

Alvah Bessie

Considered Opinion

Robert Eatherly's tortured soul

Claude Robert Eatherly is dead.

He was 57 years old and on July 7 his story made page 9 of one of the big West Coast dailies. He had to have been an important man to have rated a two-column head over a ten and a half inch story, complete with a one-column picture taken in 1946—in the San Francisco *Chronicle*.

Eatherly was important. In 1945 he was only 24 years old and he piloted a B-29, the biggest bomber we had. For two flights of his he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. His plane was named *Straight Flush*, which as all poker players know beats anything on the table.

Flying the *Straight Flush* on Aug. 6, 1945, Claude Eatherly found a hole in the cloud-cover and radioed another B-29 following him that was named *Enola Gay*.

Eatherly was acting as a scout. Through the hole in the clouds he saw a city and his message to the *Enola Gay* was: "Advice: Bomb primary."

Primary target was the city of Hiroshima and in the next few moments somewhere between 80,000 and 200,000 civilians died in the atomic fire.

Three days later Eatherly led the *Enola Gay* over Nagasaki and between 39,000 and 74,000 more died instantly. Nobody knows the exact number—and does it matter? In both cities, people have been dying ever since from radiation sickness—which acts like a form of cancer.

That was how Claude Eatherly won the Distinguished Flying Cross and became important. He did not actually drop the atomic eggs on a nation we knew was ready to surrender. He merely led the way

and pointed to the primary targets.

Nor would those particular people have been atomized if they had been "white"; this, too, has been admitted by those close to the decision to use our great invention.

Just as it was also admitted that had we made a public demonstration of the weapon before using it—three weeks after the first one was successfully exploded at Los Alamos, New Mexico—the Japanese would have surrendered immediately.

But what the hell, Mac—you make a thing like that, whose purpose is to kill more people than anything ever cooked up before, you gotta try it and see if it does what they say it will. Since then we have cooked up another thing that kills people—and leaves their property almost intact. When will we try it? Do you know?

* * *

In 1946 Eatherly was involved in testing nuclear bombs over an atoll in the Pacific named Bikini. (The name has since become famous, but not for nuclear tests.)

In those tests Eatherly was one of two pilots who was accidentally covered by the mushroom cloud. He lost his way briefly and later said it was the most horrible moment of his life. But there were other moments to come that were even more horrible.

In 1947, psychiatric tests revealed that Claude had "severe neurosis and guilt complex," and he was discharged from the service. After his funeral in Houston last month, his brother James told the press, "He never forgot those thousands

of people dying in those flames.

"I can remember him waking up, night after night, screaming. He said his brain was on fire. He said he could feel those people burning."

There were those who said he was some sort of nut. After all, it was war, wasn't it? And he didn't even drop the eggs himself.

Certainly his behavior was peculiar for a man acclaimed a hero. After his discharge from the Air Force he returned to Van Alstyne, Texas:

- In 1952 he was charged with forgery;
- In 1956 he was accused of burglarizing post offices in View and Avoca, Texas;

- Then, according to the UP story on his death, he was charged with robbery in Dallas and Galveston. At his trial he pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity and was committed to a Veterans Administration hospital.

* * *

While Claude was in that hospital in Waco, Texas, a German writer named Gunther Anders started to correspond with him and in 1961 he published a collection of their letters. The correspondence came to an end when Eatherly escaped from the hospital.

The title of that short book is *Burning Conscience* and it carries a preface by the late Bertrand Russell (Monthly Review Press). It is worth reading in the light of what followed.

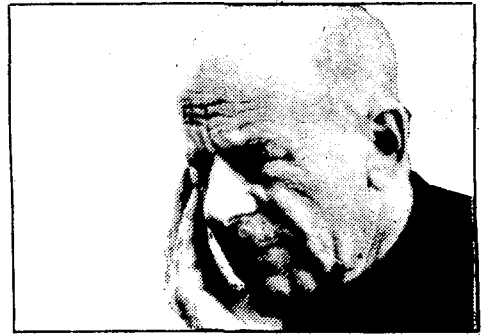
For there are writers and there are writers. One of the more celebrated in our country is a man named William Bradford Huie who became famous for a book

called *The Execution of Private Slovik* (1954). This was the thoroughly researched and deeply moving story of a G.I. nobody who was scared stiff when he was headed for action in Belgium in World War II, deserted and turned himself in.

There was plenty of evidence that he was not exactly bright, but what made Eddie Slovik important is the fact that General of the Armies Eisenhower, faced with a rising rate of desertion, decided to authorize the execution of one of the deserters, Eddie Slovik: the first American soldier to have been so condemned since 1864. And he was shot to death by musketry on Jan. 31, 1945.

