CHAPTER - VII

CONCLUSION

THE EVOLUTION OF INDUSTRIAL SYSTEM

The Argument for Evolution

Now we require to formulate a viewpoint from which we should try to conceptualise the future of industrial system.

a) The lack of discontinuity

The first step, is to offer the hypothesis that in the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary in specific instances we should assume that societal change occurs in an evolutionary manner, without major discontinuities. In this we must oppose Bell, Habermas, Galbraith, and both Marcuse and Mandel.

Bell has contended that industrial societies develop into post-industrial societies, given that, in his view, the United States has moved from industrialism to post-industrialism. But the proposition is only of interest if a qualitative societal change occurs with this progression, and the case is not made. For Bell the indications of the development are the changes in occupational structure consequent upon the preponderance of service employment, the new eminence and salience of theoretical knowledge, information and scientific institutions, and the rise of a new scientific, professional and technical class. The objection is not that these developments have
not occurred, but that their significance is quite unclear. Bell asserts that a society in this new phase of development merits a new name, but even the title post-industrial is misleading. The existence of the new scientific class is asserted, but whether this carries a Marxist sense of shared consciousness on the implication of a new social group with its own social, economic or political power is not clear. Bell states that knowledge and information are sources of power but he does not document the proposition. As Lasch notes, he "simply deduces political power from functional indispensability, without demonstrating the influence of "expertise" on actual decisions". It is far from proven that the power accruing from the advance of science is wielded in substantial part by the scientists themselves rather than by those who employ and use scientists and their knowledge.

It seems prima facie more probable that new knowledge serves and will serve those in power just as old knowledge has always done, and that the scientific and technical elite, with the increasing specialization of knowledge the proliferation of professions and their employment in large-scale organizations, will become progressively diffused and then political power weakened.

Habermas claims that advanced capitalist society has encountered a series of crisis tendencies which can not be overcome without a major social transformation. This claim contains
two assertions, neither of them substantiated: that advanced capitalist societies are experiencing crisis that threaten their continued existence and these can only be overcome by major transformation.

We may accept the existence of recurrent economic crises and of increasingly evident crises of rationality and legitimacy for the capitalist state, but it is far from clear that these are as disabling as Habermas supposes. Capitalist institutions have shown remarkable resilience in the last hundred years and the historical record would suggest an alternative null hypothesis of continuing survival and adaptability. This is reinforced by the observation that no social group in contemporary capitalist society has plausibly been identified by non-Marxists (and is not by Habermas) as the standard-bearer of societal transformation and renewal. Habermas also hypothesizes a motivation crisis whereby individuals no longer have a sense of participation in society’s shared norms and values. Hence social integration and social stability are threatened. But the conclusion does not follow from the premises. As Held points out, Habermas romanticises the past, overestimating the individual citizen’s historical integration into society. There is no gainsaying the lack of consensus concerning norms, values and beliefs but there is no warrant for asserting that this is the prelude to societal disintegration. On the contrary, it might equally be asserted that value dissensus weakens the
impulse to social transformation and permits the dominance of a powerful and politically mobilised elite. And as far as the individual is concerned, 'an acceptable flow of system-conforming rewards', in McCarthy's words, may suffice to legitimate the political system 'for the reason that nothing better seems practically possible in the given circumstances'. There may be reasons for acceptance of the system.

Galbraith lacks a similar sharp sense of discontinuity but it is there, if veiled, behind the twin ideas of the emergence of the technostructure and the recognition of the economic and political dominance of giant corporations and the planning system. He implies that he is pointing to the occurrence, hitherto unnoticed, of a qualitative, systemic change. Unfortunately he does not show in what way the planning system exists as a system and it is unclear that it does so exist in the sense implied by Galbraith. A network of financial institutions and large shareholders with great potential influence over the largest corporations could sustain a coherent system of linked institutions, but it has yet to be shown that it does so and in what ways the system as a whole, as against individual giant companies, exercises power over the market and the government. Even less satisfactory is the notion of the technostructure, the reification and exaltation of what might more reasonably be supposed to be separate and disparate groups of technical specialists working in range of companies. Even within one company
the power of the technostructure, a group of technical specialists, over company decision-making is unproven. A more plausible hypothesis is that individual executives and top management groups remain more ascendant in decision-making in large capitalist companies than do groups of specialists of whatever kind.

