers. . . . Without a renewal of moral education based on the Gospel, any political movement will be found wanting, and deep causes of the world collapse and hatred propaganda and divisions will not be uprooted.

It has been necessary here to explain at some length the ideology of Movimento Comunità because, though its aims do not differ essentially from those of the French, Swiss, Belgian or Dutch movements, yet it is not promoted by small groups of workers. It is a complete system for the reorganization of the whole set up of a country in view of re-evaluating man.

Therefore the communitarian movement in Italy presents itself first as a decentralization. An attempt at re-creating local fullness of life without renouncing any of the benefits created by modern techniques.

Here we have a new form of social ownership somewhat different from the one imagined by M. Dubois of the UCE-ACT, or from the socialist conception, or from the Jewish National Fund.

2. *Distribution*

In charge of the local Communities and the regional Community, depending, however, on a superior organism composed of people whose mandate is to co-ordinate the technical-economic problem with the problem of man as a living being.

Here is the place in the new society for philosophers, religious men, and wise men. The highest control is the one of the spirit.

3. *Federation*

All autonomous groups are federated at different levels. The Federative State intervenes but indirectly as an instrument of control.

Decentralization secured without division.

In his absorbing book *L'ordine politico delle Comunità* Mr. Olivetti explains in detail how such a society would function, how the people at the different levels would be elected, etc. The "integrated democracy" of Mr. Olivetti may prove challenging to specialists of the questions. Here we only have to report on it as one of the branches of the communitarian current in Europe.

Someone may argue about the right at all of Mr. Olivetti's scheme in this book. First on the ground that it is but a theory, and that there are many such blueprints elaborated now throughout the world. This is true. I myself know of the plan worked out by the team *Economie et Humanisme* in France and yet have no intention of taking it up here in a book which deals primarily with practical experiences. The fact is that Mr. Olivetti's theory has already gone further than mere book records. It has entered the field of action. He is in it tooth and nail, with all his energy and money, for some sort of political development of the communitarian idea, right now, in Italy.

Another objection might well be that Mr. Olivetti has no place in this book since he is not now, at least, trying first to transform

his own capitalist enterprise into a communitarian one, meaning his factory, into a Community of Work. To turn our back on Mr. Olivetti because his approach to the communitarian problem differs from ours would border on fanaticism, at least at the present time. In this transitional period we live in, anyone who favors economic freedom, decentralization, initiative in collective responsibilities, sharing of interests, all this together with the maximum of technical and scientific development and at the same time a never-waning concern for the living man of today, should not be dismissed on the ground that we do not like the way he goes at it. The least we can do is "to give him a break," which I have tried to do here.

When an engineer, the successful head of a large industrial concern, devotes time, money and energy to influence people, all sorts of people, along a line of thought which leads unfailingly to the disappearance of a system of which that man himself is a privileged representative, it is time to sit up and soberly take notice. Something is happening in the world, and it is neither confined to a few reckless gestures nor to some mystical experiences, nor is it limited to the class struggle.

CHAPTER V

Proclaiming Common Salvation

You give bread to the hungry, but it would be better that there existed no one in need.
—St. Augustine

IT IS one thing to go communitarian on the land. It is one thing to do so in transforming a prosperous capitalist enterprise. It is one thing to do so from nothing, in 1940, like Boimondau.

It is something else to go communitarian from nothing after 1945.

"When two poor people get together," says Marcel Barbu, "they are that much less poor." Hum. One is tempted to find it so only in the acquisition of spiritual values of human relationships. On economic ground it seems questionable especially after one has made the rounds of the Communities of Work which started from nothing two, three, four years ago. Though it should be pointed out again that new noncommunitarian enterprises have not had a chance to fare better during that time.

However, is M. Pierre wholly right in maintaining that, generally speaking, unless a Community does at least as well economically as a capitalist set up, it has no future? Most communitarians are indignant at this reasoning, for the very reason that a number of them have proved, and are proving, it untrue. However, if they did give up all hope of materially improving the situation in time, they certainly would defeat their own end. So that both M. Pierre and the poor communitarians are right. It is a question of time.

From my own observation throughout my tour, it seems to me a matter of vocation. Some people have in them the stuff for heroic situations. Others just plod along. Both have their place. The heroes would not be happy in the average situation, and vice versa. There is no one exclusive way of furthering the communitarian idea.

In this chapter we have to deal with those people who have made the spectacular move from nothing. Pioneers of pioneers, the *coureurs des bois.*

When a few fellows and their families get together and decide they are going communitarian, they have to choose an economic expression for the Community. Obviously it will be something they are familiar with, which they know how to make.

But the economic expression of a Community of Work is not an artisan enterprise. Therefore, the Community has to have machines. A place to work. Often a large place because machinery nowadays does take room. What is made has to be salable, that is there must be a demand for it.

So far so good. But how can you offer something on the market unless it is already made? And how can you make it unless you have machines? And where can you put the machines unless you have a place for them? And how can you have a place and machines unless you can invest some money in material and pay rent?

This is the dilemma of the Communities starting from nothing. In our present world, especially in the Old World, it is a challenge if there ever was one. There is no question but that it cannot be the lure of material return that prompts people to go into such an undertaking. What lies ahead for those pioneers is hard work, complete sacrifice, months, years of austere discipline.

And yet, those daredevils are the gayest crowd I have ever met. Ease and comfort do not make for buoyancy of spirit. On the contrary. I have the happiest memory of those struggling Communities. I left them loaded with riches. People who have faith. People who do not just sit and wait for the atomic bomb to fall.

People who will not give up "because what can we do anyhow, the whole thing is too big." People who will not take it lying down no matter if the smallness of their experience makes it look like a ridiculous endeavor. People who are breakers of paths, adventurers of the spirit, undaunted souls as free from illusions as from fear.

The problem how to start from nothing is tackled at different angles according to the groups.

The Community "Chaudronnerie Provençale" swears that the best way is to start getting orders before worrying about anything else. Start from the end, practically.

But how to get orders?

There were these five workers, specialists in pipes, boilers for steam engines, etc. All work which requires highly qualified workers, since a mishap can cause a catastrophe. Who is going to trust them and order from them?

That was the time for one of them to announce quietly that he was an engineer, graduate from the Ecole Polytechnique, and had previously been employed at Toulon Arsenal. The others did not know it. Nothing in his manner had betrayed him. He lived with his young wife in a workers' settlement. While he had worked as an unskilled worker, his wife had taken in sewing. She was very friendly too, and when she had had her first baby the women neighbors had come in to help. And after, he, Charreton, had been promoted to foreman, many evenings were spent in his room talking about how to grow into a Community. They had no idea that he and his wife were bourgeois. When they knew it, if they did resent a bit having been fooled, so to speak, it did not last long, because Charreton was a regular buddy. The Communists especially had long enjoyed talking with him. "I am a Christian" . . . "I am a Marxist." Both: "Let us see what we have in common. And also our differences."

And now, not only was Charreton a Christian, but he was a bourgeois, graduate from the most bourgeois engineering school

in France. "Well, I'll be d——. That certainly was a crazy thing for him to do." To give up everything. To turn his back on all his opportunities. To throw in his lot with the workers because as an engineer he had become conscious of the gap between the staff and the workers. This awareness had grown so acute that he could not go on living as he had before and he had come to the conclusion that the only approximate way to know how a worker feels and to bridge the gap was to become an anonymous worker himself.

It is easy to criticize Charreton's move, to call it senseless, useless, misleading like some conversions, inadequate because no matter what one does with the utmost good will one does not become a worker just by working manually. It takes at least one generation, if not several. It can also be discredited as utmost conceit in its humility. And, it can be explained through psychoanalysis. On the other hand, it can also be argued that it is necessary that a few bourgeois make that rash plunge. Anyone can offer advice and pass judgment on Charreton's action.

The point here is not to decide whether M. Charreton is a fool (forgive me, Charreton!) or a saint. If he has done the neatest trick to assure his own private salvation (if there is any such thing). If it has been a colossal error or the move of a genius. One thing strikes the onlooker, and that is that neither he nor Régis of the Rochebrune Community, who also made the plunge from an ultra-bourgeois background into unqualified proletariat, neither of those men act as if he had done anything outstanding. In fact it is evident that any display of admiration would seem totally out of place. And it probably would be. When my own mother used to be complimented on her life, which had been one of utter abnegation, she used to remark dryly: "It's my way of being selfish."

What concerns us here is the value that such a move as that of Charreton holds for a Community, and this from a purely practical point of view since we are dealing now with the economic problem of a Community starting from nothing.

The fact that Charreton had been a bourgeois meant that he had connections. This, for the penniless Community, was most valuable.

Charreton called on his former colleagues, engineers, who were employed in large industrial concerns. Men who had studied with him, had confidence in him. Their sense of friendship outbalanced their possible disapproval of Charreton's conduct. "So you are going in for a setup which, in principle, stands against the trusts of which I am at present a cogwheel? All right. Sure I'll give you orders. I would like to see what happens."

And so the budding Community had orders.

Then it was time for Charreton to make the round of his "capitalist friends." "All these orders, see? And no machines. Will you lend us some money?" Well, of course, after all, they would not lose much, and Charreton's family has a good name in business.

And so the Community had some money.

And bought some machines.

Only machines for making steam boilers and pipes cannot be installed in an apartment. It is the kind of work that requires much space. And how could they afford a large place? And where could they find one?

They heard that the city of Marseilles was going to rent the building of the German submarine base. Fortunately again, Charreton had a friend in the administration who could say a good word for him. And so the Companions moved into the German submarine base, and it did not cost too much.

"It was all done through friendship," they explained to me. "See? It's no use going around and grabbing people by the throat and telling them in no uncertain terms what you think of the system they promote. You just explain to them that as far as you yourself are concerned you are through. That you are after another way of living, and how would they like to help you? Would they be interested? If they know you professionally and have respect

for you as a person they will come across because deep down they know that the present structure is doomed, that not only is it anti-Christian, but that it does not even pay any more."

This unorthodox way of proceeding in reverse from orders to money, machines, and a building seems to have been profitable to the Chaudronnerie Provençale. About in the same fashion Le Mouton Jacquemard was put on the map. And it is very much on the map now.

It all started with a young man who was director of a Leisure Center. Those centers have been established by the French government ever since the working schedule was cut. Young Huneau's job was to teach people what to do with their spare time. One day he was struck by the inanity of the endeavor. Any kind of leisure economy was fundamentally wrong. Man's problem reduced to more and more enjoyment of leisure time and to what to do with those free moments! The whole living setup itself was out of gear.

They were a few young men of different spiritual allegiance who felt the same way. They heard a lecture from Barbu. That was it. They would form themselves into a Community. Having just emerged from the war, they had not yet learned any trade or profession. First they thought of "going back to the soil." But none of them had had agricultural training. So it appeared to them that this was a backwoods utopia. What were the possibilities? Huneau had a brother-in-law who was an associate in a large leather-dying enterprise. Huneau went to him, was engaged, and learned the trade. He was quick, intelligent, and had executive ability. He tried to persuade his brother-in-law and the other associates to transform the enterprise gradually into a communitarian economic expression. There was much talk. The associates offered raises in salary, share in profits, anything, but they would not go communitarian.

Then, Huneau asked his brother-in-law to lend him a hand for

the starting of an independent Community, by trusting him with the skins that were sent outside to be finished. The brother-in-law accepted provided Huneau had a place and some workers. He had the men who wanted to form a Community. They calculated that 3,000,000 francs would be sufficient to start with, for rent and installation. There were ten men. It seemed to them that they should be able to find that amount of money through friendly loans. However, they were not so successful as the Chaudronnerie Provençale. They started with only 15,000 francs. They could not afford any machines. They had to work by hand, and, in addition, at that time few of them had any real technical skill. It cost them their 15,000 francs to learn. It was worth it, but what next?

From the time Huneau had been a boy scout he knew a man who supervised the French Polar Expeditions. He persuaded this man to order from the Community 200,000 francs' worth of sheepskin mittens and boots.

The men worked night and day, and the women did too. Still they had no machines. They finished only the day before the order was due to be delivered. There was no time to mail it. The village of Taninges, which is a skiing center, is in the Alps and the postal service is slow. There was a train due to leave for Paris within five minutes. Huneau boarded it with the mittens and boots.

He found the headquarters of the Polar Expeditions on the Avenue des Champs-Elysées. In front of it many trucks were being loaded. The receptionist said to him: "The mittens? The boots? All right. Put them right there and go to the cashier." The cashier said: "No time today. Send us a bill." Huneau had no money left, just his round-trip ticket. He took the subway back to the station and the next train back to Taninges.

The Community sent the Polar Expeditions the bill. Ten days went by. No answer. Finally a letter came: the mittens and the boots did not fit—so they could not be paid for.

The Community was aghast. Not only the money so badly needed, but the professional disappointment. And how could it be

true? They wrote to Paris that they had worked according to the samples sent. At long last another letter, full of apologies. The first letter was not for the Community but for another faulty order. The secretary had mixed up the correspondence. The Community's work was fine and the check was enclosed.

Next move? To buy machines. A friend said: "I'll sell you machines on the installment plan if you get another order."

They heard that the government was going to order leather pants for the motorcyclists of the President's personal guard.

They had some stationery printed:

Le Mouton Jacquemard
Fournisseur des Expéditions Polaires Françaises

Bang! Didn't they sound important?

They got the order for the pants. They wrote the friend to send the machines. The letter was lost. When they inquired again, the machines had been sold, and no others were to be had for a long time.

The order deadline stared them in the face.

To gain time they made a beautiful hand-cut and hand-sewn model of motorcyclist leather pants and sent it to Paris asking if that was what they wanted. Paris was so slow in answering that they were plainly justified in writing back that it was impossible for them to meet the deadline. Meanwhile the friend had some machines available. They took them and set to work. They filled the order which was found entirely satisfactory and gave them together with the one of the Polar Expeditions quite an excellent professional standing. When I saw them they were working on leather vests for the National Association of Firemen. They had successfully participated in several commercial fairs. Their name is now synonymous with first-class workmanship.

Though we are now examining just how the material start is secured from nothing, it may not be superfluous to mention the laconic summing up of the situation from a communitarian point

of view, by one of the members of Le Mouton Jacquemard Community: "The fuss is not about sheepskin. It's about men."[1]

Corton Community at Metz. The father of the actual Chief is a self-made man. He had looked forward to forming a radio corporation together with his engineer son. He is a man who thinks along the line of enlightened paternalism: share of profits, perhaps even some shares of stock to the workers. The son thinks communitarianly. He asked his father for 2,000,000 francs to start communitarianly. The father was skeptical and angry in his disappointment. The son said: "You go to church. You go to Mass. One should live the Mass—everywhere—as much as possible."

The father did not seem to listen, but he did hear. And he did come across, handsomely: 50-year loan without interest.

So they started. But though they put in shape a shattered bombed building all by themselves, yet 2,000,000 francs is not much to go into the business of making electric cook stoves and radios. All of them were not beginners. They all knew their trade. They explained to me how their cook stoves had been designed in order to give the maximum heat with the smallest use of electricity. Their radios are as good to listen to as they are pleasant to look at, having been designed by one of the communitarians who was a designer of Aubusson tapestries.

Unlike the two previous Communities, they made their stoves and radios first and then tried to sell them. And by that time the crisis had come.

They were stuck for a good many months with all their stock. Each member knew what it was to live with no more than 500 francs in one's pocket. They ate meat four or five times during the whole year 1948. Of course wine was out of the question entirely. The women did sewing work at home. Priester's young wife (the Chief of Community) was the accountant of the Community and came on her bicycle every day, covering the 3⅓ miles rain or shine,

[1] "La peau d'mouton, on s'en f . . . . C'est les hommes."

[2] Young Catholic Workers.

on a bad road, up to fifteen days before her first confinement. Ten months later she had her second baby. She never complained, never seemed to think that she might have a right to do so. The Companions allowed themselves just one movie a week. It was their big extravagance, their one moment of relaxation.

Priester Senior watched the whole struggle. Probably he took it all in: the mistakes and the grit, of the twelve Companions. When I saw them, he had found them an important market for their wares.

E.C.H.B. had nothing either. The instigator: a young man, Thomas, very intelligent though he had been unable to do well at school because of his endless questioning and his constant protesting what was being done or taught. He did not see any connection between school and life. He probably had landed in one of those old-fashioned schools, still so numerous in France. Thomas quit school early and became an apprentice electrician. He became acquainted with the J.O.C.[2] and there revealed at once his remarkable qualities of leadership. At the close of the war he was appointed permanent secretary of the J.O.C. But he had something else in mind: to help build a structure which would not be based on the competitive instinct. He heard a lecture from Barbu. He had found what he wanted, as he explained to a few other friends (of all spiritual allegiances, as usual).

They started with nothing, except the excellent reputation of Thomas. A well-known firm gave them an order for some carpenter work. It was a 300,000 francs job. The firm advanced 100,000 francs. They could buy the boards and each member had his own tool kit. One of them, a young electrician, had his own shop which the budding Community could use as workshop. There was of course no question of machines at this stage.

Fortunately they all knew different trades: electricity, carpentry, painting, plastering. They found out that, professionally speak-

ing, they were a team which could handle a building job from cellar to roof. So they took in every job that came along, always managing to get a little advance to buy materials.

Thomas's credit was good, even if he had no funds. Big industrialists of the region could not help taking some interest in a young people's outfit and they commissioned them for different jobs. So the Community kept getting orders before it had any money to buy materials. Sometimes they did not have even the necessary tools: a painting job and no brushes and no money to get them. But they all worked like beavers and the enterprise grew. However, after a year and a half of this shooting upward, it became evident to Thomas and to all that it was not sound to go on extending without financial backing. It was decided to reduce the field and to sound a bank for a loan.

The director of one of the Nancy banks was interested in the Community. He and Thomas boarded the same train in order to talk over the loan. They were both killed in a railroad accident.

How the young Community weathered the blow calls for admiration. Alone the twenty Companions faced a complex enterprise which was running away at top speed and power, because it was not based on fundamental laws of business and credit, and as far as the work was concerned had not been developed along scientific methods of organization. When I saw them in December, 1949, they were far from having fully recovered but they were straightening out steadily. If they have been able to do so it is because Thomas, in spite of his powerful personality, had always insisted that everyone in the Community share responsibilities. The suddenness of his departure and their deep grief did not prevent them from taking full charge immediately. There is in this a marked victory for communitarian training and spirit.

Metalléger at Sierre in Switzerland got started in a way entirely its own. Some men who worked at Chippis heard about Boimondau. Chippis is one of the largest aluminum plants in Europe.

As you get out of the train it occupies the whole right-hand side of the valley. The men were on friendly terms with Abbé Zufferey who had been instrumental in convincing them that they should belong to a union and had introduced them to Roger Bonvin, who is a dynamic spirit in charge of the social service of the Valais region. Union activity, talks with those two people about workers' conditions, brought an awakening of consciousness in eight workers. So that when Boimondau was talked about in Switzerland the eight of them were all for going to see what it was like, and Roger Bonvin was only too glad to join them. However, they went not because they believed what they heard. On the contrary. They were entirely skeptical and were prepared to verify their hunch: that those Boimondeau people were utopians or dreamers.

Coming back on the train, their enthusiasm knew no bounds. They wanted to form a Community at once. Rober Bonvin, who is an older man, thought they just had to sleep it off. But the next day his telephone rang. They had given Chippis their fifteen days' notice. Two other workers who had contemplated starting a small shop for the making of aluminum objects, joined them. As the two workers had already found a place to work in, that question was solved for the Community. But what about money?

Roger Bonvin called on the Union of Metal Workers: "If you mean what you say, you lend some money to those fellows. Or else your fight for the workers is just a sham."

The union came across.

Roger Bonvin called at the bank: "Gentlemen, the union is lending them money. You cannot let yourselves be outdone."

The bank came across.

Roger Bonvin called at Chippis: "Gentlemen, it is to your interest to see what comes out of this experiment. You must sell them raw materials."

Chippis came across.

And now the Metalléger factory (two rooms!) is up there on the hill facing Chippis in the valley. And the Companions are

hard at it. And the women are in it just as much: according to Swiss law, they had to sign at the bank when the loan was made.

They have plenty of work: seats for teleskis, four miles of air pipe for underground galleries, etc.

They happen to be all Catholics at the present time, which makes possible some definite collective form of worship. But there is nothing in their rule which prevents them from welcoming other believers or nonbelievers, as they emphatically explained to me.

Chippis, at first condescending and rather skeptical, is beginning to take Metalléger seriously. Those Companions turn out work as no other working team does. Besides, they are much talked about among the workers of Chippis. The presence of the Community creates tension. Something is on the move.

As for the eight families of the Community, the presence of the huge industrial concern does not give them any inferiority complex. Far from it. "We hope," they told me, "that Metalléger Community will act as a booster shot on Chippis."

Community Cora at Riom also started from nothing. Six young men who had a Marxist background had been in the Resistance and were searching for a better way of living. They heard of Barbu.