Karl-Marxist thinkers all expect discontinuous, that is revolutionary, change to occur in capitalist society. Marcuse and Mandel are no exceptions but their views are markedly different. In contrast to Habermas, for Marcuse it is not the crisis tendencies evident in advanced capitalist societies but the lack of them that lead to the vision of a major and necessary transformation. In a context in which 'there is no reason to insist on self-determination if the administered life is the comfortable and even the "good" life, Marcuse yearns for the promised land of liberation. But although the revolution, catalysed (rather than led) by students now that the working class has been incorporated into capitalist society, for the moral good must come, Marcuse is no determinist: 'there can be no blind necessity in the tendencies that terminate in a free and self-conscious society'. Notwithstanding his claims and visions, Marcuse's analysis of capitalist society is not of a revolutionary character. Mandel, a far more orthodox Marxist than Marcuse, still believes that revolution, led in capitalist societies by the industrial working class and in the international sphere by
the semi-colonial masses will come to pass, but his prediction is of long-run rather than imminent upheaval. No doubt that ultimate upheaval will be revolutionary and violent but it will be preceded by a period of evolutionary change in which capital will become more internationalised, multinational companies will grow, the profits of capital will be less stable, the educational level and the qualification of the work force will rise and automation will spread. All precise predictions of Mandel concern the outcome of merely evolutionary development.

We are left then with the undramatic propositions that advanced industrial systems have witnessed: a shift to service employment; the continuing advance of science; and the consequent emergence of new groups of scientists and professionals; recurrent economic crises and, more recently, administrative crises with implications for the legitimacy of government; the increasing importance of ever larger business corporations; and apparently disarming (and possibly oppressive) incorporation of the industrial working class into the elite dominated culture of the affluent society. These are noteworthy trends indeed, but steadily developing trends are precisely what they are.

2) The absence of convergence

The social theorists whose views we have examined have not put forward the thesis that the industrial systems of West and East, of capitalist and socialist societies, are converging. Indeed Aron argues persuasively that this is not the case. There
must inevitably be similarities in the development of industrialism. Since, following the industrialization of Britain, every other society has had prior examples of the process to imitate and to adapt to its own circumstances. It is rather obviously a fallacy to suppose that each newly industrializing society 'recapitulates' the growth and development process of its forerunners. Divergence between systems is as certain as are similarities. A more plausible hypothesis surely is that industrialism in different societies is likely to take the course of parallel evolution, lines of historical development will show similarities but remain obstinately different.

The logic of industrialism will in the long run lead to the convergence of the more advanced and developed systems, but it is the conclusion that the advanced industrial systems are now encountering developments that manifestly have elements in common, but they are responding to them in different ways and will continue to do so. The assumption of alternative paths of evolution is the most plausible assumption.

b) The Issue of Social Dominance

The moral concern is of course with social injustice, and especially with the inequitable distribution of society's goods and the economic exploitation of the many by the few. In the moral sphere the issue endures, but in the contemporary constitution of advanced industrial systems it has become
large measure masked, as some of the great inequalities and deprivations of past historical periods have been reduced.

Habermas observes that class division underlies the crises of advanced capitalism but he also notes that the most conspicuously deprived groups (such as the old, the sick, and the unemployed) are no longer class-based and he contends that science (and not capital) has now become the leading force in production, in this way the inequalities of class are obscured by the imperatives of science and technology.

The truth is that while class-based inequalities remain in all advanced capitalist societies, they now compete with many other grounds upon which groups are formed, common consciousness is developed, and social and political action is mobilized; and while they remain the hope of the few they are not judged by the majority to be the most probable source of a future societal transformation. Only in exceptional historical circumstances has social deprivation provided a basis for political mobilisation and societal transformation, and there is no warrant for supposing that the greater development of industrial society promotes an environment congenial to this occurrence.

Given that this is so in the capitalist societies of the West, it is even more so in Japan where, while great inequalities and deprivations exist, the opportunity for working class mobilisation is greatly attenuated by the stratification of industry, by the system of company unions, and by the lack of development.
of individualistic ambition owing to the salience of the group as an element in the formation of identity.

The shift of attention in capitalist societies is now to the respective roles of the state, the giant corporations and, in some general sense, 'bureaucracy'. Their little-bridled power is seen to lack legitimation and their potential for oppression is widely judged to be a greater source of moral danger, and to the citizenry as a whole, than that of any economic or social group. And we may suggest that in the leading socialist country, the Soviet Union, whose existence is a monument to the power of an ideology founded on deep class divisions, the threats to the individual and to the system itself derive from the centralised power of government and the organizational complexities that attend it in an advanced industrial society.

c) The Circle of Relationship

The 'circle of relationships' refers to the connections that the theorists we have examined (Bell, Habermas, Galbraith, Marcuse and Mandal) have noted between the advance of science and technology, the growth of government and the development of variously, large-scale organizations or big business. They have also voiced concern for the growth of 'bureaucracy' whether this has occurred in government or in the business sphere. This is the set of relationships that may seem to hold the key to the evolution of industrial systems and it deserves a fuller exposition and a more thorough probing.
First, however, we may recapitulate some of the aspects of these relationships. At the heart of Galbraith's analysis of the industrial state is government expenditure on research and development. The vast growth in this expenditure in the United States leads Galbraith to assert both the power of the Scientists and the technical specialists (whom he calls the Technostructure) and the symbiotic interrelationship of government and the giant corporations. Mandle sees government acting as the 'servant of the corporations', budgeting for major industrial projects and taking responsibility for crisis management of the economy and for providing a secure social context for production. Habermas comments, 'large organisations strive for a kind of political compromise with the state and with one another, excluding the public whenever possible.

Additionally, the emphasis on the massive promotion of science suggests to Galbraith the consequent emergence of an educational and scientific estate. Bell is in fair agreement with Galbraith, that the government-aided advance of science is producing a new knowledge elite. They differ in that Bell's emphasis is on the development of Universities and research institutions rather than upon the growth of large corporations or government. Habermas's focus is different again, upon the scientisation of decision-making in government accompanied by reliance on experts who act behind the closed doors of the bureaucracy beyond the layman's comprehension, sphere of debate and democratic control.
the consequences are a decline in rational decision-taking and a loss of legitimacy.

Between them these theorists have made prominent the circle of interdependencies, scientific research is now so expensive that it has to be funded by government, thus as science advances, government and governmental power grow. Science is predominantly pursued in large organizations; thus corporations also grow and large corporations become interdependent with big government. Governmental decision making is dependent upon experts and especially upon scientists; experts are similarly powerful in business corporations. Thus the power of government, of large organizations and of science and scientists grows; science comes to be depicted as the entirely neutral source and justification for this growth. The progress of science and technology comes to be perceived as quasi-autonomous and as the single factor upon which economic growth and future development of society depend. Habermas rightly comments: "when this semblance has taken root effectually, then propaganda can refer to the role of technology and science to explain and to legitimate why in modern societies the process of democratic decision making about practical problem loses its function and 'must' be replaced by plebiscitary decisions about alternative sets of leaders of administrative personnel.

The citizen needs, therefore, to know who controls the experts, to whom the controllers are accountable and how the system of control is legitimated. But before answering such
questions, let us first examine further the elements in the circle of relationships.