Together they gathered 4,500 francs. Friends added to the fund, which came to amount to about 250,000 francs. They all had training in the radio field. Riom is a small town and soon they were well appreciated. They were the only ones within a wide radius to offer a three-year guarantee on their radios. Their names became synonymous with excellent work. They had orders from friends in town and all around the country. However, the crisis came and did not spare them. They weathered it at the price of daily and unrelenting sacrifices shared actively by the women and not only tacitly by them. The feeling of homogeneity of Cora Community strikes the visitor, and it rests effectively on the absence of hierarchy, equal sharing of responsibilities, and active

woman participation. When I saw them in 1949 their liquid assets were one million francs. As they remarked to me: "Had we not been a Community of Work, we would never have made it." Which means that, like many Communities, they tightened their belts to the limit.

One Community tightened it so hard that a little more and there would have been nothing left to tighten it on. It is Rochebrune, the *enfant terrible* of the Communities of Work.

In 1946 I paid several visits to Abbé Depierre, priest-worker, in a populous suburb of Paris. In *France Alive* I told of some of the evenings spent there after Mass had been celebrated in the drab back kitchen, and how neighbors, believers and unbelievers alike, dropped in and talked over their personal problems, the problems of the place where they lived, the problems of the world. How, through Abbé Depierre, a current of openness toward the neighbor, of live Christianity, had started to flow through the town, how sharing everything one had and leaving one's door open had turned out to be the natural thing. Charity. That much-abused word. "If I have two shirts, and the man I know does not have any, my second shirt belongs to him. It is not a gift I am making him. In a Christian sense the second shirt belongs to him. That's what charity means."

So I heard Abbé Depierre say, in 1946, as we sat around the kitchen table. We were about twenty-five, men and women. Many faces remain in my mind, particularly the one of a young and distinguished man who had the hands of an intellectual. And so he was. A lawyer. Régis, of bourgeois background, whose name I mentioned above when questioning the wisdom of Charreton's move.

I saw him again in 1949 when I visited Rochebrune Community. Gaunt, emaciated . . . and happy. "We had to form a Community. It was out of the question for a few of us, believers and unbelievers, to go on as we did after seeing what Abbé Depierre is

doing. When one has really witnessed what it means to live like a true Christian it becomes impossible to carry on within the present-day structure. But none of us were qualified workers. Some of us, like me, were intellectuals and the others had no specialty. And we did not have any money at all. Abbé Depierre found 5,000 francs for us. So we decided that our economic expression had to be something very simple which did not require training or investment. We decided on kindling wood. We rented this bombed building and a mechanical saw. There was no roof, and only parts of walls left. We worked all winter under those conditions. And it was a cold winter. Of course, when May came there was no more work."

They managed to survive during the sunny months, doing easy odd jobs.

Then winter was on them again. All the families decided to eat together in order to save. But even so what they earned was insufficient. The men started to faint at work. It was then that they came to know that they could not go below a certain minimum. That the minimum which prevented them from dying was not sufficient to make them live. And that capital should not be confused with capitalism.

They borrowed: 7 per cent loan. They had also come to understand that as long as the structure of society remains what it is, communitarians cannot live their principles fully.

A friend bought them machines which they are paying for gradually, the machines remaining the friend's property as long as the balance is not cleared off.

They have specialized in carpentry work for buildings, which is easier for them to tackle than furniture and also lends itself to mass production.

Now, in 1950 they have important contracts ranging from one to ten million francs. The workshop now has roof and walls, which they put up themselves. They are fifteen Companions, men and women, and expect to reach fifty by the end of 1950. Roche-

brune is especially anxious not to cut itself from the other workers. So, one of its rules is that Companions go back and work in non-communitarian enterprise periodically. Rochebrune has decidedly the communitarian mission spirit.

Out of the desire for a Community of Work evolves an economic expression the choice of which depends on the training of people along certain lines. Such was the case for Cotram Community. The chief, *"le responsable,"* was a buyer in industry. He knew what kind of demands existed and could foresee a market. That is why the work chosen was sheet iron. Many automobile parts are not made in large factories in France, but orders are passed to smaller outfits. This is true even of Ford. So Bardeau was sure of the demand once the Community could operate. But where could the money be found? Bardeau and some of the other Companions, believers and unbelievers, attended often the evening Mass, followed by supper and talk at the room of the priest-worker, Father Besnard, in Montmartre. Often they discussed the Community. One day a girl who used to come to the meetings inherited some money. Being a communitarian in spirit, she did not feel that it was right for her to keep that money for which she had not worked, and she brought it to Father Besnard in order that he might dispose of it for people who needed it. Father Besnard mentioned the Community Bardeau and a few others wanted to start. The girl liked the idea. She gave Cotram Community all the money—2,500,000 francs. It was agreed that the money would be repaid by the Community but in the shape of a similar gift to another Community. Such a sum was a nice beginning, but it was not sufficient. Father Besnard is from the north of France. He contacted a wealthy industrialist. The man did not want to go communitarian himself, but he was interested. He lent 2,000,000 francs at 3 per cent interest to be repaid within ten years, 200,000 every year. The prospect was not tremendous but it certainly was good enough. And some of the Companions, with-

out realizing it, were a little dazed by it. The communitarian idea was just taking shape, in the the minds of some of them, and the auspicious material beginnings clouded it. All they could see was that suddenly they were, so to speak, put in the saddle and able to become independent and their own master. Unanimously they voted themselves a minimum of 20,000 monthly allotment. Some of the wiser Companions at first opposed the suggestion; but they realized that the others did not see the situation, and they decided to rally to their rash generosity, feeling that experience would teach everybody what words would fail to convey. Which of course happened. Three months later the Community could not meet its bills. The Companions woke up with a start. They had to cut themselves down to 14,000 francs. Apparently the Community was no way of getting rich easily. Neither was it a refuge for inadequacy, nor a springboard for rugged individualism. They took a sober look at the situation. It was hardly what most of them had expected. Would they quit? No. The notion that collective good is inseparable from personal good had already made an imprint on their minds. They had no desire to leave and fend for themselves somewhere else individually. They had misunderstood what the Community was to be, yet the Community was already precious to them. They emerged more realistic with a certain toughness toward themselves and their undertaking. They said to me: "The Community, it is not made. It is in the making. It is not easy. Just the rubbing against each others' personalities is difficult. But that's life. Whereas, in the ordinary world, the workers just do what the foreman tells them to do. If they have an idea, they are told it is the engineer's business. And they don't know why they do this or that. The whole management problem escapes them. They are nothing but rented objects.[3] Don't think we are a Community because of the material advantages. There is too much talk about material advantage. It is not for that that we decided to stick and grow into a Community. It's in order to

[3] "On est des choses qu'on loue."

develop ourselves. The whole man on his way toward a better life."

Another Community which had quite a unique kind of start is L'Imprimerie Communautaire in Brussels. There the communitarian group looked for people who would be willing to form a co-operative society which would back the Community financially, until the Community was strong enough to be self-supporting and prosperous enough to acquire the ownership of the means of production. This was done. They found forty-five co-operators. The co-operative assets amount to 160,000 francs (Belgian). All those people are interested in the communitarian movement and feel that, unless there is a practical realization, any verbal propaganda is worthless in Belgium. The Community proper has had some setbacks at the beginning because of lack of preparation on the part of some of its members who thought that in a Community of Work one did just as one liked. Consequently, there was a sort of anarchical state for a few months. But that is no reason to be discouraged. Blueprints are of little help in any Community. It is the group itself which grows into being a Community. A Community is not organized one grand day. It is a living organism. And because of its concern for human values it may not attain technical efficiency all at once. Though, of course, it will have to get it. "Hitches," as drawbacks or mistakes are called in French, are interesting and valuable. The fact that people can outlive them, learn through them, and be ready for another step is more commendable to the communitarian movement than if all the experiments were streamlined perfect at the beginning. To the communitarian, the world is not changed overnight nor do men wake up as angels because they want to go communitarian. The whole process is gradual, scientific. It moves step by step. One does not shut oneself within a formula which seems good and try to fit one's own life to it. The most one can do is to be willing to let things happen along a certain line. The Community takes

shape and grows with the awareness and growth of each member. And that is what is happening at L'Imprimerie Communautaire.

Comec of Merville, in the north of France, resolved its financing in another way. They were lucky inasmuch as one of them had already a prosperous furniture-making shop of artisan proportions, and the other Companions belonged to an industrial furniture-making plant. So several of the necessary conditions of a good start were already fulfilled.

They had 500,000 francs of liquid assets at the start. Now they register a sales volume of 5,000,000 francs. Gradually the Community is buying back the original layout by establishing its own fund. The Companions (11) have unanimously agreed that profits should be blocked in the Community up to the time it would reach the adequate ceiling for covering all debts and the acquisition of the means of production. This means that, at the end of the year, the repartition is made as follows:

38 per cent for reserve, 7 per cent for social security, 43 per cent in blocked members' account, 12 per cent for immediate distribution among the Companions. If anyone leaves the Community he cannot claim anything on this blocked account. This of course was decided unanimously.

The setup imagined by the Companions seems to work very well for their Community. They are a group of quiet, serious, unassuming workers, with their two feet on the ground and a far-sighted vision. I arrived at their shop five minutes before noon, and they were as busy as bees. As they knocked off for the two-hour lunch we repaired to a nearby bistro. It turned out that they had no Chief of Community. They did not feel it necessary. They elected several responsible persons, unanimously. Wives were paid for the housework, but the Community had not yet established any human value grading. They thought eleven families was not enough. They had not yet formed any Neighbor Groups either, partly because of their small size and also because they were all

very active in the union, and in politics and in church, and for the time being they preferred to focus the energy of their communitarian attitude on these established channels. As they expressed it: "There are many things we cannot do, because we have had to start the ball rolling. But the fellow workers coming after us will reap later." It was the awareness of what it means to be a Christian in our modern world that started them on the track. Then some of them heard Barbu, and their yearnings were crystallized. "We don't fuss. There is really nothing to it." One of them wrote me later:

> You may have noticed that it was all very simple. But it is better to do something simple and respect it than to do something big and spoil it.
>
> Is it necessary to recall that the fact that they are all Christians does not mean exclusion of anybody else?

In no Community does it have that implication, not even in the most closed one in intention I found at Dreux, where a few Catholics starting from the making of optical instruments as an economic expression aim gradually at an integral Community in the country which would group all sorts of professions: agriculture, optical, carpentry, upholstering, etc. The financial start was made through the son of an optician who is the Chief of Community. Actually the Community is feeling its way along. It is above all a certain fraternal atmosphere. They make all sorts of precision instruments, and though sometimes it requires a great deal of individual work they all speak of "our" work. "*We* did that well." Or "*We* could have done better there." One of them, a refugee from Spain, spoke his mind: "We could not work anywhere else now. Not even for more money. Here we are a group without racial prejudices. I am happier here with my French friends than with my own Spanish compatriots. Friendship, that's the important point."

The wife of one of the Companions and I had a long talk.

Besides being an excellent cook she was devoted to the full Community to be. It seemed to her the evident manifestation of Christianity. In her youthful enthusiasm she went so far as to declare that she could not see how any one could be a communitarian without being a Christian. We then had a pleasant chat about all the communitarians I had met and who not only were not Christians but were unbelievers and Communists. Having an open and gentle mind, she was deeply interested, and we discussed how such a thing could take place. We came to a conclusion which may sound unorthodox to clerical ears: The communitarians, those who had the love of the neighbor without being Christians, they were people ahead of us Christians. We had had to have Christ because we were hopeless. We would never have waked up. The non-Christians with the sense of brotherhood were already in Christ without knowing it. This view made us feel connected with the whole communitarian movement regardless of creed or no creed, and as Christians, like the least among its members.

The Spanish Companion of Dreux might have found friendship also in the Spanish Community I visited at Toulouse. Communauté Ouvrière du Languedoc.

The Spanish Center is a Quaker foundation for Loyalist refugees. In 1946 the Quakers withdrew. The Y.M.C.A. took up the work, making it a center for disabled and sick Spanish refugees.

At the head of it was Mr. March. A democrat, a Spanish engineer who had fled Spain in 1940 because he did not consider it possible for him to work there any more. Mr. March took the French examinations for engineering and chemistry at Grenoble. There also he met his future wife, a French girl who was graduating as a chemist. At that time March could write and read French better than he could speak it. And his future wife did not know Spanish. But that certainly did not matter much: I have seen them together in their camp shelter, much more primitive than any GI veterans' temporary quarters, three small children running around, no conveniences whatsoever. And yet so much

tranquil happiness pervaded the shack, and their hospitality had grandeur in its simplicity.

After they graduated from Grenoble they went to teach at the Protestant college of Chambon. It would have been all right if March had wanted to teach. But the social concern for others lay deep in him. So he left Chambon and became director of the Spanish Refugee camp at Toulouse for the Y.M.C.A.

Soon he discovered that, praiseworthy as the undertaking was, it seemed useless eventually. The men sent to the camp were all sick from years of prison or malnutrition. They had wandered back and forth between sanatorium and hospital and did not have any trade. Those who had had one previously lost their skill. No matter how great the effort of the instructors, the men could not get enthusiastic. They felt their lives were doomed and that they would always be unable to compete with the work turned out by healthy Frenchmen.

For a long time March considered the problem. It seemed as if there were no solution. The men would just remain a liability which social agencies would have to take care of. Lives without hope, without anything to live for.

March could not accept that. His sense of the meaning of man was too vivid. And then he hit on the communitarian idea. Make the men grow into a Community. They would regain dignity, they would draw strength from their collective purpose and they would develop through the managing of the economic expression and through the communitarian setup.

But could they make anything salable? Yes, together they could. And they would have a market: the large Spanish population around Toulouse. Those people who are not refugees but have a sense of solidarity with their compatriots.

What could they do? They could be taught tailoring and carpentry.

The I.R.O., sensing the social implication of the project, gave it its support.

Small groups were formed. Building: Communauté ouvrière du

Languedoc. Shoes: Communauté-Coopérative de Chaussures. Arts: Communauté-Coopérative des Arts Décoratifs. All in all, about 100 men. I visited several of the shops where groups were not only learning a trade but were awake to the communitarian idea. The rehabilitation does not take place only on the material side. The whole man is patiently tended. Not only the individual all by himself, but the man integrated into a group. Men who are growing into a Community.

How difficult at first to grasp that what they earned belonged to the Community. But when they understood it, how inspiring it was. They were not alone any more, shifting for themselves in an unfriendly world. And at once they thought of the others who were still alone in the world. The collective savings of the Community could help other Spanish sick people who were put out of hospitals. And why only Spanish people? Any poor foreigner. That's what they, the Community, could do.

I saw them, working with the concentrated passion of the Spanish temperament. They work ten hours without noticing it and know how to live so frugally that surely the collective savings will grow steadily.

The barracks stand in the mud, the wind blows through the thin boards, the men's clothes have no color any more. But the fire of common salvation burns high and encompasses all.

These few typical examples do not exhaust the list of Communities of Work which started from nothing and are still alive. In America, distinct approval and admiration accompany the phrase "He made good." The epic of the single individual who, starting from nothing, makes a success has been dear to the American heart for many decades. Hence it seems that we are made for understanding those Europeans who make a stand against wind and tide, and in spite of all, push ahead and make good.

They make good. That is the difference from the traditional

statement. This is the modern pattern. The pattern for mass production. The thrill is not to make good singly, but collectively.

Undoubtedly there is a tremendous, legitimate, and absolutely necessary joy in making good materially as a Community. That necessity should in no way be undervalued. To fulfill it when starting from nothing is no small achievement. All Communities breathe a sigh of relief when they do make good materially. And only those which do so are able to offer a concrete example of communitarian living.

However, there is more to the testimony of those who started from nothing than the sheer ability to make good collectively on material ground. Those Communities bear witness to the thirst for a new way of life.

It is evident that anyone with energy and capability, just anxious to make good materially, even collectively, would not choose a penniless Community.

The interest, the basis of the search, has to be beyond material return. Though, as said previously, material return has to come.

Throughout my tour, communitarians of those heroic Communities, expressed their motivation in different ways, which all amount to what was said in one Community:

"We want to help build a society in which everyone will share responsibility to the maximum of his possibility and in which living will be more harmonious."

It is this search that bolsters them up. It is their faith that, no matter how small and insignificant their demonstration of a more human way of living, through it they participate in the effectual liberation of the working class and mankind in general. Their Communities are the first cells of a new society. They may be only the first fruit of things to come, but they are that.

That is why they are so intent on not losing the communitarian aspect through the bitter material struggle: to come out on top financially and to have lost the communitarian spirit. Minutes of Communities reveal that struggle:

Cober Community: "The fever of work holds us. The meetings are disorganized . . . Total human value, wives' remuneration . . . How stupid we are. We only remember that we discussed all that passionately. And nothing came out of it. Production. Production. We are only 11 left. Why? Consequence of our lack of understanding, of our individual selfishness. We have forgotten that we are making the "Communitarian Revolution."

Pathetic SOS from Cober Community which could be signed by many others at different times! Pushed against the wall of present-day society, those people find also their own shortcomings assailing them. And in the process it seems that these shortcomings, accepted and veiled in ordinary life, grow out of all proportion. The communitarians battle giants on two fronts: society and themselves.

Rochebrune, which calls itself a "school for revolutionary formation," that is, a "cell, truly human, where companions can develop and become every day freer, more fraternal, more realist because obliged to take into consideration all that is human," Rochebrune discovers that being thrown together as they were at the time of their destitution did not improve the communitarian spirit. On the contrary, the lack of privacy worked against it.

So thinks Neuilly-Paisance (sheet-iron works) where for several months they had 60,000 francs monthly for the cooking of two meals a day for fifteen people. It was high time that some orders came in and made it possible for each family to return to a certain degree of privacy. Fortunately, the communitarian setup is supple enough to accommodate French people, who by nature have no gregarious instinct. The communitarian way goes much deeper than the herd inclination. It does not aim at agglomeration but at liberation.

E.C.H.B. favors the start of a Community the hard way. They themselves certainly were not spared. Those who cannot stand it leave. The rest wake up to the communitarian spirit and a climate is created through common sacrifices. Otherwise there

is danger of having the spirit of an associate and not of a communitarian. In all men there is the spirit of competition and the spirit of mutual aid. Society caters to competition. Community of Work caters to mutual aid. Poor beginnings give it a chance to develop.

Cober chimes in:

"Now we know how difficult it is to be a Community. In order really to succeed one has to know the difficulties first. It's like being vaccinated."

All Communities are aware of the two pitfalls: only technicians—material returns and no communitarian spirit; no technicians—no material returns, communitarian spirit. A balance is to be found, mostly created.

Also they all emphasize that a Community cannot choose, but has to take everybody: the self-centered and the selfless, the healthy and the weak, the intelligent and the stupid. And they all agree that the stupid ones are always a majority, which is in itself an intelligent statement!

Communities which start from nothing have the opportunity to test to the limit the worth of the pattern, since it presents itself under the most unfavorable material conditions.

Some Communities cannot make the grade. They fail. Barbu himself failed spectacularly in 1949 when he tried to develop a Community of Communities, a City of Communities, where even the administration would be a Community. It is too early to try to probe into the many reasons for this failure. What is remarkable is that it has not affected the rest of the communitarian movement. It shows that the whole thing was not, after all, a personal matter. That it was created by the wishes, the work, the will and the experiences of many. The temporary failure of Marcel Barbu teaches at least two lessons: (1) That no matter how great a man is he is still a man, and as such, especially in a communitarian regime, has to be checked like anybody else. (2) That the communitarian movement is not built on one per-

sonality but gathers its momentum from all those who belong to it. The recent events may have saddened many of us who admired Marcel Barbu and will continue to do so by trying not to minimize in any way the part he played at the start of the movement. But those events are also a source of hope, because of the turn they have taken. A source of hope not only for the communitarian movement but for Marcel Barbu himself, *premier de cordée* (first in line).

This book is not a report on successful business enterprises of a new kind. Communities do not present themselves as a ready-made solution, recipe, something which works infallibly, a panacea for world troubles. The communitarian way is not the sure road to success. It is not a trick to learn, a formula to apply, a clever device to circumvent Communism, a short cut to prosperity and happiness. It is a step taken on the road that leads to human maturity and more and more human plenitude for all.

That step, that move, that departure, that is what is important. What will each Community be tomorrow? A failure or a success? How many new Communities will take shape? Into which form will the communitarian movement evolve? No one knows. And the communitarians no more than others. They carry on from day to day, viewing their effort and search modestly, within the age-old struggle for the workingman's liberation, that liberation without which no freedom is possible for anyone on this earth.

CHAPTER VI

Le Bélier—Boimondau 1950

Only those live who find not their happiness in the life they have prepared for.

—Saint-Exupéry

WATCH-CASE FIRMS AGREEMENT between Boimondau Community of Work Chervet & Co. Generalor Le Bélier Community of Work François Miserez

THE present covenant between manufacturers of watch-cases has for its object the creation of an organization for the purpose of improving the conditions governing the fabrication and sale of their product.

It is proposed to:

(1) Divide activities in accordance with a plan of specialization mutually agreed upon.

(2) Make joint efforts to improve techniques and cut production and sales costs.

(3) Create new markets by establishing a central bureau for export sales.

(4) Distribute among the members the orders thus obtained.

While the individual members retain their independence and have complete control over their own administrative, financial and techni-

cal activities, the covenant binds them by mutual consent under self-imposed rules and regulations for concerted action on methods of production, types of products, specialization and certain procedures of sale, particularly in regard to export.

A covenant? How come? Two Communities of Work getting together with capitalist firms? Is this treason? Are those Communities gradually relaxing their original attitude? Is their material success leading them to re-enter the capitalist world, through the back door, so to speak, but entering it just the same? Or should this move be viewed as the spectacular evidence that the Communities have made good?

All these questions crowd one's mind when first hearing about the agreement. Is it the beginning of the downward trend, or is it the first opportunity for a greater communitarian sphere of influence?

Perhaps, before musing over the possible consequences of this new development, it would be better to try to examine a few facts.

In 1948 there was a severe economic crisis in France: 5,000-franc notes recalled, extra taxes, prices going up while purchasing power diminished, etc.

The watch industry is a deluxe industry which, of course, suffers from any lowering of purchasing power before other more essential industries do, such as food products, for instance.

On the other hand, for several years the demand for watch cases coming from watchmaking concerns in France had been such that, as mentioned in the first chapter on Boimondau, all watch cases that were made were sold. Before the war, a great many were imported from Switzerland (half of what was necessary). During the occupation and after the Liberation, mass production in France was considerably developed. It came to meet the French needs, and in addition exported 10 per cent of this production. All firms were working to the limit, though already in 1946, because of the government setting so low a price, capitalist firms claimed they were losing money.

However no one was hit too hard until 1948. And then it came like a tidal wave.

Within ten days, practically all orders were canceled. In April, 1948, Boimondau sales returns were 8,000,000 francs. In May they came down to 3,000,000 francs. In July to 2,753,000 francs.

Boimondau had no financial backing. The other firms had. They were sitting tight, closing one shop after another and dismissing the men. And everybody was waiting for the Boimondau downfall.

But Boimondau held on. "We have done it with our moral capital and our work."[1] All the Companions, in General Assembly, voted unanimously to forgo two months' remuneration, and to go on working. For the next three months they agreed on cashing less than half the vital minimum set by the union.

How could they live? The women took work outside to feed the family while the husbands worked for nothing at Boimondau. Other Companions gave half their time to the Community and got extra jobs outside. Everyone worked to the maximum and with a will to save the Community. All together, they did save Boimondau, without any outside help, and without selling one machine or one ounce of raw material. And all the 140 Companions (except one who left) were still there when they finally emerged from the struggle.

They emerged conspicuously: they were at the head of the French watch-case market.

The watch-case market is no different from any other market. It is governed by supply and demand. As everyone knows, the question of synchronization of production and consumption is one of the biggest issues in the world of mass production. It is not the purpose of this book to examine all the solutions that have been advocated or tried. What we have to consider is just the fact that one of the ways to face the problem has been, and is, by producers' mutual agreements. Firms voluntarily agree to abide

[1] 1948 Report.

by certain rules which limit their individual liberty but make business possible for all of them.

The result is a producer-planned economy instead of a state-planned economy. Discussion of respective merits has no place here.

It was to be expected that other watch-case factories, seeing the spectacular stand of Boimondau, would become both interested and worried. Boimondau in a sense had saved the whole French watch-case market. On the other hand, the other firms did not want to go out of existence.[2]

The important other firms decided that the thing to do was to go and see those communitarian fellows and talk it over with them.

It was quite a day when M. Miserez came to Boimondau. We can imagine how the Companions felt. Especially the 55 older ones who had labored since 1940 in the "search of a setup in which the distinction between employer and employee shall be abolished." There was the employer of one of the biggest French watch-case factories come to talk business with those communitarians who "make watch cases in order to make men." Such acknowledgment of their material success must have been overwhelming. Distrust may have swelled their breast too. At any rate there must have been room for a good deal of elation: the old way of living having to come down to talk things over with the new way. Who could have foreseen it a few years back?

M. Miserez's visit was followed by those of the representatives of Chervet, Generalor. It had become evident to those capitalist firms that an agreement should be signed between them and the two Communities of Work whose economic expression was watch cases. The other Community, Le Bélier, whose production is smaller than Boimondau's, ranks high in quality.

In connection with the agreement one may find it a little diffi-

[2] There are 26 French watch-case factories out of which 7 only operate on a mass production system. Only 10 factories employ more than 100 workers. So Boimondau is a "large" concern."

cult to free oneself from emotional reactions such as: "They should never have done it. The communitarian spirit will deteriorate." Or the reverse: "Bravo! This is the best evidence that they have made good."

Leaving those outbursts aside there is a sober fact:

It is useless to pretend that a Community of Work can be an isolated phenomenon, divorced from the rest of the world. As long as the economic structure remains what it is at the present time, Communities have to deal with capitalistic ventures. To think otherwise is pure romanticism.

How does this fact work in favor of the often-used argument that the communitarian movement is incapable of making, on the present day structure of society, an impression strong enough to change it and that only violence will do it?

At this point I recall a conversation overheard in France. The noncommunitarian Marxist: "The cleaning up is absolutely necessary." The communitarian Marxist: "All right. But when that is over, who is going to rebuild? Not you, boys. We, communitarians."

The communitarians who are already building.

At the present time the Watch Case Agreement is a victory for the Communities of Work. It is not only a material victory but a spiritual one, since their financial success was wholly built on their "moral capital and their work." Let us hope that the victors will not be caught napping. We shall see later that there are signs already that such will not be the case.

One participant in the agreement, is the Community of Work Le Bélier. It is situated in the heart of the watch-case center in France, Besançon. Originally it was Marcel Barbu's own factory to which he could not repair during the occupation. In 1943, when the Germans invaded the whole of France, some of the machines saved from Boimondau's wreck were sent there. In 1944 some of Boimondau Companions decided to stay in Le Bélier and start a Community of their own together with some other

men. Agreement was made with Boimondau regarding machines and production. Le Bélier would not compete with Boimondau on the market. It would specialize in a few choice models and would push to the maximum the educational side of the Community. Arrangement was also made with Barbu for buying back the factory.

Times were auspicious, and the Community prospered. "We were lucky," says the Chief of Community. "It would not turn out like that now. But what of it? It is always worth trying, even if you break your neck. You learn so much!"

Somehow Le Bélier seems to be for adults what a Montessori kindergarten is for children. The factory gives the impression of a workshop. There is scientific organization of the technical work, but there is also a scientific attitude toward everybody's behavior. There is an atmosphere of attentive sympathy devoid of any sentimentality. A willingness to understand human beings to the fullest extent—Le Bélier seems to accomplish this feat of always giving full credit to human nature and at the same time remaining without any illusions. As was explained to me, for instance: "We do not change. We remain what we are. For a long time. Those who are in the habit of coming late to work, come late. What is the use of a sanction? To obey a sanction has no value. So better be frank, and have no sanctions."

The main point for Le Bélier is education. Many courses in history of civilization, art, music, management, political economy. And all with "progressive methods." In the spiritual section, for instance, the Companions answer such questions as "Why are you a materialist?" or "Why are you a Catholic?" Starting from such answers as "Because I am fed up with religion" or "Because God made flowers and birds," the Companions learn to find the root of their attitudes.

The same method for "growing up" is employed in all branches, including management, and it is all done without apparent hurry and in a leisurely manner excluding any sense of pressure. "We

always try not to take anything tragically. Companions should remember the Community as a place where they were happy."

Yet the "growing up" is the important part. Just as a Montessori kindergarten is only a preparation, so is Le Bélier. Le Bélier thinks the present society setup is disintegrating and a new one is in the making. The members are getting ready for it. They insist that they do not know what it will be like and that they do not expect it necessarily to turn out to be a Communist dictatorship. What is certain, they say, is that in the world of tomorrow there will be a great demand for competent people, for educated people familiar not only with management and business problems but also with the sense of the value of man.

That is why Le Bélier insists on remaining wide open to all, regardless of any allegiance. "It is rather easy to grow into a Communist or a Catholic community. But to grow into a Community which is truly a section of the world, that is something else."

At the close of my too short visit I heard part of the choral work. A teacher from the State Normal School was directing. I could not help being surprised and not a little moved when men and women broke into Bach's chorale "My heart ever faithful" to which had been written communitarian words. Nearly twenty-five years earlier it was that same chorale that I had chosen for the Parisian members of the first French children's library, L'Heure Joyeuse. And we had put words to it which fitted our effort, a daring effort, along progressive and communitarian lines before the communitarian movement was in evidence. For some reasons rather, during my visit at Le Bélier I had thought of Mme. Montessori, and also of the mad educational adventure of my twenties. And, then, at the close of the visit, the same chorale. I should add, and Bach again. For Bach seems to be on the way to becoming the communitarian movement's favorite composer. We will find him again before the end of this book.

The Rule of Le Bélier has been almost copied word for word by

R.G. Community which we studied in a previous chapter. That Rule itself came out of the one of Boimondau which Le Bélier Companions rethought in terms of their own attitudes and experiences.

Le Bélier is prosperous materially. It averages four to five million francs sales return monthly. It does business with Lip, Zenith, Tribaudeau, Bauer in the United States, etc. There are twelve other watch-case factories in Besançon. Le Bélier receives an average of fifty applications weekly from workers who want to belong to it.

Like Boimondau, Le Bélier uses its extra money to help new Communities get started.

Le Bélier and Boimondau are highly respected in the watch-case field in France. Within the powerful Five Group they participate in all questions regarding the profession. They have reserved their entire liberty regarding questions which are not technical or commercial. For instance, they leave the board meeting when salaries are discussed, since they disapprove of wages. They still support strikers, even those of the firms in the Covenant, by giving them a day's pay as they used to, but at present, in order to avoid chaos, they hand the money over to the strikers at the end of the strike instead of during the strike.

Boimondau alone makes 20 per cent of the French production. A few months ago, people confusing the failure of Barbu in his new venture and Boimondau, announced urbi et orbi that Boimondau was bankrupt. As a matter of fact it never was so solidly prosperous. To such a point that it might be disturbing if the communitarian spirit was not so strong. Mermoz, present-day Chief of Community, hammers at it: "The communitarian movement does not mean to get rich together, but to liberate oneself more and more and together, in order to liberate others."

After four years I still found the same concern, though I had been told that it had greatly changed.

That Boimondau has changed is true, but not the concern. At least I have not found it so.

What has happened is that Boimondau has grown and is still growing. It has grown materially, even in its outward appearance. Gone the muddy yard and the makeshift door. A beautifully designed doorway, a paved courtyard, an assembly hall, new buildings, new machines, music in the workshops to relieve the monotony of tasks, every hour for fifteen minutes. A restaurant where meals are excellent and abundant, and where you can read the newspaper of your choice while sipping your coffee, from *Témoignage Chrétien* to *L'Humanité*. Medical service, library, etc., etc. And the kindergarten where children spend the day after they have been rounded up throughout town by the Community truck.

For this is something new: Boimondau 1950 has a child problem which Boimondau 1946 did not have (125 children). And that problem fills up many of the discussions of the Neighbor Groups and the General Assembly. The kindergarten answers a need for small children. But up to the present time Companions do not favor the creation of a school in the factory compound. Children, like adults, should remain integrated in the civic community. Avoid the successful ghetto at all cost.

The Community has acquired, a few miles from Valence, a beautiful country estate which is used as a convalescent home or a rest cure for the members. The transaction was made possible through the wife of a Protestant minister, Mme. Lelièvre, who owned the place, and considered the communitarian movement, and Boimondau particularly, as an up-to-date practical demonstration of the spirit of the Gospels. The village of La Baume, where the property lies, is twice famous. There, the sinister Baron des Adrets, called by Coligny himself a "dangerous beast," took Montbrisson castle and compelled its defenders to throw themselves over the walls on the upturned spears of his soldiers.[3] On the other hand, La Baume is the only French village that remained utterly faithful to the Reformation. There has never been a Mass said there since the sixteenth century. Up there, on

[3] At that time Baron des Adrets was a Calvinist. But cruelty is no monopoly of any religion. The Baron was just as monstrous when he turned Catholic later. He probably was a pathological case.

the domain of the Community, one contemplates a grandiose landscape. It has both charm and severity. The harmonious manor itself is in excellent condition, all furnished. Boimondau Companions are lucky. Fortunately they know it and acknowledge it with understanding, and not only the "arrangement" but also the fine spirit that prompted it.

There are some other new developments at Boimondau since 1946 which should be mentioned.

Lecture courses have been replaced by workshops in the modern way of teaching.

The proportion of the social and professional value has been changed. The reader may recall that it was previously ½ ½. It is now, in 1950, ⅛ ⅞. The Companions have decided it so because of all special features. If, in addition, the social value was rated ½, then the whole amount was out of gear. Special features include wives' remuneration, all medical expenses (the Community makes up fully what is left to be paid after the Social Security[4] has contributed the legal amount), one month vacation, one week at the farm, cut price restaurant (115 francs a meal which would cost 250 or 300 elsewhere), a consumers' co-operative (10 to 20 per cent lower prices), educational courses, lectures, movies, library, free use of a charwoman when someone is sick in the family, renting of a hotel by the seashore for summer family vacations, use of La Baume for rest. All this, to say nothing of the spiritual advantages. So it seemed that the social outweighed too much the professional. Therefore, another rating is being tried. The professional value is easy to determine since there is a great deal of experience already in this line. The social value is more difficult, especially now that new people are coming in. (There are 140 producers. There were 90 in Dec. 1943; 55 of

[4] After it had been made possible for Boimondau to have a legal status, it was decided that the Community should join the Social Security in order not to be cut off from the rest of the nation.

these are still at Boimondau. The rest fell off for different reasons: most of them at the time of the burning of the factory by the Germans. They were afraid of reprisals on their families. Others were shot or died in concentration camps. Others just left.)

Boimondau Companions say that in order to figure out the social value they have decided to use the Cartesian method: "To divide difficulties in as many parts as possible and desirable in order to arrive at a better solution, and to organize our thinking in an orderly fashion, that is, by starting from the simplest ideas."

This philosophical statement is no speculative matter at Boimondau. It is applied practically at once, as the following table shows:

			Per Cent
Social Value	Personal value	Make-up and character.	14
		Practical knowledge ..	3
		Culture	3
		Health	5
		Intelligence	5
	Communitarian value	Responsibilities, and sense of, ...	50
		Communitarian spirit .	10
		Civic sense	5
		Family responbility ..	5

How is that determined? By cut-and-dried statistics, and built on what?

Statistics and tests do help, but they are not everything. What has to be appreciated is the attitude of the Companion in the Community, in function of the communitarian life. "That is why we give so much importance to responsibilities and the sense of responsibilities. And we have asked each Companion to fill out a questionnaire on all his communitarian activities."

It is out of all these elements that the social value is evaluated. It is not a matter of a "last judgment": "The elements of the social value have been chosen after taking into consideration our Community of Work, the mentality of the people who compose

it, and its history. It is a stage of our evolution. We want to try to establish a rating of the people who compose the Community at the present time. We have no intention of trying to determine the absolute value of each one."

Another innovation has been the introduction of the Bedeaux system, clock timing for operations of production. This has been startling to many outsiders, and quick disapproval followed. But it all depends on the use made of the system. At first some of the Companions themselves had a disagreeable reaction to the suggestion. They remembered having worked in capitalist factories where the Bedeaux system was used in such a way that it became to them synonymous with the last word in man's exploitation. However, the Neighbor Groups studied the question. Much discussion brought to light the fact that probably many unnecessary gestures, or a faulty organization of successive operations resulted not only in lowering production, but also in fatigue. To time operations could not be harmful in itself in the machine world. What was wrong was the pressure brought to bear through it to the advantage of somebody else.

Boimondau is also up to date in having introduced a planning of production. There is a huge graph in the Chief of Community's office where all can follow its development per se and also in relation to the general state of affairs.

Absenteeism
Labor and Personnel Turnover
Statement of Accounts Payable to Members
Restaurant and Co-operative
Statistics of Remuneration
Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Statement
Customers' Accounts Payable, and Orders on Hand
Comparative Sales and Order Figures
General Administrative Expenses
Ratio of Current Assets to Current Liabilities
Bank Balances
Statistics of Manufacturing Process
Statement of Control of the Turnover

Statement of Comparative Sales Cost
Statement of Man Hours
Inventory of Raw Materials, Semifinished and Finished Products
Monthly and Annual Budget Control

The budget control itself reads as follows:

	Percentage of the Volume of Business
Distribution of Remuneration	37.0
Holiday Pay	3.5
General Maintenance Expenses	10.0
General Administrative, Manufacturing and Selling Expenses	10.5
Reimbursement of Loans (Barbu)	2.0
Purchase of Raw Material	26.0
Depreciation of Equipment	3.0
Taxes	3.0
Reserve Funds	5.0
	100.0

This budget is controlled each month by a monthly statement of accounts and all of the members have access to the monthly statement. The Chief of Community makes a monthly report to the Companions.

The budget proposed at the beginning of the year by the Chief of Community is discussed and approved by the General Assembly.

All this is important to mention in order to show that communitarians are no dreamers, and that they are thoroughly integrated in the world of the Industrial Revolution.

The yearly progress since 1946 reads as follows:

Number of watch cases produced

1946	1947	1948	1949
221,296	327,613	298,829	339,667

Sales returns (net after taxes) reads as follows (in francs)

1946	1947	1948	1949
28,800,00	54,800,000	72,200,000	98,567,000

The Companions emphasize that such good results are far from being only the consequences of adequate machinery and scientific

organization of the work. They depend primarily on the communitarian spirit of each and all Companions.

The year 1949 marks a definite financial liberation for Boimondau. It is not only written down in figures, one feels it in the atmosphere: the ease of prosperity. The visitor who knew Boimondau in 1946 and goes back to it now, feels enthusiastic, and a little fearful. There is such a thing as enjoying fully the fruit of one's labor without giving a thought to the rest of the world. The bourgeois spirit is no capitalist monopoly.

So the visitor goes around cautiously, observing, asking questions, reading minutes, talking with the Companions.

In such a way I proceeded, all the more because before I had arrived in Boimondau I had been amply supplied with a wealth of criticisms and of erroneous statements on several issues. I have already mentioned one: that Boimondau had gone bankrupt. There was also a "head or tail" statement: Boimondau had gone completely Communist (this from Catholics). Boimondau was working against the Communist Party (this from Marxists). According to different people Marcel Barbu turned out to be a "disguised fascist" or a "secret Moscow agent." In either way, very, very clever; on that, everybody agreed, at least. If you pointed out that Barbu was no longer at Boimondau you were told that it did not make any difference: in the opinion of the person who talked: Boimondau had received the fascist imprint. Boimondau obeyed communist orders.

Some people are incapable of forming a judgment devoid of labels. It is a convenient and lazy way. Unfortunately, sweeping statements are sometimes very harmful especially on those who are bent on trying to build a new way of life and not on proclaiming that they have found it. Which is Boimondau's case. If people want to be prejudiced, no amount of talking and explaining will change them, because the earmark of a prejudiced person is not to believe what he does not want to believe. Therefore, I will not try to disprove anything, nor convince anyone. I wish only to mention some modest facts, without comment. And let the reader

make up his own mind. Though, of course the best way is to visit Boimondau, and stay there for a while, with an open mind. This last requisite is most important. Because, again, a closed mind has a tendency to "interpret." Here are the facts:

1. Arriving at Boimondau in the late afternoon, I just had time to join the weekly Assembly of Contact. It had already started. A man in overalls was making an announcement. "The meeting of the Christian team (Catholics and Protestants) will take place next Tuesday night. Mass will be celebrated at the factory on All Saints' Day at nine o'clock." The man was François Rendu (François, as the Companions called him), priest-worker.

2. A few days later, at lunch, sitting at one of the long tables I talked with a man who said he had worked in Russia and been very happy there. As a matter of fact he swore he was trying hard to go back there. He had married a Russian girl and had a child. The Russian girl kept writing that the French government would not allow her to come in. The French administration told the Frenchman the Soviet would not let her leave. The point here is not to determine which story was true, nor if workers are happy in Russia, nor even if the man was sincere. The point is to show how constantly at Boimondau one runs into a variety of opinions and attitudes freely expressed and accepted by all, in a spirit not of challenge but of mutual understanding.

3. A comparison of the spiritual statistics of industrial producers:

	1946	1949
Materialists	48	46
Humanists	39	47
Catholics	35	41
Protestants	11	11
Undecided	2	0

Boimondau likes to quote:

52 Christians
47 Humanists
46 Materialists

And now to come back to the other criticism: that with material prosperity Boimondau will see the end of its pioneering spirit.

Some people always expect the worst. On the other hand, others are unduly optimistic. It seems best to examine how today looks.

Plans for the immediate future include the problems of children and family lodgings. But even that might be considered as using the Community's money just to increase the members' comfort.

What should be stressed is that up to now Boimondau has already helped financially four Communities to get started. It has also given a friendly financial push to ten Communities at times when they were stuck.

4. Last but not least is the taking in charge of 115 refugees from Eastern Europe. This project, duly signed by the various parties involved in February, 1950, is one of the most interesting developments of the communitarian movement and an occasion for congratulating Boimondau. It is also an important piece of news for all those who the world over are interested in the fate of the displaced persons.