1. The control of Science & Scientists

Heilbroner has written that the major problem for industrial society to solve is 'the far reach of science and technology'. But the issue is very obviously mis-stated: what is significant for the development of society is not the advance of science as such but the use to which science and technology are put and institutionalization of the social role of scientists. Industrial societies are all of them committed to the promotion of science and its social uses and therefore also to the growth of scientific, technical and professional groups. Thus the roles allotted to the new specialists and the incorporation of their work into the occupational and social systems are matters of vital importance. Are the scientific and technical specialists becoming a new knowledge elite replacing politicians, entrepreneurs and managers, or are the new men simply serving the old? or are the new men in effect controlling their apparent political and industrial masters while seeming to serve them? or is knowledge now so complex and fragmented and are the new men so specialized and so little cohesive among themselves that they cannot be considered as a group or an elite with the potentiality implied by the singular noun 'for common action'? Is political power being dissipated, then, between rival cliques and coteries of experts and between lay
pressure groups with access to specialist advice?

The soundest assumption in face of questions that require empirical testing for their proper answering is that nothing has changed, that power belongs, as ever, to the politicians. Of course there are well-documented instances of politicians being persuaded and influenced by scientists and other specialists.

2. The control of large-scale organisation

(a) Meyer raised some questions: Are industrial societies, socialist and capitalist, in East and West, converging in bureaucratization?

(b) Is it that in the Soviet Union, for example, bureaucratisation of the whole society is occurring while in Western capitalist societies the process is one of multiple bureaucratization? The idea is worth raising, since it emphasizes the pervasiveness of large-scale organisation in all types of advanced industrial society, but confuses several issues.

The control of large-scale organisation as a matter of social concern can be split into three issues: the control, by government or citizens, of large-scale organisations, usually business corporations; the control, by citizens, of governments, treated here as the largest and most recalcitrant of all large-scale organisations; and the control of the very
process of bureaucratization or organisational development with its tendency to increase as the size of the organisations in which it occurs itself increases.

3. The control of Corporations

We have found that large corporations in the West have grown to the point at which they present a challenge to governments. Their decision-making, potentially at least in the hands of a small elite of individuals and a small group of other equally anonymous financial institutions, is largely beyond the rational supervision of government or the democratic control of the electorate. Their powers have grown to be in excess of their legitimacy. In Barber's concise phrase, 'business has gone international, the countries of the world have not'. In contrast, in the Soviet Union large-scale industrial enterprises have been deliberately created and fostered. They remain very firmly under state control and their legitimacy is not in question.

It is concluded then, that the issues related to the control of large-scale organisation exist in all advanced industrial societies but that they take different forms; once again, the idea of convergence is rejected. Large business organisations cause anxiety to the citizenry and pose a threat to governments in capitalist (and Third World) societies; they have been deliberately fostered in the Soviet Union. The formidable power of central government is evident in all advanced industrial
societies but, while it is apparently open to review through the electoral process and challenged and mitigated by the activities of pressure groups in capitalist societies, it is reinforced and justified in the Soviet Union by the authority of the communist party; questions of legitimacy, therefore, vary likewise. Finally, the fear of bureaucracy itself and its apparent evasion of accountability is indeed common to all societies and systems, but again, the form of the accountability problem differs in different systems.

The questions of control - of science, of government, of large-scale organisation - are surely the major questions requiring solution in the continuing evolution of industrial societies.

It is a widespread belief that social change now occurs so rapidly that it virtually defies the commentator to describe any societal features before they have already changed. On the one hand is the sense that even a society-wide industrial system is only a 'temporary system', on the other is Schon's contention that conceptualisations of social issues and processes, because they are slow to form, are out-of-date even at the moment of formation - given that they are slow to come into good currency, 'once in good currency and institutionalised, they are slow to fade away'.

But of course Schon does not himself infer that because
transformation processes are continuous it is not possible to grasp them intellectually as they occur. The caveats about the rapidity of change emphasise the need to examine processes of change in industrial systems and to outline trends of development rather than to attempt to depict a particular state of system. In Oppenheimer's more graceful comment, 'the world alters as we walk in it, so that the years of man's life measure not some small growth or rearrangement or moderation of what was learned in childhood, but a great upheaval'. We must expect continual change and it is that which we must analyse and respond to.