The plan was originally conceived by Abbé Glasberg, director of the Centre d'Orientation Sociale des Etrangers. Abbé Glasberg is thoroughly familiar with the DP situation, not only their physical and material plight but their mental dereliction. Since 1940 he has devoted all his time and energy to them. He knows several European languages including Slavonic tongues. He has also first-hand knowledge of people themselves, which comes from the fact that he roamed around Europe a good deal before he became a priest at the age of thirty-two. A member of the Resistance, organizer of the clandestine rescue of the Jews, he was condemned to death in 1942. He escaped and hid and continued his work. He opposed those Christians who took advantage of the horrible plight of the Jews to "convert" them. He stanchly refused to do any proselytism. He saved them at all costs, including his own life. For him the very dignity of Christianity was incompatible with

any method of pressure, whether physical, moral or sentimental.

Such a man was well designated after the Liberation to be put in charge of the Centre d'Orientation Sociale des Etrangers. First he attended to the problem of Jewish emigration to Palestine. Then another kind of refugees poured into France: the displaced persons from Eastern Europe. Now, in France as elsewhere, people complain that they give the DPs all material assistance, and that still they are not satisfied. And that if they were worth anything they would hoist themselves out of their trouble.

Abbé Glasberg understands that human beings cannot be handled like bags of flour, nor disposed of with money. The DPs are uprooted. Not only have they to be rooted again, but they have to be tended. For their own good and for the good of society. Sheer material assistance will not do this. Only human contact, and sharing.

There are plenty of committees made up of people of the same nationality which are anxious to get hold of the DPs for political purposes. Thereby they only add to the unrest of the refugees and the irritation of the French people.

A group of French people should take charge. And it should be a group of manual workers.

Those DPs need to work. And manual work is a powerful agent of stabilization of the human being. However, many refugees shirk it and are inclined to consider it beneath them.

But what about watch-case making? It is different. Its fineness confers on it a sort of aristocracy.

On the other hand, it would be no competition to the French-born workers because, though on an industrial production basis, watch-case making requires a thorough apprenticeship, and for that reason many French young men prefer to enter the commercial side of the business instead of the production line.

To teach watch-case making to a DP group and thereby making them able to earn their own living is good. But it is not enough. It does not take care of the necessary human contact, the sharing,

without which there is no real assimilation possible and no chance of acquiring a better, more equitable conception of work and common good.

So thought Abbé Glasberg. He took his problem and his thoughts to Boimondau. The Companions agreed to act as sort of teachers and foster parents to 115 DPs. Boimondau will provide professional training through its own technicians, and will also—and that is the most important part—gradually initiate the DPs into another kind of living where co-operation is paramount. It will be done much less through talk than by sharing daily and intimately Boimondau's communitarian life (all activities).

So first a school is established, for technical and communitarian training, staffed by Boimondau. Then after the DP's "graduate" they can build their own Community of Work.

The I.R.O. is interested in the project. It gave L'Entente a mandate to create and administer "co-operatives of production in communitarian form for noncitizens." L'Entente formed a special association for this purpose, called L'Entr'aide Communautaire.

Purchase has been made of ground, buildings and machines in another part of Valence. Business possibilities are excellent. No competition to Boimondau since the DPs would specialize in watches of precious metal.

This whole new project means plenty of communitarian work ahead for Boimondau. Once more it is not a matter of making good materially together, but of liberating oneself more and more and together in order to liberate others.

They wrote me: they are up to their necks in getting everything ready for the DPs. The combination of Abbé Glasberg's humanity, understanding of the I.R.O., and the communitarian spirit of Boimondau, raises for the DPs the curtain of hope, not of illusion, not of condescending charity, not of embittering anonymous help. Of a hope to the full measure of man.

It seems that as long as Boimondau keeps that concern for the development of the whole man burning high, "it will neither slumber nor sleep."

CHAPTER VII

Nonmanual Workers

> Energy and character do not develop by reading books or listening to lectures.
>
> —H. Dubreuil, *A chacun sa chance*

WORK, says the communitarian movement, is any human activity. It emphatically recognizes that it is not confined to manual activity, since communitarian remuneration covers social value as well as technical ability. Intellectual and artistic activity is work.

At the present time, Communities in which the economic expression is manual work are more numerous than other Communities. The initiative came from manual workers. People who do something collectively with their hands get together more easily than those whose work is mental. For that reason a satisfactory communitarian setup for intellectuals and artists is not easily built. Some communitarians feel that the manual structure will have to be well established before the communitarian expression of intellectuals and artists can be sought out. And that, possibly, it will not be an isolated expression, perpetuating the division between the matters of the spirit and those of the hands, but a fusion. Intellectuals and artists will be integrated in the new society instead of living on its margin as they do now in present society, where, except for a few, they often are in a state bordering on destitution.

However, already some attempts toward a new way of living are being carried on by some intellectuals and artists.

It seems natural that the first ones in the field should be educators. In a certain sense, in both theory and practice, they preceded everybody else in the communitarian movement. Their experiences developed along communitarian lines before the word was coined.

In a former chapter I mentioned Mme. Montessori. Through her methods, young children are led to make their own discoveries, learn by their own initiative instead of being dictated to. From the start they are on their own, with responsibilities proportionate to their capacities.

Mme. Montessori is, as everyone knows, only one of the outstanding educators who have advocated and put into practice the apprenticeship of liberty and the development of the sense of human value and human relationship among children. There are famous names in the field, including several American ones.

With the deepening and the broadening in Europe of the communitarian current, some educational ventures have pushed further than ever in experimenting toward the bringing up of the whole man.

In fact there so many experiments are being carried on that I would need a whole book to report on them. Children's Republics, Children's Villages, Children's Communities, are everywhere. Some already seasoned, and many new ones.

Probably to Americans those ventures do not seem so daring because for many years we have been used to a democratic school system, generally speaking. But in Europe up to the present time it has remained strictly on the authoritarian side, except for a few bold ventures. Some communitarians express this lagging behind by saying: "Men and women are getting free. Children are still in bondage. Let us liberate children."

It is not the purpose of this book to mention experiments in progressive education, no matter how interesting they are, but only those which have communitarian aspects. It can be through participation, management, unanimity. It can be through a co-

worker attitude between teachers and pupils, whereby teachers are willing to listen to children's suggestions and criticisms, to acknowledge their own mistakes and correct their own judgment.

Many of the new experiments sprang up out of sheer necessity. Like the adult Communities of Work, the "children's Communities of Work were born out of suffering," all over Europe: Children on the loose, separated from their families while fleeing from one country to another, or left behind while their parents were shot or sent to die in gas chambers. Many children were picked up by French families, especially in the working class, where room was made for the little strangers. But that would take care only of individual cases. Other people grouped some children together in one big unit. In other cases the children themselves banded together. It seems that the groups formed either by the children themselves or through the initiative of an older person instinctively evolved into a communitarian pattern. This is significant of our times. After all, children could have been rounded up and placed under authoritarian supervision, as of old. As it was, all, adults and children, turned toward a communitarian way of life.

This trend is so marked in education, that the French government itself has given leave to some official schools to experiment along communitarian lines. Such is the case of the Lycée Marseilles-Veyre. The director, Pol Simon, and his staff are trying to develop the school along communitarian lines to the maximum without tampering with the rigid curriculum that has to be covered by all French children expecting to enter a university. This is a difficult assignment, since final examinations, which are all directed from state headquarters, are meant for students who have studied in the old-fashioned way, passively accepting the teaching under a quasi-medieval authoritarian system. Which means that they know a lot as far as intellectual tests are concerned and very little for living purposes. With the communitarian setup the intelligence is apt to be well trained at the same time that the whole person is tended, but the mind is not so crammed with knowledge,

the knowledge required for the state examination. Therefore, under the present general educational setup what is being attemped at Marseilles-Veyre is quite a feat.

Classes do not exceed twenty-five children. The class itself is divided into five teams. Each has a special responsibility, from very simple ones for small children up to important ones for older students.

All competitive systems have been given up. This is a tremendous step in an official French school. Evaluation is marked from A to F, each child rating himself or herself together with their team and the teacher. Unanimous decision. Effort is rated from 1 to 5. All marks bear on the person in relation to the work itself, and not as competitive marking.

Leaders of teams, designated by unanimous agreement of class and teachers, represent the class and make the liaison between teachers and students. Every week leaders and teachers meet together and exchange their views freely. This includes what they like, dislike, wish, and what they think of each other.

Just as in a manual Community of Work it is not only a matter of straightening out questions of order or discipline, of arranging for some social events, it includes discussions on work itself, that is, studies or the way subjects are taught. For instance: "We would like more conversation during the English course." Or "We would like you [teacher in mathematics, for instance] to speak louder." The ground to cover in the different branches of studies during the following week is examined in a general way so that heads of teams can convey to the other students the direction and the meaning of their efforts, instead of plodding along from day to day without any vision.

Even in outward appearance the Lycée Marseilles-Veyre is different from other official French schools. First of all, it is beautifully housed on a large estate outside Marseille, with lots of trees and grass. Classrooms have no platform and no desks, either for teachers or for students. Tables arranged in an open square are

used. It is a pleasure to see the two hundred children coming in and out freely, instead of forming a military line as they still do in other French schools. The midday meal is a gay affair, boys and girls mixing joyously at the tables. Again, unlike other schools, Marseilles-Veyre is coeducational. It is so in an intelligent way. That is, nobody pretends that with coeducation there is no sex problem. Nor that it is not apparently easier to deal just with one sex. Marseilles-Veyre believes in facing problems, not in running away from them.

Another communitarian feature emphasizing the concern for right human relationships is the fact that the familiar "thou" is used between students and between students and teachers and between teachers. This is a minor revolution in a French school, where distances have always been stretched as far as calling small children Monsieur X or Mademoiselle N.

In a way the most daring move is for teachers themselves to say "thou" to each other. French intellectuals have always had a tendency to remain aloof from their colleagues. Usually they greet each other ceremoniously every day, but hardly ever talk to each other, and once their courses are over they would not dream of having any kind of relationship with each other. On the contrary, they hasten away, meaning to forget everyone as quickly as possible and resume their cherished and most private life. In a way, it amazingly resembles the attitude of the industrial worker in a capitalist factory. Which shows that, as the communitarians say, the problem is much deeper than an economic reshuffling. It is the building of a new way of life, starting from man himself.

At Marseilles-Veyre, teachers have gone so far along the communitarian way that they decided to pool their salaries and then redistribute the money among themselves. However, up to the time of my visit, winter 1949-50, they had not been able to carry their project through, because for the present they never know if a new teacher coming in will be communitarian or not. They are trying to convince the French administration that no teacher should

be appointed to Marseilles-Veyre who is not communitarianly inclined. The problem is not easy because there are not so many teachers to choose from for a given course of study, so that the administration is probably hard put to it to please Marseilles-Veyre in that respect. However, even now a most fraternal atmosphere pervades the whole school. Everyone there, and, of course, particularly dynamic and imaginative Pol Simon, hopes that when the new buildings are completed for a certain number of children to live there, it will then be possible to experiment further along the communitarian path.

Already Marseilles-Veyre is a landmark in communitarian education. Within a rigid administrative framework, which prevents it from being fully communitarian in form, it manages to be communitarian in spirit.

Long before the state permitted some unorthodox experiments a number of private schools had entered the new path. It hardly seems fair to name any special ones, since so many were and are still outstanding, and the whole subject would requires a full treatment. The experiments mentioned here happened to be on my path. It is as such that they find a place in this book and not to the exclusion of the others in the field.

Freynet School has been in existence since 1934. It is a boarding school, nestled among pines on the sunny and perfumed hills along the Mediterranean Sea. Started along progressive methods, it has steadily grown into a Community. The children (40) are familiar with the whole life of the school. It grew to be so out of sheer necessity, which, again, is the surest ground on which to build. Only a third of the pupils pay the full amount required. Parents of another third give what they can afford. And the last third does not pay at all: problem cases, orphans, etc. So the school cannot afford any domestic help. All the work is done by children. And it is well done. Not apple-pie or shipshape order! But classrooms are in order, beds are made and the service at tables is efficient, to say nothing of the entertaining conversation carried on

with visitors! The 10-year-old young man who faced me at lunch exchanged points of views with me on all sorts of questions including skyscrapers and the old Marseilles harbor. At last another 10-year-old boy finally managed to restrain the flow of this eclectic talk by saying "Now, you let *me* talk to her." The worldly conversationist bowed his curly head good-naturedly in assent. He had quite a time controlling himself while *two* other boys talked with me, so that when I turned to him again he was nearly choking with all he wanted to say, so much so, that he gave it up with a flutter of his hand, sighed a little, and said in the most considerate, gentlemanly fashion: "Please have some more noodles."

Children not only help with the work, but they accompany the teachers on all errands, marketing especially. They know prices and they can figure out what is best to buy for food under the circumstances. They truly help to run the school.

They work in teams, but not always with a head for the team, in order to avoid the danger of too strong a personality. They have a wall newspaper on which they draw and write what they think good and bad of everything and everyone, including teachers. That wall newspaper reminds one of the Neighbor Groups' notebooks:

We wish we could paint plates again.
François, Roland, Claude, Jean.
We wish everyone would go to the shower before going in the swimming pool so that the pool would not get dirty so fast.
Daniel, Jeanne, Georges, Roland, Claude.
I congratulate Christian, Daniel and Claude who cleaned the swimming pool so well.
Jean, Suzette, Denise.
I congratulate Georges who served so well at the dinner table.
Serge.
I criticize whoever cut three dahlias.
Denise, Yvonne, Jeannette
I criticize Christian who says he saw me eating up the chestnut custard. It is not true.
Jean.

There is a General Weekly Assembly, and during the winter they have friendly evening talks on topics chosen by the children. The average age is between ten and twelve, what do they want to discuss? Here are some of the subjects suggested by them:

Should women smoke?
Should a man agree to go to war?
Should people stay married if they don't love each other any more?
Are women equal to men?

Questions are seriously talked over as they would be in a family where adults would not escape them and children would feel free to ask. The kind of question often reveals the troubled background of the child and also our chaotic world.

Children and teachers belong, or do not belong, to different religious groups. It has never raised any problem.

Neither does race. As a matter of fact the French children's tendency to go wildly enthusiastic over Negroes is to be noticed here again. A Negro child is usually made so much of that it becomes quite a problem to prevent the child-idol from being completely spoiled.

Any religious or racial prejudice which might be voiced by an ignorant newcomer is dealt with by the children in no uncertain terms. First a terse: "We don't speak like that here." And, if it happens again, any child (not the one offended) challenges the prejudiced child to have it out in the garden right then and there. I was told that the method was most efficacious.

When children leave Freynet school, either to go to work or to enter high school, they keep in touch with their former teachers. Not that they have to. But they want to. To most of them it is home. Sometimes the adaptation to a conventional academic school or just to present-day competitive society is hard. But they have been warned that far from going under they should fight to bring the spirit of mutual aid to all places where they happen to be.

Freynet, who nearly twenty years ago devised his own progressive method—one of its main features being the use of the printing press by children—has known lately a certain amount of public

recognition. A movie has been made in which the children of the Freynet school were the actors. They acted out, perfectly naturally, their own life, through a scenario and a script intelligently composed with a minimum of catering to romance. It should be said that even that minimum was highly criticized by the children, boys and girls, who thought it unnecessary. The film *Playing Hooky* has had a successful run in France. Unfortunately, inadequate financial arrangements were made for Freynet school which has not profited as it should have by the venture. The movies contributes to popularize not only progressive education, but also the communitarian outlook.

For twenty years the communitarian spirit has pervaded the school of Beauvalon, which is sometimes called Goodwill House. There also the children live as a community, sharing everything, including clothes. All teachers are called "thou" and there is a warm human relationship. Children feel as free with teachers as with their own fathers or mothers, or perhaps more so. They kiss them, hug them and get mad at them. But the personal relation is conducted in such a way by the teachers that it does not create any sentimental complications. General routine domestic work is done by children. All activity is paid weekly.

The school has no office. When you want to see the principal you just walk into her bedroom as you would your own mother's. The whole atmosphere is of utmost confidence and freedom, and yet there are some accepted (and explained) rules well observed. For instance, a moment of silence before and at the end of each meal. Also silence from the evening bell until morning. Then silence again (quite a long one) at the 15-minute morning general gathering; and another period of silence before starting to work. Children there, as usual, belong to any or to no creed. The silence is the one common meditation possible. In addition, I could not help reflecting what a salutary habit it was. The air is filled with shrieks and noise or just with the tension of work, and all of a sudden there is that stretch of quiet, a gathering of one's inner

self and a facing of one's self. The silence does that, by itself, especially when practiced collectively. Those regular breathing spells of silence throughout the day. Like so many "Hear, O Israel" . . .

All general policies of the school are discussed with the children. During the war the school was much used as a hideout by members of the Resistance and by hunted Jewish people. When the deportation was carried on in mass proportions the school sheltered twenty Jewish children who had escaped and were hunted by the police. To all children in the school, big and small, the situation was explained. How they should never give away the Jewish children even if questioned by French police or German soldiers. But some immediate and practical decision had to be agreed upon. The question was: Who was going to feed the Jewish children? Every Gentile child had one ration card. The Jewish children had no cards. So they had to be fed on the other children's rations. And the rations themselves were mighty small. Not only did the children agree wholeheartedly to share their own food with the Jewish children, but they never complained once, though sometimes it was evident that everybody was hungry. On every side there was a deep concern about the others: the Gentile children pretending they were not hungry any more in order to press some more of the food on the Jewish plates, and the Jewish children doing the same. Everybody kept an eye on the road. Fortunately, the house is on a hill and one can see over a mile who is coming, especially as all the classes have large bay windows. The alarm would be given and the group of Jewish children, rounded up in no time, would take to the woods back of the house. The country there is very wild. The Resistance used it much as hiding ground. The Jewish children slept in one of the well-hidden caves at night, amply supplied with mattresses and blankets. It was too dangerous to risk a sudden knock at the door during the night. In the morning a Gentile child would run up to the cave to tell them all was clear and they could come down. At one time, when the Germans

had moved their investigating headquarters to the nearby village, the Jewish children stayed several days in the cave. Other children sneaked up to bring them food.

During the occupation Beauvalon saw all sorts of people fleeing the Gestapo. Practically every intellectual, Christian or atheist, who belonged to the Resistance went through the village of Dieulefit at one time or another and was guest at Beauvalon. Beauvalon made no distinction. More. It continued to make no distinction, even after the war, when collaborationists took to hiding. At Beauvalon, any hunted man is entitled to twenty-four hours' rest.

Beauvalon has sixty children from two to seventeen years old, two-thirds boys. All nationalities. Many are problem cases. Yet in twenty years only two have turned out badly after leaving the school. Yet many are the children who reached Beauvalon completely unbalanced by unfortunate home situations. The simplicity, the frankness, the warm and intelligent affection, and the community life restored them.

They are taught by words and deeds that the aim of life is not to make money but to be more and more a man in the fullest sense of the word.

When I was there I talked to them about the industrial and agricultural Communities of Work that I had visited. They were much interested and asked all sorts of pertinent questions. They also seemed happy to hear that perhaps after leaving Beauvalon they could go on in the world along communitarian lines since now there were Communities of Work.

Vercheny is one of the many Children's Communities sprung up since the war for bringing up children who have no one left in the world or who have been abandoned.

A young student in Paris, Robert Ardouin, started to pick up children around railroad stations. He brought them to his room. Then he managed to interest Mrs. Vannier, wife of the Canadian

ambassador, and through her the United Nations. A temporary shelter was found in a Paris suburb. But soon Ardouin realized that the children had to be entirely removed from the big city. He was lucky enough to discover the abandoned village of Vercheny, thirty miles from Valence. He brought the forty children, from three to ten years of age there. Many of them had never seen the country before.

The village is in ruins but the children love it. It is "their" village and they help to repair it and to build a new school. Through friends of the staff (Ardouin, Galland and Gué) over 130 volunteers came to help Vercheny throughout the year 1949. The financial situation (entirely dependent on gifts) does not permit the buying of any machinery. So it is with pick and shovel that they dig ditches for water pipes. They pile up bricks one after the other for new buildings. A gigantic contractor's job, all by hand. American volunteers, students from Princeton University, were appalled when they discovered what would be expected of them. All other volunteers, being Europeans, took it for granted and just fell in and worked. But the Americans kept telling the French that the whole thing did not make sense without money and machines. Their restlessness and impatience lay heavily on the group. However, when about to part they said it had been a unique experience they were not going to forget soon, and they were not so sure that, after all, in their crazy way, the French might not succeed.

The children, all boys, except for the 3-year-old who is the sister of one of them, seem very happy. We had the midday meal together. The moment of silence that preceded eating was most moving: all these tough boys, practically in rags, suddenly very quiet and collected.

The group lives strictly on communitarian lines, one might say, an integral Community, since all is common, even the rags. And everything is talked over with the children and they attend to their own discipline.

There is nothing very new for an American in all this. It rings much like Boys' Town. Perhaps that was the reason why I found Gary Davis so perfectly at home there. I did not know he was there. I had gone to see the Children's Community. "Ah," said Garland, "you are an American. Well, you have a compatriot here." and there seated at one of the rickety lunch tables was Gary Davis pounding his typewriter, a dazzling, sunny, open-space atmosphere floating around him. As American as they come. We talked . . . about Vercheny and America. Vercheny: the French could not be on the front line of economic life any more. One had only to look at Vercheny, what it had become, and also under what conditions this little group was trying to build again a new cell. America: burdened by its economic responsibility. Vercheny: picture of France, outpost of the spiritual. That is how France still leads. America's material help is needed, but in order to be effective America should consciously enter the communitarian spirit. In France, in Europe, it is the multiplicity of all the communitarian centers, in one form or another, which puts hope into one's heart. The vitality of the spiritual. American material wealth could help the European spiritual quest if it came to perceive that the aim is not acquisition, that a civilization where emphasis lies on "things," "objects," is not matured, that the center of living has to be man himself and a motion from man to man. So we talked, Gary Davis and I, and we agreed that such an understanding does not come from setting up an organization, as America might be prompted to imagine, just as the French did too when they formed the world citizenship. It is born out of suffering and meditation.

There again the familiar communitarian phrase.

The Federation Internationale des Communautés d'Enfants with headquarters in Paris, under UNESCO, groups over 75 Communities throughout France, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Hungary, Germany and Italy. If one does not forget that there are children's Communities in Palestine, in Russia, and in the United States, one

can visualize the spread, variety and vitality of the educational communitarian trend in our present world, even when the groups do not use the word.

Some people are more aware of this than others. Understanding of the direction of history is not the monopoly of the manual working class. We saw that some bourgeois have it, also some intellectuals. Now, even royalty. Witness Queen Juliana of Holland.

The two little princesses go to a communitarian school. And one where communitarian thinking is pushed far. The school of Kess Booke. Werkplaats Kindergemeenschap Bilthoven—Society of Work of the Children of Bilthoven.

Queen Juliana had quite a difficult time arranging for her daughters to go to that school.

First, I was told that the Queen Mother could not favor the idea. It is easily understandable when one remembers that, in his youth, some twenty-five years ago, Kess Booke had been a conscientious objector to the hilt, up to refusing to pay any taxes, including indirect ones like postage stamps. He mailed all his letters stampless. His friends used to smile when they received his letters . . . and paid the postage and the fine.[1] It ended by the crown putting Kess Booke in jail.

And now the little princesses go to the school of the one-time jailbird. It must be a little hard to swallow for the Queen Mother, even though she knows that Kess Booke is not the extremist he was in his youth.

The other difficulty lay on the side of Kess Booke. He simply refused to take in the princesses. On the ground that there would be publicity. That people, visitors and reporters, would flock to the school not in order to visit the school but to get a glimpse of the princesses. And, above all, he would not take children who were bound to come to school one day and not the next because of this or that party, or this or that official affair.

[1] In Europe unstamped letters are not returned to the sender.

Queen Juliana said there would be no such thing with the princesses. They would come to school rain or shine, and no party or official affair would ever stand in the way. And, as far as visitors and reporters were concerned, they would get tired of coming if the rule of not seeing the princesses was kept hard and fast.

It was only through the glass wall of the school that I saw the little princesses busy at some Montessori-looking material. Of course I was not going to ask to shake hands with them, nor even enter the classroom where they were. I was told also that Queen Juliana has kept her word—the princesses never miss a day at school.

Bilthoven, ten minutes' train ride from Utrecht, is a lovely town, with lots of trees, broad avenues, beautiful mansions, not a little reminding one of Westchester County, New York. The different buildings of the Society of Work lay in the trees, very inconspicuous.

The basis of the society is "sociocratic." That is a new word coined by educator Kess Booke. It means: co-operation between those who naturally oppose each other.

Teachers and pupils naturally oppose each other, pupils with different opinions naturally oppose each other, parents and children naturally oppose each other, political parties naturally oppose each other, etc., etc.

How can those who oppose each other unite? The common aim, that's what does it.

But how can a common aim be reached? To some people it is this, to others it is that.

The sense of the common good has to be developed in people from the time they are small. The best way to start is to let the children form a community and take charge of it.

In that Community children discuss, compare their opinions, search for solutions, give up their too-particularist point of view or insist on their counterproposition. So that what finally is decided

can be so by all. A measure of common good, unanimously agreed upon. And so is achieved co-operation between those who naturally oppose each other.

We find here one of the main characteristics of all Communities of Work, yet this was arrived at by Kess Booke completely independently from, and years before the Communities of Work proper, just as Boimondau Companions hit on this principle of unanimity without ever having heard about Kess Booke or the Quakers.

The sociocratic principle is applicable in all walks of life, says Kess Booke: family, economic life, political life, and of course education. The co-operation of those who naturally oppose each other would of course result in the building of an entirely new society, in which the minimum chances of armed conflicts would occur. This requires a considerable training. It is the only sound and practical one for our time, thinks Kess Booke, and that is why he has set out to train children in it.

The school board of directors, the teachers and the children consider each other on the equal footing of *coworkers*. So it is in an adult Community of Work which does not necessarily prevent a hierarchy through ability and responsibility. The atmosphere is wholly informal. Children call adults by their first names.

The keynote is to experiment everything by oneself without losing the sense of the common good.

All classes are conducted as workshops. As much as possible proper physical surroundings are secured. No military rows of desks or tables. No platform, no desk. Sitting in a circle, on the floor. That's what is best. The old method of the Middle Ages, when Abélard sat on straw, surrounded by students.

A great deal of time is devoted to music, and almost exclusively to Bach. Singing of chorales. Piano playing starting with the *Little Book of Anna Magdalena* and continuing through the *Little Preludes*, the *Inventions*, the *Well Tempered Clavichord*, etc. Bach string chamber music. Ensemble performances: St. Matthew Pas-

sion. B minor Mass, incredible as it may sound. Why all this Bach, and almost nothing but Bach? I inquired. "Because his music is essentially 'communitarian.' No voice ever subservient to another." Children and young people of the Sociocratic Society of Bilthoven bask happily in Bach's music. It is part of their life. Not so much the acquiring of musical taste, but the sharing together of spiritual experience. How many times did I meet Bach in my communitarian tour! And sometimes in places least expected, where people without cultural background took him vigorously to heart, in "unchurchly," most vital fashion. Bach's music is "essentially communitarian." As if he had ever thought of such a thing! Of course that is not what is meant by the statement. Nor is it the use of his music propaganda fashion which would remind one of other similar pronouncements enacted by the French Revolution or Soviet Russia regarding artists. But there is a fact: in Bach's polyphonic music there is the fullest development possible of each voice by itself and within the ensemble at the same time. What the communitarians are trying to do in life, for man. Perhaps there lies a partial explanation of the affinity, between Bach and communitarians. Of course, to any lover of Bach no explanation is necessary.

To secure unanimous agreement among youngsters is no small job. Undoubtedly the authoritarian system is easier. However, any result obtained without full consent will eventually, in the course of one's life, bring trouble, say the educators at Bilthoven. It is better to shelve a question than to get something done by a majority only. Children still remember the time a 10-year-old opposed Kess Booke. Everybody had rallied to the proposition, except that 10-year-old child. Kess Booke dropped the matter. A year later he remarked that the child was the one who had seen right.

It is possible that one is right against all.

The story was told to me by a 12-year-old girl. I asked her if there was never any obstruction for obstruction's sake. She had a hard time undertsanding what I meant. When she grasped it, she

looked at me with pity: "But why? It is *our* work, *our* school, all together, teachers and students. It would be stupid, perfectly stupid." There was evident proof that the sociocratic method was working: co-operation of those who naturally oppose each other.

Sociocratic methods right through the whole communitarian movement: young and old, believers and unbelievers, Christians and Communists, Catholics and Protestants. A slow method. Wait. Wait.

There is much waiting at the Society of Work of the Children of Bilthoven. When discussions become too heated, suddenly a child raises his or her hand. It means she or he requires quiet for a few seconds. Immediately silence spreads over disorder and passion. Then the discussion is taken up again. During the half hour of the Weekly General Assembly at which I was present, hands requesting silence went up over a dozen times, and the tumult subsided. Sometimes an older boy would raise his hand, but more often a small child, and everybody closed his mouth and waited until order was restored. A most impressive self-discipline, much more convincing than the gavel of the chairman or the command of a teacher. Children learning the democratic way to the maximum of its possibilities. And, in so doing, developing within themselves control, dignity and a sense of values and a feeling of the importance of the common good.

Among teachers the maximum of communitarian life prevails. The school does not have much money, because it insists on taking poor children. So the teachers are paid "according to their needs." And, as they explained to me, their needs are few. There are too many needs in the world which are no needs at all. Very few things are necessary. Anyway little is spent in the country. And the sociocratic method takes so much time that there is not much left for one's own private amusement, which, anyway, they do not seem to crave. To teach at Bilthoven is a vocation and not a profession.

It is in such an atmosphere that the princesses are being brought

up. One could hardly imagine a better preparation to facing heavy responsibilities in tomorrow's world.

Si tous les gars du monde
Voulaient s'donner la main
Tout autour de la Terre,
Ça pourrait faire un' ronde . . .

So says Paul Fort in his famous ballad. Looking at the seven of them, singing it with such gusto and such sure musical technic, seven strapping young men full of fun and life, one wonders why indeed "all the fellows in the world do not get hold of each other's hands and form a ring around the earth." The Compagnons de la Musique make it sound so convincing and simple.

The Compagnons de la Musique are the creators of the animated song. Not mimicked song. Animated, living song, for the use of all polyphonic resources, different harmonies according to the different verses, and a collective dramatization using sparingly only the most effective and essential means of expression.

Right from the start in 1941 the Compagnons de la Musique were successful. People, especially young people, liked their performances. But by 1943 the government of Laval was fed up with that group which refused to play politics. And the group was dissolved. Then the boys took to the maquis, they sang in the maquis, they sang for Boimondau Companions. When the Americans arrived the Compagnons de la Musique were sent to the Army of the Alps. Later to the army of General Delattre de Tassigny, where their success was so great that in all parties they were made to take precedence over officers and officials. It was only in 1946 that they became independent again. Then some of them felt they wanted to strike out on their own. Eight of them left the group, where they had been trained and had learned the essentials of their art, and formed the Compagnons de la Chanson who, associated with Edith Piaf, came to the United States and were much appreciated.

This division, on which we pass no judgment, created a difficult situation for the Compagnons de la Musique. It may have been partly the reason why they decided to form themselves into a co-operative. They are legally a Co-operative Ouvrière de Production. Asked once what they produced, they answered: "Ourselves."

Actually they are very near a communitarian form. In fact, they border on an "integral" Community; and that is why they find a place in this book.

They live, eat, sleep and work together in a ramshackle wooden villa outside Paris, close to the ponds of Ville d'Avray immortalized by Corot. They are seven now, and one of them is married and has two children.

Each one has a special task to perform for the Community aside from his artistic duties.

Allotments are distributed monthly according to a vital minimum to which is added social value (responsibility, competence, effort) and a 6 per cent surplus for each year of work. There is a bonus for weddings and births.

Performers' work is always hard and requires a severe self-discipline. So, in a way, the Community is a little like a monastery. But not quite. At any rate, those are very modern monks who swim the crawl, do cart wheels on the grass of the estate, practice equilibrium feats, play ball. You would think they had not a care in the world.

The work is really created by the whole team: what to do, musically, dramatically. Then the endless rehearsals. What should be discarded, what should be retained. Everyone personally responsible to the maximum and yet blending his work in the whole team's performance. That is why there is never any name on the poster, and no single Companion takes a bow. It is always "we." There are no stars in the Compagnons de la Musique. Only, whoever hears them might add: "Of course. They are *all* stars."

The Compagnons de la Musique sing and "animate"[2] French folk songs, popular songs, ancient pieces, modern works—and

[2] In the Latin sense, *anima*—soul.

Negro spirituals. They have engagements all over Europe, and on the radio. Some of their songs have been recorded by Polydor. Their artistic formula pleases many people, and has been much copied and imitated. But everyone who has seen and heard the Compagnons de la Musique knows that in their own field they are tops. The spontaneity, the freshness of their performance, and its unspoiled directness surprise and charm. Art so perfect that it is concealed and the song seems improvised.

The Compagnons de la Musique had only to regularize legally what they were already living in their daily material and artistic life. For a long time the communitarian spirit has been their daily bread and wine.

The Compagnons de la Musique bear officially the title of Co-operative Ouvrière de Production. But many are the artist groups living communitarianly and who have not taken the trouble to register. After all, a certain form of communitarian life among poor actors is an old story. It has often seemed to them so very natural to share everything that they forgot to mention it. Some groups of artists are like religious people who have practiced a form of communitarian life for centuries, and nobody pays any attention. The difference is that religious communities are closed communities, and, until recently at least, not composed of lay people, nor of families. Whereas actors have often practiced open communitarian living. Because of the marked trend toward communitarian living in Europe, artists who do live in a communitarian way, find themselves related to the whole communitarian movement and not isolated as they used to be.

I wish I could have visited many actors' companies in Community form. As it was, I had to restrain myself and choose one. I chose to visit the group Le Cheval Arlequin, because it was playing right near the Paris office of the Federation of Communities of Work, was in close relation with the Federation, and in addition was, at the time, playing with marionettes. *The Little Prince* of Saint-Exupéry. It happens that Saint-Exupéry is THE

communitarian modern author, the one always quoted by communitarians. And last but not least I, myself, love *The Little Prince.*

Readers may remember that *The Little Prince* was published first in America. Saint-Exupéry wrote the story and drew the pictures in New York. Exquisite imaginative tale, its fantasy charms children and its poignancy moves them. To adults the philosophical message speaks in terms of human tenderness and longing of the soul.

To put *The Little Prince* on the stage was out of the question. Too subtle and delicate for flesh-and-blood interpretation. Adrien thought marionettes could do it. Adrien and his troupe had never used marionettes.

Adrien, actor, painter, engraver, worker in enamels, carpenter, and poet. Adrien, the famous decorator responsible for the mirror decorations of the French Line boat *Ile de France.* His troupe, Le Cheval Arlequin, all young, full of vitality and fantasy, and already well known for its performance of Molière, Colette, etc.

For such people to use marionettes means complete self-sacrifice. No personal applause, no curtain call. This is hard on professional actors.

Yet they were willing. Only how were they going to secure the copyright?

Then it proved to be most helpful to struggle communitarianly, and this, practically next door to the Federation Center. The Federation helped the troupe to get the rights.

So *The Little Prince*, text and pictures adapted by Adrien, came to settle down in rue Mouffetard—La Mouff, as is called that old, quaint, narrow, colorful, dirty, steep Parisian street, where fantasy reigns and red wine floods the gutters. The theater of La Maison Pour Tous, The House for All, quite a program in itself, opened its door to *The Little Prince.*

The first act enchanted me. Then I went backstage to meet the troupe. They explained to me that receipts are divided equally among them, regardless of stars or premiers. That the needs of

each one is met by the Community, depending upon the cash on hand. Which means, practically, bread for all, and a pair of shoes once in a while. The biggest worry comes from the fact that, not recognizing any hierarchy of allotments they cannot join the Social Security.

It was time for the second act. By special privilege I was tucked in backstage, in a crowded corner, between the "drunkard" and the "boaster." High up, on two narrow planks, parallel with the stage, stood the actors. There were no wheels, no hooks to hold the marionettes. The actors held them by a rigid rod, and at the same time pulled the strings and spoke the lines. They gave themselves heart and soul to the performance. Up on the perilous scaffold consummate artistry was lavishly dispensed.

A French critic wished *The Little Prince* "neither fortune nor glory, but an audience with a pure heart." Children, poets, artists and saints are such, and, for the rest of us, watching *The Little Prince* at La Mouff is apt to make us long that we too might become one of them.

It is fitting that *The Little Prince* be given audience through a communitarian troupe, through the intervention of the Federation of Communities, and in one of the oldest popular Paris streets, and on the stage of the House for All, which since 1900 has been famous in La Mouff for its cordial welcome to all the downtrodden of the neighborhood, physically, materially, morally.

The Little Prince's place is indeed among the poor, among those who value human relationships above all, and who subscribe to what Saint-Exupéry has to say about happiness: "It is useless to look for it anywhere except in the warmth of human relationships. Our sordid interests wall us in. Comrades alone pull us by the hand and free us."

However, this does not happen because we care for each other in a romantic fashion. We care for each other, as Saint-Exupéry goes on to explain, because "together we are looking in the same direction."

CHAPTER VIII

Along the Communitarian Road

> But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?
>
> —St. Luke 10:29

I REPORTED how in 1946 M. Pierre declared to me: "We are all looking for a more fraternal way of living." He was right. Communitarian search does not end with Communities of Work, whether with industrial, agricultural, intellectual or artistic economic expression. There are all sorts of attempts along different lines. Variety discourages any cataloguing and vitality exhausts one's efforts at locating all the initiatives. Discovering one group means being told about several others, absolutely different and yet plodding on the communitarian road. It becomes sometimes difficult to understand what is a community, an association, a group, or even a co-operative. Especially in France, where people have the talent of imagining a setup not *quite* like another setup. So much so that you come to marvel that two people might succeed in getting together. In a sense that is what makes the communitarian movement quite an event in France: that six, ten, one hundred French families can get together on a common basic minimum. And yet that is what this book is about.

Necessity, suffering, paved the way. It is true also of the groups outside the Communities of Work proper.

From a communitarian point of view the essential difference

between a Community of Work and the groups we are about to study is the fact that a Community of Work deals with what is so basically at the source of the daily life of man, that if this collapses, the whole life of man is endangered. And that is his work. Whereas the other groups deal with secondary elements. However, those elements are important. And the search in all communitarian directions is valuable at this time.

This is no attempt at covering this crowded field, but just at reporting a few of its aspects.

Les Castors, The Beavers, get together to build their own houses. There is scarcity of housing in France, especially for people who cannot afford high rents.

In 1947 the French government enacted a law by which governmental loans were given individuals or co-operatives for building homes. This is known as the project of low-rate homes, Habitations à Bon Marché, H.B.M. The loan represents 90 per cent of the building cost.

Reimbursement within 65 years, 2 per cent yearly interest.
No interest during the first two years
Half the interest remitted for the next 8 years
Reimbursement of principal deferred for 5 years

This enables a workingman, spending about 150,000 francs, to start to build a house, that is, to have it built for him.

This 150,000 francs, approximately $500, does not seem much. However, it is an enormous sum for many working people in France. So much so that they cannot even hope of ever being able to raise it. In addition, the initial fund is not everything. It is only the beginning. When figures are added it turns out that it takes around 1,500,000 francs before a house of four to five rooms is paid for. Few workers can afford, even gradually, to spend so much money ($5,000).

Five workers, at Bordeaux, thought the problem over. They explained their reason was not only that they needed homes and that they knew other workers who did too, but also they had

one common thought: "It is necessary to free man, and especially the workingman, of all material and moral servitudes imposed upon him by modern society. So it is necessary to organize this society in such a way that man can develop his own self. This necessitates a transformation of economic structures along a line of repartition of goods which takes into consideration the total human value (the spiritual included)."

So their initiative in the housing problem is a means not an end.

By getting together for building their own houses, workers' families achieve different results:

Immediate result: the housing
A minimum of property which guarantees independence. (Communitarian city property in the form of shares owned by a co-operative formed by members.)

Training in the communitarian way for people working together to build their own houses and who have known only salaried responsibilities.

Possibility, after working together in building their homes, to form a Community of Work.

Possibility for other working groups to form other Communities and join in the formation of a whole city.

Possibility of the formation of a whole city, with the understanding, however, that it will include all sorts of people and not only people belonging to Communities of Work. (Easily done: since people may have joined the building co-operative group and yet not want to form a Community of Work.)

This last consideration is emphasized over and over again by Les Castors, as it is, generally speaking, by all communitarians. It is false to try to form an exclusive setup. A perfect, select, self-sustaining ghetto. It is always a ghetto. A ghetto can never be right. Man is made for the vastness of the world. Let us not dwarf the world. If we free ourselves and then erect certain boundaries around that freedom, then we are cut off from the problems of all the other men, and our purpose is maimed at the start. The liberation of oneself is only in order to liberate others.

In fact liberation of oneself in any other way is no liberation at all. In the case of Les Castors "the real problem is not to house oneself but to house *men*."[1]

How do they realize their project practically?

Building work done by themselves. The future owners are the Beavers.

Grouping of Beavers so as to reduce general expenditures and be able to standardize material and organize the work scientifically.

Forming of a co-operative society legally registered as a builders' co-operative.

This structure having been established, how were they going to secure the government loan? The government loan was calculated for certain types of houses, built by contractors. The price evaluated included labor, which came in for about a quarter of the cost. If the Beavers were going to build for themselves, their labor amounted to a certain sum of money. It was, in itself, capital. So they reasoned, in very uncapitalistic fashion. The marvel is that, taking their ideas to government officials, they found people who understood what they were talking about and were willing to study how the thing could be put through.

An initial guarantee had to be found willy-nilly.

With the help of the government Family Agency (Caisse d'Allocations familiales), the families purchased some ground.

For ten months the families worked on putting the ground in trim.

The value of the ground at the end of that time was such that it could be used as guarantee by the government. It was not only the ground itself, it was that it stood as evidence of hard work.

Having considerably reduced the cost did not, however, solve the whole problem. Most of the families did not earn more than 15,000 francs a month. In order to clear themselves they had to repay approximately 5,000 francs, monthly. How could they do it?

The families then formed a consumers' co-operative. The co-operative returns are used to pay back the loan.

[1] "Communauté," March-April 1950.

For those whose earnings are very low, the other Beavers are studying a plan through which all the members will help them out. Already the discovery has been made: no one will have his own house, no one family will free itself without all the others.

Beavers have spread all over France. It may be asked how people have improvised themselves as carpenters and masons. But a French workingman is a resourceful man who can do almost anything. As a Beaver explained to me: "You need only a few very competent people. The others learn fast. And, in case you get a white-collar man in the outfit, he can always be an unskilled worker." Some members of Communities of Work belong to Beavers. All communitarian paths are intermingled.

Vie Nouvelle started before World War II. A few "bourgeois" probing the tragedy of personal and family isolation in our modern world. The inadequacy of the old pattern. After the war, as the president explained to me, they saw more clearly what they could do, because, through the suffering of the occupation, the rigid bourgeois framework had crumbled. Rationing for all, standing in endless lines, the necessity of doing one's own work, the effort in the Resistance where all classes were mixed. The French background which made *Madame Bovary* possible is gone.

With its disappearance, a few people had their eyes opened. Like Alexandre Dubois and some members of the UCE-ACT, they came to understand the value of the workingman's conception of salvation: Liberation of all the workers, not only his own. His own, alone, really nonexistent. What a lesson to the self-centered, isolated bourgeois. How right was Marx when he pointed out the psychological and moral importance of the economic factor. Out of economic structure, habits, reactions, ways of thinking shape themselves.

Vie Nouvelle has about two hundred centers, each grouping from forty to fifty families.

These families do not try to break the wall between themselves

artificially. They join for special practical purposes. For instance: buying vacuum cleaners. It is not a question of buying one collective vacuum cleaner. Families live far apart. The purchasing of all vacuum cleaners is made in rotation. Everybody shares in the buying of the vacuum cleaner of that family which needs it most. And so on, until all the vacuum cleaners have been bought. The same for a washing machine. Sometimes, when families live near each other, it is possible to arrange for one collective washing machine. Also a collective arrangement for household help.

There is nothing new in all this. It has been practiced extensively elsewhere, especially in Sweden. But it is something quite revolutionary in France. French women of the bourgeoisie who belong to Vie Nouvelle are learning a lot about how to get along with people. The problem of human relationship. Of how to use what belongs to all. It is interesting to note that this common practical ground seems to smooth out political differences which in France are often bitter within the very ranks of the bourgeoisie, according to rightist or leftist tendencies. Vie Nouvelle groups all tendencies, from extreme right to communistic ones (however, no party members).

In addition to these practical realizations, members of Vie Nouvelle pledge themselves to turn over to the general fund 10 per cent of their earnings. Those who earn above the vital minimum turn over more, calculated on a percentage basis. The money is used for emergencies, sickness, a child's career, etc. This is meant not as charity, and not so much as solidarity, as an attempt at more nearly equalizing financial possibilities.

One of the most interesting points in connection with Vie Nouvelle is the fact that they aim to grow in order to disappear. The fullness of their development will mean that the communitarian spirit will have burst out all over France, in all avenues of human activity, and therefore the group Vie Nouvelle will have no reason to exist.

This is a long way off. However, the fact that the members

have this in mind is important. It is the line of thought we are by now familiar with. Not to create a choice group, not to aim at a partial reform, not to be satisfied by doing the right thing in one's own corner. But be wide open to the need of the whole world, to keep in mind the liberation of all, and to work for it.

Communitarian efforts on all planes are best visualized at Montreuil, an industrial suburb, east of Paris. The impulse came from the priest-worker, Abbé Depierre, together with a few militant workers: A very detailed and scientific survey of the economic conditions. A merciless criticism of the whole setup. A vigorous, unsentimental search for getting out of the rut. Is not Abbé Depierre the one who ceaselessly upbraids the communitarians for their sentimentality? That sentimentality which falsifies all relationships and prevents them from being human.

First of all, before working toward men's liberation one has to know what held them in slavery. The approach to the problem varies. The little group of Montreuil found it was "habit." You get used to anything after a while. A whole people can be made to swallow injustice, falsehood, exploitation.

For instance:[2] It seems natural that man should have a nest for his family, adequate to his physical and spiritual needs. But now nobody seems to find it incredible that a great deal of money be spent on production, and that the men who work be housed any old way, and be not given any possibility of fulfillment. Each one shifting for himself, or else being parked in makeshift shelters or in company-towns which may meet all comfort requirements but are wrong in themselves since they set people apart and also make them dependent on the management. What of it? say those who do the hiring. And practically no one thinks this a monstrous phrase. Habit.

It seems natural that man should have control of what he

[2] The following material and quotations are from an article by Abbé Depierre published in the magazine *Communanté*, January, 1950.

makes, even if it is only partial control because of all the operations involved. It is normal that man should be able to understand the part his own work plays in the whole setup. If not, man is no longer man but simply a cog in the wheel. It is hardly surprising that those who have an interest in letting him be a cog in the wheel do not protest against the system. But there are many "cogs in the wheel" who themselves have lost any interest in being anything else. Habit.

It seems evident that the system of small rural property is a source of stagnation, including lack of educational possibilities, enslavement of women, dissatisfaction of the young, etc. Yet this conception has become an "idol." "The very idea of changing this social structure appears as tampering with God's plan." Habit.

It seemed natural in the nineteenth century for priests to be dispensed from bearing arms. People at that time had at first violently rebelled against any compulsory military service. So it seemed out of the question for a priest to be taught how to kill. It would have been shameful. And now "the shame is not to know how and to be able to kill; the shame is to refuse to kill." Habit.

That is how it works. First people revolt against an unjust social structure. Then they accept it, temporarily, for the time being it is necessary; but it won't last. Third, they make idols of what they fought at first and then accepted. They have to in order to justify their acceptance. It is an unconscious process. The priest-soldier is a hero. The businessman has a noble vocation. The poor people have the "vocation of obeying without discussion and of redeeming resignation . . . There is also the sacrament of 'private property' since the one who possesses property is saved by the fact that through his very generosity some extra benefits reach those who have been crushed and lessened all their lives by that very property. That sacrament of property works in two opposite ways according to the person involved: the one who considers the property as his own, or the one who is forever deprived of it." Habit.

If those unnatural views have become such habits, the first thing is to re-create a healthy, instinctive reaction to the problems involved. How? says Montreuil. By going against the current:

One: Denounce the idols.
Two: Deny the fatalistic acceptance of war, economic system, etc.
Three: Round up collectivities (villages, factories, social and religious groups) not for a sentimental gathering but for union and action toward specific realizations for the common good.

Montreuil is doing those three things. Montreuil is hard at it. Montreuil is on the move. Here are a few of the modest but real results:

Every year industrial workers go to visit peasants, stay with them, study their activities and their economic and social setup. And the peasants help them with their products, or by providing places to rest for the families.

The women of Montreuil are trying to push their husbands toward social and political action instead of trying to keep them at home as is the usual family French way.

Groups of militants, believers and unbelievers, get together and try to deepen their knowledge and mutual friendship through conversation, and common work for the same practical aim, "knowing that that practical aim is not of the same order as their religious or philosophical faith."

Physicians, lawyers, professors, technicians, priests come to learn through workers, and in order to do this they share their life, their lodgings, their work . . . Even ask that in the exercise of their own liberal profession they be controlled by the workers.

"With all the organisms of this city: municipality, unions, political parties, physicians, educators, etc., we try to work toward an awakening of communitarian conscience of all responsibilities . . . All different but all united, working in the field most fitted to one's capacity, a real army of free men try to wind up the mechanism of Society. They do not stop at unjust situations, which are but consequences. Above all they look for the root of the evil

in trying to fight on all fronts the organized oppression of men by Money."

The efforts of *all* have resulted in finding lodgings for 350 families and in creating a Beaver group. This, says Abbé Depierre, will do "more for the liberation of homes and collectivities than all the speeches, and all the grand theses on the spirituality of the 'home' and the grandeur of love."

The efforts of *all* have resulted in the opening of country places of rest. The survey revealed that about 12,000 families had never gone to the country since their marriage. The passivity of acceptance of unjust conditions lay partly at the door of this caged squirrel life: work, eat, sleep, movies. It is impossible to renew oneself, to get a saner look at problems without getting a change. Several country places have been secured. The people themselves arrange to manage them. Hundreds and hundreds of families have already enjoyed them. But this is only one way to get a change. The main thing is to refresh oneself physically and mentally, and to break away from habit, the routine daily life. That is what Montreuil is after all along the line.

Montreuil has elected a Youth Communal Council which groups young workers of all allegiances, regardless of faiths or ideologies: to be different and yet united.

All this is only a beginning, including the Community of Work Rochebrune, which we studied before.

Moreover, Montreuil views its own effort with a healthy sense of proportion. It is very self-critical because it is wary of myths. "In the name of myths, crusades, massacres and divisions occur. . . . The sentimentalism of many communitarians, their lack of critical sense and of autocriticism, their distrust of the great union and political currents of the workers' movement; their ignorance of the other efforts and realizations, put them in danger of this mythical decadence . . . To fight for peace is to make it today, with other people, other groups, it is to build it today in thrilling undertakings. It is today, that men have to be united for building

cities, leisure centers, libraries, churches, cathedrals. They should be brought together, from different horizons, with different ideas, without excluding anyone. A few have to work right now in both ways: a selfless unselfishness and a universal friendliness, that agricultural and industrial workers may develop a taste for these."

That is what Montreuil is trying to do: to share in building the community of mankind.

We cannot study here all the modalities of expression of the communitarian thought. There are as many ways as there are groups. And who can number all the groups?

Students get together and share all their resources. Groups of people with different professions agree to set aside in a common fund a percentage of their earnings. The fund is used if one gets out of work, or is sick, even if one of them is badly in need of a holiday. People living in the same building arrange among themselves for baby sitters, or people get together and rent a house for their families' vacation, organizing among themselves the running of the place. There are all sorts of ways, big and small, some of them very familiar to Americans, without calling them communitarian, which they are.

There is also a whole literature connected with the communitarian movement and its side lines. Many people are planning ways and means in all branches of life which would make for a more human kind of living. The team Economie et Humanisme already mentioned, the Association of Protestant Engineers, the committee for studying how to alternate activities right in the big industry in order to avoid the tyranny of the team (Comité d'action mondiale pour l'Organisation Polyphonique), groups of architects studying the problem of housing (Rouzeau-Bardet), etc. In all walks of life one runs across people bent on developing a way of life based on a sense of the community of all men.

In Geneva, M. Rohrbach founded the Artisans d'une Vie Meilleure which has some branches in France. Mostly intellectuals

who, for one reason or another, cannot grow into real Communities but can contribute to the communitarian movement by training themselves to think along communitarian lines. From five to ten persons get together in order "to improve their personal life, express to the maximum their fraternal life, and collaborate in the building of a better life." They meet once a week, at the home of one of them, and choose to work along a program most suited to their interest and capacities. Some teams are interested in social service, others in religion, others in economic problems. The team does not only study the conditions but tries to act upon them. Leaders of the teams, chosen unanimously by members, meet periodically to report on their team and get an idea of the general outlook of the work. Meetings start and end with silence which enables everybody to meditate in his own way, since groups include Jews, Catholics, Protestants, atheists, Buddhists, etc.

The Artisans of a Better Life say: "We know that a new world is being born, but it has not yet been 'received' by men." They believe they can help by thinking communitarianly to prepare a mental atmosphere for this fraternal world.

Though this book does not deal with co-operatives proper, it would not be right not to say a word about them, if only to point out that the communities are aware of the tremendous contribution of the co-operatives to man's liberation, especially when they do not forget the Rochdale pioneers' outlook, which was not to get rich but to enable man to develop.

Mention should be made of an interesting experiment carried on in the north of France: a consumers' co-operative in communitarian form. MM. Lecomte and Remy are the forceful, practical instigators of this group, which is steadily growing. Instead of individual people dealing with the co-operative, the relationship is established through Neighbor Groups with a group Chief. Just as in the Communities of Work. It is the Neighbor Group that gets together at one of the homes and discusses the needs of the group, which the Chief transmits to the co-operative. Delivery is

made at one of the homes for the group. The Chief is responsible for dues, purchases and deliveries. All this is done outside one's own professional work. It can be carried successfully only if everyone pitches in under the leadership of the Chief. So, in every way the co-operative runs on communitarian lines, which, after all, seems to have been the intention of the Rochdale pioneers. However, the communitarian consumers' co-operatives see more in their endeavor than social and economic advantages for a small number of families. They conceive a multiplication of such co-operatives and a federation of them which could give definite information on the real needs of a whole sector, and thereby help to bring an equilibrium between production and consumption. At least an agreement could be made between the communitarian consumers' co-operatives and the Communities of Work. That would be the beginning of a healthy solution of the problem of production-consumption.

This chapter is an attempt at giving the reader an idea of the variety of the communitarian research field. There is no one powerful stream flowing throughout Europe and which could not possibly escape the American tourist's eyes. No. There are dozens and dozens of springs, gushing out and oozing all over the old world soil.

CHAPTER IX

General Characteristics of the Communitarian Movement

> Where our grandparents tended to be concerned with the saving of the individual soul, this generation is more liable to be concerned about social justice and the perfecting of human relationships. Those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" are more likely to yearn for a further realization of fraternity, of justice and fellowship between man and man, than for a mere personal purity.
>
> —W. Thomson, *Pioneer in Community*

COMMUNITIES of Work hold that true relationships and a better way of living can be evolved only when whole human beings are present to other whole human beings, instead of being present under only one of their aspects as it happens in today's society. The fragmentary approach is the one that rules economically above all, but also socially. Multiplicity of Industrial Councils, Clubs and Societies, does not alter the picture.

There is one natural setup in which the whole human being meets another whole human being. That is the family.

When Communities say that they do not necessarily mean that they suscribe to the present legal status of the family. Nor do they mean to use the family concept as has been done often: that is as a buttress for an economy which favors men's exploitation and subjugation.

The point is simply that it is evident that, in the family, human beings come in contact in a more complete way than they do elsewhere and that there is a constant interchange (good or bad) within this small unit. The couple and children form a natural cell.

This natural cell is the necessary starting point for building a new society.

However, it is only a starting point. A family cannot do everything. It is not even desirable that it should. A larger group is necessary to the development of man. And we come to a grouping of families, a federation of families, so to speak, which is the Community. (Not more than 100 families.)

But the Community cannot close in upon itself either. It has to be integrated in the whole world.

There are now, in 1950, over 60 Communities in Europe. Let us sum up the general characteristics of the communitarian setup.

Women

It is hoped that by now the reader has a fairly good idea of what a Community means to men. We have been obliged to present the work mostly under their angle because of the importance given in our society to the problem of production and distribution. But even so, when using the term "man" or "men," it should be understood most of the time as "human being" and not as "male." However, as it is easier to picture in one's mind the communitarian life of a man than of a woman, or child, I shall try to outline what characterizes a woman's life in a community.

In a Community, women can work in the economic expression of the Community or at home.

They work in the economic expression, often in many young Communities out of sheer necessity. Either openly (Le Mouton Jacquemard, Cora, etc.) or tacitly (L'Aurore). Women working in these conditions can be married or single. However, it is not always out of necessity that a married woman works on the as-

sembly line or in the fields. It may be out of choice; because she prefers that kind of work to housekeeping. In Communities there is the greatest respect for a woman's possibilities besides natural functions. Nevertheless, Communities stress that, generally speaking, woman's fulfillment is linked with natural functions first. Hence the emphasis laid on homemaking.

It should be added here that, usually, this is no problem for the Frenchwoman, who prefers her "natural work." As we shall see later, the difficulty lies precisely in the fact that she is rarely interested in anything else.

Wives who do not work at the factory or in the fields receive an allotment just as those who do. The remuneration includes professional work, that is, homemaking, and social value. In other words, the total human value. If a woman has no children she is expected to help the Community in other ways.

It is important to realize that woman's allotment is a remuneration and not an indemnity in any sense of the word. In a Community of Work the man who works outside and the woman who stays at home are both breadwinners.

Acknowledgment of woman's dignity as a human being is brought out again by the fact that a woman outsider marrying a Companion does not enter the Community ipso facto. Only if she wishes it. And if she does, she has to go through the same initiation as her husband did.

Women Companions participate in all discussions and decisions, and they are eligible for the different positions of responsibility just like men.

They have much influence in the Neighbor Groups. In the discussions it is not only the man's point of view that is taken into consideration, but the joint opinions of both, so that what governs the Neighbor Groups, and therefore the whole Community is the family point of view.

Agreement at home over some issues is at the root of unanimity in the General Assembly.

As we already mentioned in case of sanctions, both husband and wife face the Court even if apparently it has been an individual breaking of the rule.

Women are obligated to work a whole week every year in the factory, in the field, where the husband works. The Community arranges for the housework to be done meanwhile and the children to be cared for. This is prescribed so that the woman's horizon may extend and that she may be drawn closer to the problems faced by her husband, the Community, and the world.

House and child help is also provided regularly so that the woman may devote some time to social activities, in order that a common background of interests outside the home may unite husband and wife and enable them to widen their own vision, grow and develop and make contacts with other human groups.

Such are the principles generally adopted by Communities concerning women. However, there are exceptions. Sometimes there is no remuneration for women: not enough money to go round. Sometimes, among older communitarians, there subsists a fear of endangering their masculine authority by recognizing, with figures, the woman's worth. They compromise by saying that temporarily they put the woman's problem aside, because there is plenty to do without it. Sometimes also the Community is like a big toy for men. It is "their" toy. And they like to play with it without feminine interference. Again, for some, who are up to their neck in difficulties, they like to come home and have a change of atmosphere. And, if the woman is a Companion too, well . . .

It is perfectly understandable that some men hesitate, postpone, waver, when it comes to women's position in the Community. The problem is complex. It remains so even in Communities which have gone a long way in women's integration.

What is important to note, and in fairness to all, is that it is never because of deliberate ignorance or because of masculine overruling that the woman's communitarian status is not always

in full swing. It is basically because of an overwhelming sense of the importance of the problem.

On the other hand, women themselves have their own particular complaints to present. In a young Community, physical and material sacrifices are tremendous. It is true that men bear the same sacrifices. But men are principally busy at the industrial or agricultural end, which provides sufficient drama to prevent drudgery. Besides, usually, the men are the ones who originally wanted to form a Community. So it is their idea, and they are all immersed in it.

Most women stay home, often facing the daily difficulty of concocting a good meal with nothing. Usually women can take it as long as there are no children. The average European wife wishes but one thing: that "her man" be happy. If it is to be Community, let it be Community. Even if it means hardship for the woman. But children arrive, and then the women start to protest. And it is not only, by far, the material difficulties that get them down, as much as the fact that the Community takes so much of their husbands' time that they don't see them any more, which means children being brought up with but little father's influence. And that, European women will not take. If they would always protest in Neighbor Groups or in the General Assembly, it would be all right. I have seen it happen and I thought it quite healthy. But often they don't, and they get it out of their systems on the husband at home. The result is that men complain that woman act like brakes. And it is true. As Mme. Renée Lebel, the well-known French educator, says: "Without knowing it the woman acts as a brake on the virile push toward a new world." Well, after all, perhaps men do need a brake once in a while!

However, from hearing men and women talk, one gets the impression that often it is a lack of vision that is responsible for the women's attitude. Their main difficulty is how to think beyond their homes. Of course the Community is there to help

them do it. But it is not accomplished in a day. It is difficult for a woman who has married a first-class technician who could get work anywhere at high wages, to accept for the children the risks and the meager temporary material returns of a young Community. If they grumble once in a while, and put the brake on, it is no wonder. What is remarkable is that so many women do go through with it, and remain scowling but stanch supporters of the Community.

Often men complain that women are not interested in the Community. They are interested only in their husband and children. However, many communitarian men have told me that they consider this a failure on the part of men. They are the ones who go home, and say: "Give me my slippers and let's forget about the Community." They are tired; they want a change. And they do not want to make the effort of explaining. As there may be a good deal to explain, since women, as a whole, do not have the syndicalist training that men have, nor the civic training (in France anyway). They need help to get interested. And the men are the only ones who can do it, because the average Frenchwomen will not learn about an industrial covenant per se; they will learn for their men's sake.

American women may get a little disgusted at reading this. But that is how most Frenchwomen are. And, in spite of the masculine communitarian complaints, Frenchmen like women to be that way, and that is all that is indispensable.

One has always to remember about Frenchwomen and men when planning for feminine entertainment or education. One Community discovered that all courses were beautifully attended by women if made by an unattached man. An attached man rates half as much. As for a woman talking to other women, that is nil. Women don't pay any attention whatsoever. So whenever something important is to be taught or decided in the Community, let it be said to women by an unattached man.

In some Communities they had difficulty in getting the Neighbor

Groups going and could not find out why. It was simple. Some wives were nervous: with so much intimacy, who knows, their husbands might fall for another woman.

The pledged obligation of educating oneself on all planes rests on the women as much as on the men. In most cases it takes quite a time to interest women in anything except courses on dress-making and cooking. Some Communities have been able to start with chorale singing. Any interest in world questions is slow to develop, unless, as mentioned previously, introduced by an unattached man. One might ask: Is it, then, the man or the world? Never mind how one begins to get a sense of the universal, provided one gets it.

One of the difficulties for handling the women's situation resides in the fact that feelings and reactions which remain covered up in present-day society get aired in a Community and, therefore, it all at once seems much more complicated than in the old-fashioned world. However, it is *not* more complicated. It is less hypocritical. The communitarian rule of the ethical minimum bearing on complete sincerity toward each other is not easy for most women.

Habits, which we spoke about in the preceeding chapter, are not got rid of lightly, and women are the victims of many of them. In order successfully to conquer them it is not enough suddenly to declare them null and void. Pulling the props from under the building before the building is secure is no help.That is often the way the women's situation is handled, the world over. The freedom granted women is freedom to roam alone. And the tragedy is that so many women are deceived into finding this state most satisfactory. On the contrary, the freedom granted by the Community takes into consideration woman's physical and psychological needs. And it is with that basic understanding that effort is made to help women develop to the fullness of their human capacities.

Will some sympathy for the Communities develop in American women's hearts, when they hear that Communities have few

bachelors and practically no single maiden, at least for any length of time? In a Community it is really better materially to be married. On the other hand, constant relationship with families in the Neighbor Groups probably inclines everybody not to stay single. And, anyway, French men do not like to be alone nor to live among men only. So, in that respect, to say nothing of all the other advantages, a Community is a good break for a girl.

Children and Old People

In the communitarian setup children also are human beings, and not animals in training. Not only do they enter the picture through the educational experiments, as mentioned previously, but they are recognized as members of the Community as soon as the physician diagnoses conception. As quoted before: "The work of a child is to grow." The child is paid for his "work." Whoever brings a human contribution of some sort to the life of the Community is entitled to share in its goods. Everyone is individually remunerated in the Community. Old people will be too on the ground that they have made the Community and can still share their experiences with the young, and tell stories.

Communities are as yet mostly composed of young people. So up to now there has not been much thinking about children. In 1949 Boimondau had to consider it seriously for the first time. A kindergarten was established. The children were rounded up in the factory truck every morning. But the intention is not to separate the children when they are older from the other boys and girls of Valence. On the contrary. However there are other questions which pop up and which the Companions are studying now, such as:

Creation of a team "Children"
Who should decide about studies? About work?
Should the Community automatically make room for the boy or the girl of Companions?
Should children of Companions take precedence over outside applicants?
Who is going to control the studies? The apprenticeship? etc.

Another problem is social contact for children. In Communities which started from nothing there is a certain homogeneity of background among people, so that the mingling of children is easy. Not so in Communities which result from the transformation of a capitalist set up. In America it probably would not be very noticeable. But it is in Europe. It brings a good deal of friction, especially among mothers. The children might get along if left alone. But when there are several kinds of supervision, trouble follows. The most serious ones among the mothers, who hold for their own educational method to the exclusion of all others. In a Community there is no place for the self-righteous possibility of closing one's door with a "I don't want you to associate with that boy," which was so frequent in France, on the flimsy ground, for instance, that the boy was not properly brought up since he ate candy between meals, or the girls did not add "madam" after each "yes." So, again—and without common living quarters, mind you—Community life means a great deal of effort at understanding, and quite a bit of courage. It is like living in the open.

However, it is easy to see how valuable is such training for human beings and for family life which has always, in France especially, the tendency to close on itself.

Five or six families getting together regularly to discuss the Community problem, that is the first step toward a larger world. Then comes the General Assembly. The Community is not the result of so many families agglomerated. It is formed with the contacts, the relationships established within the groups. And the Community itself should open to the immediate geographical unit, and so on.

Geographical Unit

What is important: that none should be closed in. Neither individuals nor families, nor Communities. The maximum of solidarity, of human relationship, at all steps of the ladder, but a ladder which does not end on the first floor but continues throughout all the floors of the world. Because the human being should not be

limited, circumscribed. That is why communitarians are thinking in terms not only of a "first cell of the new society," the Community of Work, but of all the cells and the ensemble. Preferably the natural cells: like a geographical unit, a region, a sector, in which naturally all activities revolve. We have seen how Mr. Olivetti starts from that conception, whereas for many communitarians in France and elsewhere this comes as a development of their experience in a Community of Work.

Integration in the World

Communitarians do not wait for a reshuffling of structures. Right now they start mingling with the noncommunitarian world, everywhere, in all their cities and villages. It is sometimes difficult for a young Community to do so. There is need for a certain amount of inner stabilization before outside contacts can be established. But this is always considered as temporary. Over and over again it is emphasized that the aim is not to enjoy the new way of living and be content with that demonstration. The aim is to liberate others. And that cannot be done if you are cut off from them. It is not a matter of preaching. God forbid. But of being thoroughly integrated in the life outside the Community. It is absolutely indispensable for communitarians. Otherwise the well of richness is no longer accessible and, in a rarified atmosphere, thoughts are warped and energy sterilized. "Keep open! If some outsider wants to join some Community classes, courses, sports, why not?" said a communitarian at the convention of 1949. And, of course, the other way around:.communitarians joining in city, union, church, political party activities.

That necessity of not being cut off is important above all in connection with the workers' movement in general. A Community of Work cut off from the workers' movement is wholly artificial, something neither here nor there, without any roots and without any future. It hangs in mid-air. Fortunately, as we have seen, this

is well understood, not only by the Communities starting from nothing but also by those which result from a transformation. Former owners who go communitarian urge the members to remain in the union and be active in it. And so that no one will see in this a dark underhanded design of sabotage of the union, let it be said that up to now members of Communities have acted, in case of strikes, just like all noncommunitarian workers, that is, according to the union to which they belong—C.G.T., C.F.T.C., F.O.—all the more since they have no immediate material reason to strike. Their gesture of solidarity shows their communitarian concern for the liberation of others.

We have seen that another way of not being cut off is to leave the Community and go back periodically to work in a noncommunitarian setup. Perhaps at this point it should be reiterated that to enter a Community of Work does not mean taking perpetual vows. There is no rule to prevent anyone from leaving.

Not to shut oneself in means also not to nourish any romantic illusions regarding the perfection of the present Communities of Work. In our society, which is geared for making money and not for meeting real needs, Communities are obliged to do the same and produce in order to make money, whether it is watch cases, milk, boilers, or spring mattresses. A Community of Work cannot of itself change the whole economy. Therefore, it has to remain conscious of the present-day problems and of all the efforts and research made along the line production-distribution-consumption. As far as its own internal economy is concerned it deals with money only in function of needs, and fulfillment of the whole man.

Remuneration

According to work, that is, to all activities which benefit the Community. This total human value includes professional and social value. This is a principle accepted by all Communities of Work. Modalities vary according to Communities:

Hierarchy in professional value
Equal remuneration in professional value regardless of capacity and responsibility
No professional value per se: everyone according to his needs
Social value: meaning actual activities
Social value: meaning capacities and possibilities

Percentage also varies: Professional and social value ½ ½, or ⅔ ⅓, or ⅞ ⅛, etc.

Out of these apparently contradictory attitudes emerges a fact: all communitarian efforts are directed toward a way of life in which total human value is taken into consideration and fully recognized. So that it appears that this total human value concept is less of a postulate established once and for all, at the start, than a future setup which gradually takes shape as Communities grow.

Distribution

All that is available belongs to the Community. But it is evident that all of it cannot be distributed. A certain amount has to be set aside in order to carry on.

Modes of distribution vary according to Communities:

Immediate distribution
Accounts payable to members
Yearly distribution
No distribution at all (Integral Communities)

Whatever the system adopted, the policy is that no one should ever suffer temporarily.

Financing

This varies a great deal too, since some Communities start from nothing and some are the result of transformations. In transforming, the general principle is repayment of the original layout as outlined in all the different arrangements that we came across when studying transformations. One of the most used is reimbursement by man-hour. Aside from repaying original layout, evaluation of a

business worth is always made in taking into consideration the surplus value of the years in capitalist form.

Reimbursements of loans vary as follows:

Immediate reimbursement as soon as asked for
Reimbursement within a set time
Reimbursement deferred for a set time
The Community voluntarily and gradually frees itself by successive payments
No reimbursement whatsoever (Integral Communities)

The principle that "money does not make money" is fundamental. However, as we have seen, it may happen that Communities do have to compromise, since they live in the midst of present-day society. When they do, it is only temporarily, and as little as possible, and without ever losing sight of their principle.

Savings

There is no more reason for any individual or family to save. Saving is taken care of automatically by the Community.

Some people may be shocked, or at least they may deplore that clause. But it sprang not from theory but out of experience. In France people do not enjoy life while they are young. They are intent on saving for their old age. So they constantly deprive themselves. They often live sordidly cramped existences in order to have enough in their old age. This of course shows a legitimate sense of dignity. However, there is no use putting the dignity in saving when you belong to a Community of Work. You can put it elsewhere, and enjoy yourself and the earth a bit more while you are young. Communitarians like the present. They have shaken off the past as much as possible and they don't worry individually about the future.

However, there is still plenty of room for family budgeting of the allotment. If old age, sickness and accident are covered by the Community, there is much left to arrange according to one's taste: home, holidays, and the education of children. A great deal of money can be spent on the last item!

Ownership of Means of Production

When Communities of Work say they own their means of production, they do not mean that they have proceeded to just a change in ownership, from private property to multiple property; instead of one owner, several owners. They do not mean that each worker possesses part of the means of production, instead of their being owned by outsiders. The communitarian way does not lead to "being on one's own" together with others who are on their own too.

In a Community ownership of means of production (machines, buildings, ground, stock, capital) will be social, that is, collective and indivisible. Members of the Community have the use and the fruit of it.

There is nothing startling about this if we realize that such a conception has been in practice in other fields for a long time. A forest, a lake, belong to a city, a country. They belong to everyone and all and to no one. Such is the New England common.

This social ownership extending to private property was already set forth by several Fathers of the Church. In the fourth century St. John Chrysostom lists under "things held in common," baths, towns, public squares and public walks. Then he goes on:

> See, these are no occasion for quarreling and everyone enjoys them in peace; but when a man starts to draw something unto himself and take possession thereof, then the fight begins; just as if nature itself was indignant that, in spite of the fact that we are put together by God to live in society, we should quarrel and divide, and weigh those objects in order to take possession of them and be able to say: mine, thine . . .
>
> Then come struggle and suffering. But, for common goods, this does not take place, there are no fights, no quarrels. So this is truly our destiny and the one conformed to our nature. Why has one never gone to court because of a public square?

Ownership of the means of production signifies access management and control by those whose livelihood depends on such

means. The actual modes of "property" are secondary. What is important is that in no way can workers ever be severed from their means of livelihood or the whole fruit of their labor.[1]

How this can best be worked out is a matter that is being studied not only by communitarians but by many people the world over. We are in a transitory period. Many systems are advocated, and some have been tried. Whether or not we are in sympathy with them is an entirely different question. Nationalizations, the Jewish National Fund, Soviet economy, etc. Theories are built: UCE.-ACT, Distributive economy, Economie et Humanisme, etc. The Economy of Plenty (L'Abondance), money which melts (La Monnaie Fondante) etc etc.

It is evident that as long as a general new structure has not become a fact, Communities of Work have to get along the best they can.

Within their precincts the principle of social ownership, that is, collective and indivisible ownership of the means of production, is applied either fully or partially depending upon circumstances. What is most important and undeniable is the fact that all Communities move in the direction of the full enjoyment of the fruit of their work by the workers themselves and by their families.

A Way of Life Proportionate to Man

The question of social ownership of the means of production is a basic communitarian principle. It is an indispensable element toward liberation. However it is not an end in itself. Communitarians do not take ownership of the means of production as the final answer to all human troubles. Liberation cannot come without social ownership of the means of production. But social ownership

[1] Mention should be made, lest this be misunderstood, that, except for a few extreme cases of integral Communities, private ownership of what is a necessity for the average human being's fulfillment has never been questioned: clothing, shelter, a tillable piece of ground, including what he needs for spiritual enjoyment: musical instruments, paintings etc. Property is considered in relation to liberty. As Du Teil wrote, "It is what guarantees each human being his natural liberty, and no more."

does not mean ipso facto the liberation of mankind. What is needed is a re-evaluation of values (and in that of course the ownership concept is included), a taking into consideration man as a whole, a resetting of structures to human proportions without losing the technical and scientific advantages of the industrial revolution. The communitarian economy places men, the mass of people, in a daily active position of maximum of chances and maximum responsibilities which spells man's development. It is not a paradisiac state to be reached when such or such conditions are realized. It is an ever growing fulfillment, stemming from a way of life rooted in the meaning of man.

Legal Status

Because of the very fact that the law (French, Swiss, Belgian) does not provide for such a setup as Communities of Work, it followed that for a certain time the Communities lived outside legality. First, of course, Boimondau, during the occupation. But that was practically "normal." But it went on after the war for some time. Nobody knew quite what to do. All government administrations were at a loss. It is quite remarkable that no one enjoined Boimondau to close its doors, since, legally, it had no right to existence. Tax collectors arranged the matter amicably as best they could. However, it could not go on forever. Something had to be done to regularize the situation.

It seemed impossible to get Parliament to do anything about it. A greater number of people would have to be awakened to the necessity of changing laws. Therefore, use had to be made of what was available. The nearest setup to a Community is of course a co-operative. In order to secure a legal existence the Communities of Work registered under the co-operative status. This status is far from covering a Community of Work. However, it was possible to introduce a certain number of additions and interpretations which made the charter if not satisfactory, at least usable.

First of all, the title tells what it is, since it has been possible to mention both "Community of Work" and "communitarian form":

N . . . . .
Community of Work
Workers' Co-operative of Production, limited
with variable capital and personnel
in communitarian form

In order to conform to the letter of the law the Companions are supposed to subscribe a share when they enter the Community. But it is specified:

1. That if a Companion leaves he is entitled only to the reimbursement of that original contribution.
2. That in case of dissolution, the balance is not divided between the members but handed over to another Community.

This last clause works also for plain producers' co-operatives in France. And that was one of the reasons why the Communities of Work could use the statutes.

The aim of the Community of Work also is clearly defined, and of course, reveals itself as different from that of ordinary co-operatives now in existence:

. . . this society aims at the full development of its members; the economic basis for this being the exercise of the profession of the members . . . and all other activities found necessary.

As everyone knows, in a co-operative each member has one vote irrespective of the number of his shares. That is another reason why this legal statute could be used by the Communities. However, a change was introduced there too. In a co-operative there can be shareholders outside people who do the work. It was therefore stipulated that only those working in the Community could be shareholders.

About returns: In a producers' co-operative it is possible to get returns proportionate to one's shares. This is possible not only

for workers but also for outsiders. The Community of Work specifies that repartition is made according to "work," and that nothing is given to capital.

Given all these changes which could be introduced within the present legal co-operative statute, it remains imperfect, as anyone who has read this book can easily see.

There are other difficulties in connection with taxes and social security. These are technical aspects connected more specifically with European laws than with the general statutes of co-operatives. What should be stated here is that, at the present time, Communities of Work are registered legally (in all European countries where they exist) but they have to have an "inner" rule which without contradicting the legal statutes takes care of questions in a communitarian way.

Mention should also be made regarding social security, which is covered 100 per cent by Communities. This has the great advantage, dear to the communitarian heart, of taking care of people through human relationships instead of through an anonymous agency or the state. However, since it is evident that it is impossible to live fully communitarianly in the present setup of the world, Communities have recently joined the national Social Security. They have done so, not because they could not afford to take full charge of the risks themselves, nor because they preferred to rely on the state, but because they realized that their former stand cut them off from the rest of the nation, and particularly from the working class.

Taxes paid by Communities are the same as those paid by co-operatives.

Communitarian Organization

The general setup is practically the same anywhere, with minor changes, such as Study Groups instead of Neighbor Groups in large cities.

However, the place and role of the Chief of Community is

somewhat differently interpreted according to temperaments, conditions, circumstances.

Some Communities have a tendency to emphasize his authority, possibly even his dictatorship, in occasional and extreme circumstances. This happens sometimes in Communities started by owners of enterprises, or in Communities which, having started a bit anarchically, discover the benefit of a strong direction. Other Communities have no appointed Chief; they work in teams. Others have a Chief, but they insist that he be not so called, but only "le Responsable." This is very frequent. Others want a Chief but solidly backed by a General Council. That is true especially of the prosperous Communities.

However, whatever the arrangements, they are all advocated in view of developing in each and all a sense of responsibility. It is always a matter of taking the maximum responsibility for one's own life.

L'Entente Communautaire

Whatever tomorrow's setup, the Communities of Work have taken the step of forming themselves into a Federation.

The work of the Federation Center is:

To publish the monthly magazine *Communauté*, and literature
connected with the communitarian movement
To intensify friendly relations between Communities
To be the representative of the Communities when dealing with
governmental agencies: governmental administration, social security, etc.
To prepare statutes for Communities
To study the problem of financing

In that way it helps Communities to start on the best footing possible. It also advises them whether it is wise to start or not. The Federation has all the elements necessary to judge a situation without illusions. This is extremely important. Enthusiasm for

the communitarian way of living is not sufficient. It has to be grounded in solid realities.

The Federation is also able to have a general picture of Communities and, therefore, to know which ones are successful and could give a hand to a new one which is sound but has a hard time getting going.

The Federation is not a directing center. It is a gathering point where experiences are sifted, and where the result of the general thinking is made available to all. It is the practical expression of the Communities' interfriendship.

Unanimity

The maximum of human fulfillment can be secured only within liberty. No one coerced into doing, thinking, or accepting something, either from the dictatorial power of one person or of one group, or the superiority of number (majority) is really free. Not being free he cannot develop himself to the maximum of his possibility and to the greatest advantage of the group.

Unanimity is one of the communitarian principles that vary the least throughout Communities. Exceptionally, in Communities transforming from capitalist expression, it is agreed that *temporarily*, when unanimity cannot be secured, votes will be taken with a two-thirds majority. But the principle remains. Its general acceptance by people coming from all walks of life is arresting.

It can be said that the first mention of unanimity recorded is found in the Acts of the Apostles. The same verse which explains that no one called his own what he possessed; "but they had all things common," also says that they "were of one heart and of one soul." It says that first. Having all things common sprang from that unity. It is the same with the Communities of Work. To them any other way is unthinkable.

However, in our society it is unanimity that is unthinkable. The fact that some Christian groups, like the Quakers, have clung to it through centuries does not lessen our skepticism. Perhaps it is

possible in a religious group, but not in a mixed group dealing with practical questions. If we say that the Quakers have dealt with a lot of practical questions with the same principle, people still fall back on the religious factor.

However though a few communitarians are Quakers, the great majority is not. They are mixed. And communitarians are no angels. None of them that I know of has become a saint overnight when he became a Companion. How, then, can unanimity work?

Very simply, say communitarians. Why cannot unanimity work usually? What makes people oppose each other? Individual interest, first of all. A course of action will benefit a certain person, a certain group, and not benefit others. Ignorance is another cause of opposition and has much to do with the fanaticism and the persecution of people of different faiths or ideologies. Destitution and injustice breed opposition, and that is quite natural. And out of all this comes deep distrust so that it becomes impossible to recognize common ground even where there is a small stretch of it.

Now, when personal interest coincides with collective interest, when there is a practical and constant effort at wiping out ignorance, when destitution does not exist and injustice is hunted down and driven away, distrust falls off too, and unanimity has a chance to emerge because the ground is already prepared.

It does not mean that it does not require work to arrive at a unanimous decision. We have seen how this is done gradually through small groups. When all is said it is an extremely adult procedure. For many it is easier to submit to a one-man decree, or to a majority's decision. To find a course of action, to appoint someone, with the agreement of each and all, requires much work. And not propaganda work either, but a quiet perusal of the good and bad points, an evaluation of what is best for the Community's interest, a divesting of one's too individualistic point of view, a respect for others' opinions and a certain amount of vision.

Communitarians agree that it is no easy job. That it requires

a lot of patience, and also an awareness in order not to be fooled by people without scruples who do find their way into Communities as anywhere else.

Community Rossier emphasizes: "Unanimity is not a voting system. It is a method of work." The Werkplaats Kindergemeenschap Bilthoven speaks of the sociocratic method: "co-operation between those who naturally oppose each other." Communities of Work in general sum up their attitude by this phrase: "It is better to progress slowly with all the men, than to go fast and crush four-tenths of them."

Double Trust Appointments

This is a very widely accepted principle. All posts are elective. The candidacy is proposed by one of the Community strata and accepted by the other, in order to prevent both demagogy and authoritarianism, as previously mentioned.

The Rule

As we have seen, the Rule varies, for the very reason that it has to be the unanimous expression of the Community, and Communities vary according to their elements, conditions, circumstances. However, a main direction has to be maintained in order to remain communitarian. This direction has been defined as follows:

Any rule which results in dividing the life of man into several specialized lives should be rejected.
Any rule which results in dividing men into classes or groups whose interests oppose each other's should be rejected.
Any rule which will oppose private interest and collective interests should be rejected.
Any rule which will make contempt of the common good more advantageous than search for the common good should be rejected.
Rules will always have a temporary character. They are means and should be revised when no longer adequate to the conditions.
The Community should be organized in such a way that the general

rule be adapted to particular cases. The rule should never be above men. It is only a counselor, a guide for the chief and the judge.

The Community will have to be organized in such a way that all members can participate in its orientation, its management and its control.

Ethical Common Minimum

We have seen that the Boimondau ethical minimum has been the basis for the ethical common minimum of other Communities. We have seen also how the Boimondau Companions came to this notion of the necessity of a common ethical minimum, and how they composed it, agreed to it, and pledged themselves to it (all this unanimously).

We have seen that because of its universal character Boimondau's main points have been used by all Communities. However, communitarians now feel the urge to explain that this is not the acceptance of a dogma, or even of "ethics." But this is the result of meditating on man and the social structure. I cannot do better than quote the General Secretaries, MM. Riby and Roquette:

We start from the idea that human laws cannot really compel men unless resting on an ethic accepted by those very men.

It is always possible to regret that all men have not attained the same high level of moral perfection. It is useless to fool oneself by making laws based on an ethic that no one would recognize.

So, facing the truth, we do not attempt to correct men by making more and more exacting laws, but by educating them and bringing them to become conscious of their failures, in codifying this failure, and in giving to all the legal right to do what nowadays only the smart and powerful ones can do.

This is the best way to unmask error.

Error should not be dressed up, nor made bearable.

Error should be left to bear its natural fruit: disorder, suffering.

Ethics, we believe, are a rule of life and action for men living in society.

The necessities of Community life will show gradually, as progress goes on, in what sense the common ethical minimum has to be revised and replaced by a more exacting one.

It is not necessary to recall the Boimondau rule, which can be found in the first chapter. It should not be forgotten that, in addition, any Companion pledges himself to respect his own code of ethics according to his convictions, the private codes never being, of course, opposed to the common ethical minimum.

Spiritual Positions

They are always taken into consideration. Companions are expected to deepen their philosophical or religious position, and search for one if they have none. Materialism is a spiritual position just as is Christianity or Buddhism.

The keynote is active tolerance and enjoyment of diversity, which make for the Community's richness.

A few Communities have a tendency toward unification of spiritual positions: all Catholics, all anarchists, all Protestants, all Marxists, etc. It may be that there exist some Communities where this is equivalent to segregation. However, I have not seen any. It seems that, taking the liberty of so limiting the Community would limit man's liberty. But then, what about traditional religious Communities? This is no place to discuss them. Sufficient to point out again that one does not take vows when entering a Community of Work.

M. Brisselet, member of a Community of Work, defines clearly the function of the spiritual in a Community of Work:

> The Communitarian Idea is not a philosophical position, nor is it a pedestal from which we dominate the world . . . The Community is not an end, but a means.
>
> It is the means offered to man in order to free himself completely of all servitudes created by, and imposed on, men, including the servitudes of philosophical and religious conceptions.[2]
>
> To label oneself Christian, Marxist, existentialist,[3] or someone who

[2] Nobody should be shocked. We all know that religion *can* be "the opium of the people," in the same sense that the great Christian thinker Nicolas Berdiaev denounced "Man slave of God." Just as atheism can become fierce sectarianism.

[3] I would like to add: and communitarian. By doing so I know I am in complete accord with my communitarian friends, who thoroughly object to being labeled communitarians.

adopts such or such philosophical or religious position, is to limit oneself . . .

M. Brisselet goes on explaining that few are those who have the same spiritual outlook at fifty that they had at twenty. And that, if it is all to the good that we uphold and defend our convictions with all our fervor, at the same time it must be under one condition: that we do not refuse to learn. We should not cling "with fanaticism, without being ever willing to change" to an absolute position.

What, then, should the attitude of Communities' members be?

Let it never be Marxists, Christians, Jews, who confront each other, but free men, in search of a more and more complete liberty and a keener understanding of positions, men who have freely chosen to live together, to try to build the harmonious City, which, by dwelling so long in our minds, is bound, someday, to become a reality, provided we put to it our whole heart and soul.

This declaration of faith sums up the communitarian movement.

CHAPTER X

Objections—Communitarian Answers

I SHALL list a few of the most common objections to the communitarian movement. It is, of course, quite impossible to exhaust them all or to foresee all the new ones.

In answering them I have used several communitarian publications together with my own limited understanding of the communitarian point of view resulting from personal contact with dozens of people in Communities of Work.

I am aware that this is all very unsatisfactory and I beg the reader not to view it in any way as a final or authorized statement. There is no key made to fit every objection.

The aim of this chapter is much more modest.

It is, before closing this book, to reaffirm an inner attitude of gentle openness toward its subject. That refusing to stifle ourselves in a priori concepts of good or bad, and at the same time holding firmly to our search for truth, we remain free to incline our mind and heart and to meditate on the communitarian realizations described here.

I say "we" intentionally. I write this chapter for myself too. At the beginning of this book I said I did not want to convince anybody, and I still do not. I wanted all to share in what I had seen and heard throughout a unique tour (up to this time at least)

of Communities in Western Europe. Keenly conscious of my inability to convey adequately the communitarian message, I wish this study to end by rededicating myself to a nonpartisan view of the subject. And I hope the readers who have so patiently followed me up to this point will continue with me in this effort, not only by reading these objections and answers, but by making up their own, communitarian fashion.

1. The communitarian setup is possible only in countries where the industrial and agricultural expression remains small in size. It is out of the question for America.

It is true that the communitarian idea has not yet penetrated large enterprises. However, this is no proof of impossibility. At the most, there are only difficulties. These difficulties, real as they are, cannot be considered insurmountable since they have already been tackled in capitalist enterprises through decentralization and autonomous shops. The example of Bat'a in Czechoslovakia, before the war, is well known. At Bat'a the work was done by autonomous teams, though of course, since the mainspring of the enterprise was the making of money and not liberation, the teams were given less responsibility than in a communitarian enterprise. However, as far as industrial organization is concerned this is the same principle. Bat'a is far from being the only experience along that line. Hyacinthe Dubreuil who worked several years in America on the assembly line, has presented the problem in several technical books well known here.[1]

A large enterprise could be a sort of federation of a number of Communities. There are of course certain problems connected with this, but the communitarian movement is not a blueprint that one can just copy. What is important is that, retaining all the acquired advantages of scientific work organization and mass production, it also preserves a pattern of human proportions for each man to work in. And this is not only in number but also in

[1] *A chacun sa chance. L'Equipe et le ballon, etc.*

functions: the whole man in charge at all times with all his possibilities, and a constant flow among all the people actively engaged in the same pursuit. The communitarian world is a face-to-face world. That is why the reform of the enterprise takes place. It is not an end in itself; it is the inevitable result of a change of attitude toward the problem of living.

2. There is nothing new in this communitarian movement. Plenty of experiences, which all failed, have been carried on all over the world, in America especially (Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen, Cabet, Noyes, etc.)

The communitarian idea is indeed as old as the hills. Across thousands and thousands of years the kibbutzim hold hands with the tribes of Israel. A whole literature has been written on the subject in many languages. Endless discussions have been carried on about which is stronger—the competitive instinct or the mutual aid. Present-day communitarians do not think they have invented something entirely new. Anyway they feel less that they are putting in practice certain ideas than that they feel they are trying and discovering day by day a way of living suitable to the present time. The old idea, made to work in today's world.

Other communitarian experiences have failed? This is no criterion. All human things fail or become inadequate. Also all human progress is the result of repeated trials and failures for hundreds of years. In addition, there are some definite reasons for the failures of the communitarian enterprises in America, which have been already studied by specialists of these questions as have also the failures in France and elsewhere. The present-day communitarian movement seems to avoid those very pitfalls. Which does not mean there are no others. At any rate it differs fundamentally from the previous experiences by its refusal to form ghettos (Oneida), to revel in autarchy (phalansteries), to go back to outmoded forms of living (Tolstoian communities).

Last but not least, even if the whole present communitarian

movement fails tomorrow that is no proof that present-day conditions are bearable. Those conditions result largely from criminal neglect at rethinking the problem of man in relation to the industrial revolution. The communitarian movement attempts to do it. If it does not succeed it only means that we have to continue searching and working for a new way of life. Unless of course we consider we already know it all.

3. What can be done in America along the communitarian line?

That is for us to find out. What differentiates the present communitarian movement from its predecessors, and also from all other present-day movements of liberation, is the fact that it is not based on a theory but on actual practice. That is where the search is carried on: in daily living. That is why a Community is not made. It grows. There is no formula, there are no tricks, there are no short cuts. And the way it may grow in America will be different.

4. If the communitarian way does not pay, we will never be interested in it in America. The general motive in America, all along the line, is profit.

Under proper conditions there are no reasons for the communitarian way "not to pay." In fact, as we have seen, unless it eventually does, it cannot last. And already it does pay, as demonstrated. So "profits" do exist in the communitarian setup. They are for the many instead of the few. This should fit right into the American traditional pattern "of the people, by the people, for the people," unless of course we mean by that a sort of highway-robbery policy where the strongest snatches the bag, which of course we do *not* mean even when appearances are against us.

As for being interested in the communitarian movement, it does not come from trying to put a theory into practice, or copying other experiments. It comes from necessity. From suffering. As it did in Europe. When our present American way of life becomes insufferable to us, then we will again take to the open road of the pioneers.

5. People are what they are. You cannot change them. Perhaps a few can do away with the competitive instinct, but not the majority.

Communities take people as they are, and no more. No one expects you to display an impressive set of virtues. However, Communities take people as they are, and no *less* either. It means that it does not overlook in man certain tendencies which are there though they have been silenced or muffled more than they have been encouraged. There is not only competitive instinct, there is mutual aid instinct. In the communitarian setup the competitive instinct is preserved through the grading of total human value, both professional and social. The worst side of competition is acquisition through taking away from someone else. This side does not exist in communitarian life. Competition in a Community is with oneself. But after all, that improves one's position all the time. One does advance.

Then a happy balance is struck by emphasis on the mutual aid instinct, so sadly neglected in our present-day society, and yet, which is so evident. If I may be permitted a personal comment in this book, I shall say that I have found Americans to be much more unspoiled along that line than the general run of Western Europeans. Americans love to do a good turn for anyone and they are never so jubilant as when someone they have helped is making good. In that respect we have a big advance over Europeans even if we have to purify the reasons back of our sympathy from a sentimental hero complex called the self-made man. I do not think that it is necessary to work very hard, not even to work at all, to persuade the average American that it is fun to help each other. We have enjoyed that fun for a long time.

6. Unanimity can be secured only outwardly. People rally through weakness, because they let themselves be convinced, etc. Physical constraint is not the only constraint. A strong personality, public opinion, etc., are also.

Certainly, so can be the greater ability at voicing arguments. Unanimity makes a constant demand on man to develop himself, to overcome his shyness, his inability to express himself, his lack of a strong personal stand. This is an educative process never finished. There is always the danger of "giving up" one's own opinion or conviction. And this for all sorts of reasons. It probably does occur in Communities. Just as in the parliamentary system when people rally to the majority. But from experience it would seem that the principle of unanimity satisfies those who use it, which of course is no certain proof that it is good, but that undoubtedly there is something in it worth considering.

7. The possibility of defeating a whole plan through one dissident voice is unpractical.

It is, if we mean immediate results. However, it should be remembered that obstruction for obstruction's sake is not recognized in Communities. You have to present a counterproposition and be able to defend it. What is to be considered is this: Is it possible that numbers make right? Or is it possible that a single individual can be right against all the others? In a Community it is not a matter of upholding one's own private interest against collective interest, ever. It is a matter of advocating such or such a policy which seems best fitted to collective-personal interests. And, as previously explained, the ground for dissenting is greatly narrowed by the fact of common interest, and of the fight against ignorance, injustice and distrust. Under those conditions, a dissident voice may eventually save a whole community.

8. It is already difficult for people to get along together in a religious order, so what you have described sounds incredible.

It does, but I cannot help it. I have seen it. Let us bear in mind, though, that a Community of Work does not mean common living quarters, and that one does not enter it for life. What probably is one of the reasons of its success is that first things come first. It is

not a matter of searching for truth together through books or arguments. But of living daily, professionally and socially, in accord with one's maximum understanding, within a small group of people activated by the same desire expressed in different forms. The basic ground having been established and recognized by all, it becomes only a question of furthering the fulfillment of each and all of whatsoever faith or philosophy.

9. If you mix Christians and non-Christians, especially Catholics and atheists, you endanger the Christian religion.

First of all, they are already mixed, the world over. Of course what people mean usually is "brought together, within a small group." Let me point out that the purpose of a Community is not theological or philosophical discussion. It is man's liberation and fulfillment within the particular allegiance that he claims at the time. It is perfectly true that if one of the spiritual groups in the Community is more forceful, more articulate, than others, it may have a great deal of influence. But that is no reason to say that the setup is wrong. It is up to the other groups to deepen their own convictions.

As far as Christianity, and more especially Catholicism, is concerned, an answer to this objection was once given in a General Assembly: "Do you want to go on forever fighting for spheres of influence? Or do you believe that the truth and the Christian testimony are still of value? If you have faith in Christ, in the Gospels and in grace, this fight, or rather this emulation, in broad daylight within the Community can be but advantageous to you."

10. The Catholic: "You are interested in Communities of Work? But they are disguised Communism."
The Communist: "You are interested in Communities of Work? But they are disguised fascism."

I do not have much of an answer, because, after all, few of us do anything except believe what we want to believe. So that, even going to see the Communities is little help. You can come out

with whatever conclusion suits your temperament or your convictions. People believe in the dark and secret machination of the Protocol of Zion, in the dark and secret machination of the Roman Catholic Church, in the dark and secret machination of the Communist Party. And they can always prove themselves right. It does not matter what one can say, it does not matter what is the evidence. A denial has no weight and no value. And since I do not think the readers of this book are in these classes of sectarian minds, we shall examine the above objections under another angle later, which may bring more light on the subject.

11. Retribution according to total human value results in everything, including virtue, being paid. So that there is no disinterested activity any more. But on the other hand, a premium on hypocrisy.

We previously noticed the correlation between the communitarian and the usual religious attitude: reward of virtue, if not in this present, at least in the hereafter. So, many religious people are disqualified at the start to criticize Communities on that ground, which apparently is familiar to the way of thinking of many peo- ple! On the other hand, looking at the question in a lighter vein, one cannot help feeling elated that the tables are turned for once and that "vice" does not pay. But this having been said, it is neces- sary to clarify a bit this notion of "virtue and vice," communi- tarianly speaking. When speaking of it communitarians do not mean to evaluate the absolute virtue of a member, but only in so far as it bears on the common good. As said previously, this is no "last judgment." Only the importance of one's achievement and behavior in relation to the common good.

It is true that even this is not easy to establish, and Communities are still searching for a satisfactory method. The world knows a great deal about professional rating, and very little about social value rating. So the actual devices are all temporary makeshifts, constantly revised in Communities. But what is important is that social value does enter the picture.

It should be understood, however, that it does not enter the picture rigidly. In a setup so deeply concerned with the whole human being there is a great deal of free play which one senses when visiting the Communities, and therefore there is ample room for disinterested action.

About hypocrisy? In a Community it is easily depicted, since everyone is free to tell the other what he thinks of him. Prigs don't last long in a Community.

12. The communitarian movement is an invasion by the public into the private sector of one's own life.

This is a matter of habit and custom to a considerable extent. For instance, many a European visiting America and spending his first night in a Pullman felt he had landed in a Communist country. The private and public sectors are relative and keep changing according to the century and the people.

13. The Community of Work is a demagogic institution: unanimity, election of the whole hierarchy, double trust, absolute power of the General Assembly, mixed faiths and ideologies.

The Community of Work is a dictatorial institution: common ethical minimum, sanctions, total human value rewarded, family tasks taken over by the Community, pledge of Companions.

Either picture alone is false. The Community is both. It is so because the Community is essentially educational. The communitarian movement is an educational movement. It is apprenticeship in liberty. An apprenticeship willed and developed by the Companions themselves. It is a school for a better way of life.

14. The communitarian movement is a clever way of getting people prepared for dictatorship of the Communist Party. (See question 10 above.)

"Any solution which will only aim at dividing wealth is bound to fail sooner or later. What should be founded is a society for human beings." So wrote Barbu, and it should be sufficient for everyone to understand that, contrary to Communism, in which everything starts from the economic point of view to end with man, in the communitarian setup man comes *first*.

However, some may point out that what motivated Marx was also man's liberation, which is true enough. And if it was, where does the difference lie between Communism and communitarianism?

As far as I understand it, in the Communist point of view, man is being transformed gradually through his transforming his own material setup. Dialectic materialism claims that the origin of everything in man, including his ideologies, is to be searched out exclusively in economics. Since the transformation of man is wholly dependent on his transforming his own material conditions, it is logical to expect that when those have been transformed, that is, made equitable, man's happiness will necessarily follow.

We can disagree that man's happiness will necessarily follow. But how can we quarrel over making the material conditions equitable?

On the other hand, one may not approve of the capitalist system and still not be a Marxist because one does not favor the conception of a closed and limited world, together with a closed and limited man who begins and ends in economics.

But that is precisely what the communitarian movement is not. What characterizes it is its sense of the meaning of man, and of the universal, the open, the limitless. And it proves it.

15. The communitarian movement is socialism.

To dispose of something by labeling it is convenient. There it is. You have got it pigeonholed and can forget about it except for the fact that you just don't like it, or that you do.

The communitarian movement is neither a political nor an economic doctrine. It is a way of life.

16. The communitarian movement is useless: the managerial revolution is already at work everywhere, and not a handful of people, or even several thousands, can alter the direction of history.

Granted that it does seem that the managerial period is on us, there are two ways of looking at it. Either we think it excellent and therefore forget about the communitarians. Or we do not think that the largest part of mankind, that is, the workers, wants just a change of master. Which the managerial revolution is. A higher standard of living, and material security, are necessary and much appreciated. They are not sufficient. The managerial setup does not mean full responsibility for one's life, including control of the means of livelihood. Managers are a class. They do not represent the choice of the workers. This is again an economy not cut to man's proportions, and not concerned, primarily, with his fulfillment and liberation. If this is what is under way now, all the more reason, right within the managerial era, to keep working for a more human way of living.

17. The communitarian movement is paternalism in disguise. Heads of firms go in for it because they are sure they will be elected Chief and therefore will still remain at the controls. (See question 10 above.)

It does sound plausible. But it somehow evaporates when you visit enterprises in transformation. And what does remain of paternalism when the previous owner is elected Chief on his total human value (not only professional), when he may not be re-elected, and when the means of production belong to the Community?

18. The communitarian movement is pernicious because it divides the workers' forces and per se plays the capitalist game. It is really an escape. People who do not want to face the fundamental struggle build themselves a cozy world while the rest of the proletariat can go hang.

The communitarian movement is keenly aware of that danger. It does not deny it. That is why it wants all its members to remain in close contact with all the movements for man's liberation. "We do not pretend to take their place nor to lessen them. We want to bring our contribution to the building they too are erecting."

As for the "division of the forces" and the "escape," even Marxists who belong to Communities consider that there are two ways of working for the proletariat's liberation: either by claiming its rights or by its education. Some people devote most of their time to one or the other aspect. Which does not mean that they utterly neglect the other. Both are very necessary. As for the "cozy" world, I hardly think any reader of this book will call it that.

19. Is the communitarian movement the way of avoiding Communism?

It is not the way of avoiding anything. It is the way of creating something.

20. Is there any hope at all that the communitarian movement will expand and develop all over Europe and become a way of life?

I think the communitarians have answered this best in the last page of their little book, *Recherche Communautaire*:

We are not after our own success through all men joining in our conceptions, or through the creation of a social structure according to our principles.

We are only trying to be ourselves fully, in the midst of other men and in contact with them.

Once our testimony stands in broad daylight, their joining depends entirely on their own choice.

A communitarian setup will be good only if it is the expression of the will of all, not only ours, however convinced we may be of its truth.

Our hope is to bear testimony faithfully.

To build Communities which will make possible man's development, and still not to be satisfied with what we have done.

Never to forget our bonds with all the workers, and with all those who have fought for justice' sake, those who came before us, those around us, and those who tomorrow will go on fighting the never-ending battle.

Our hope is that our testimony may be strong enough to arouse *more than sympathy*, the placid, lazy and sometimes cowardly sympathy. That it will inspire a similar or different *action* oriented toward the same search, and which, in its turn, will bring to men, to all men, new possibilities of being truly themselves.

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All Things Common

by

CLAIRE HUCHET BISHOP

Here is an exciting hopeful story of free men at work—whole families really—who in more than fifty places in Western Europe are pioneering in a new way of life.

This development in industrial, rural and educational life of France, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium and Holland has been fully and fascinatingly reported by Claire Huchet Bishop, who recently visited in person most of these "Communities of Work" as they are called. It is the first comprehensive report on the communitarian movement in Western Europe to reach America.

Spontaneously and almost simultaneously these groups sprung up in the decade since World War II began, to answer the great need among the plain people of these countries to establish fully the dignity and the responsibility of the working man. Here a watchcasing maker gathered his fellow-workers together and they began to form their own community and factory. There a group of young musicians pooled their talents and their resources to give their fellow townsmen the music they desired and themselves a sense of belonging and of brotherhood. In another province a furniture manufacturer turned over his plant to his workers

(Continued on back flap)

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