Ten years after *The Execution* was published, Huie published a book about Claude Eatherly called *The Hiroshima Pilot*. The gist of his argument in this book is that Eatherly did not have a "burning conscience" about what he and his fellow airmen had done over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but was probably a disordered personality from way back; that he was a habitual criminal with no regard for anything or anyone but himself; that he sought publicity and actually enjoyed being considered a political prisoner who had committed crimes seeking punishment for what he felt was his greatest—and unpunished—crime: the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In essence, said Huie, he was a phony.

The man is dead now, and the truth of his story may have died with him. Ironically, he died of cancer, which is a form of atomization of the body tissues. ■



Roberta Lynch

Choosing between a more perfect union and domestic tranquility

I am writing these words in the wake of the recent celebrations of the Fourth of July—the holiday that more than any other symbolizes America's identity. This year it was a day marked by neither the fervent patriotism of former times, nor the disquieting protests of a decade ago. A certain somnolence has settled over the land—a sense that we have pushed and pulled in order to try to "form a more perfect union"—and that perfection still eludes us. So, the feeling seems to be, perhaps we should simply settle for "domestic tranquility."

There has always existed a certain tension between these two goals so simply stated in the preamble of our nation's Constitution. The desire for a more perfect union constantly spurs Americans to struggle not just for higher wages or a second car, but for racial equality, for social welfare programs, for quality education, for care for the elderly. Most people crave not just their own immediate comfort, but the sense that they are part of a larger organism that is organized to "promote the general welfare."

It was this desire that led to the support for the 1964 Civil Rights Act, that spawned such social programs as Medicare, that sparked institutional upheavals within the churches and the educational system, and that fostered a dramatic re-evaluation of American foreign policy. For it was in the 1960s—more than any other time except perhaps the '30s—that we reached out for perfection, believing in our potential to transform ourselves and our environment.

And, god knows, we did try. It is difficult to believe—even in retrospect—that such great cultural, social, and political change could have been crammed into

such a short space of time. We all, even those on the farthest periphery of the movements of the day, lived in a kind of compression chamber in which the world seemed to be changing faster than any one individual could encompass or understand.

But try as we did, we did not succeed. And if life became better, it also became a good deal more complicated, less safe, less tranquil. There were abortion reforms that brought women greater sexual freedom, but since they were not accompanied by supportive changes in men or in the larger society, they also brought greater individual responsibility.

There was greater flexibility and openness in the churches, there was still little sense of how people should live. There was greater spending for welfare, public housing, health care, and so on, but since it was not accompanied by real justice for the disadvantaged, crime and urban decay continued to spread. There were affirmative action programs that helped to rectify past discrimination, but since they were not accompanied by a full employment economy, they also tended to stimulate competition and resentment.

And so, for many Americans the promise of the '60s did not seem to have produced greater perfection, but rather greater disarray. And as we crept wearily into the '70s, a reaction began to set in. Somewhat blindly and desperately, some people began to yearn for "domestic tranquility." Perhaps they felt that if it wasn't possible to make the necessary transformations, if in fact the attempts to do so seemed to backfire, offering unpredictable by-products, then possibly all you could do was to retreat. If you couldn't look out for

the general welfare, then you could at least look out for your own.

There is a certain logic (what the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci calls "common sense") in this response. Looked at in this light, many of the recent developments—the stop-ERA movement, the anti-abortion activities, the Bakke decision—do not simply represent a shift to a right-wing political ideology.

They may instead indicate a reaction against the failures of the process by which we set out to become more perfect—not that the goals were wrong, but that they were unrealistic and that it is only self-defeating to try to reach them.

Yet despite the seeming "logic" of this approach, it is off-base. It is a "common sense" based on an acceptance of the given order of things—a framework that can only allow certain kinds of changes. The '60s, for instance, despite the great social and political upheaval of the decade, left virtually untouched one of the most fundamental bases of our social order—our economic arrangements.

Social change, while requiring and inspiring its own momentum, cannot survive or flourish without accompanying economic change. The vision of the '60s—the war on poverty, the impulse toward egalitarianism, the rebellion against sexual repression, the opposition to the dehumanizing aspects of technology—was consistently thwarted and distorted because it was essentially in conflict with our economic system. It was not that the goals were unrealistic, but rather that the methods used—ones that left untouched a system of production for profit's sake alone—were necessarily ineffective.

And, eventually, the current hunger

for domestic tranquility will also be thwarted by the limitations of capitalism. For such tranquility cannot be maintained in the face of faltering school systems, exorbitant health care costs, environmental hazards, deadly jobs, or massive unemployment.

Today people are frustrated by rising taxes and government bureaucracy; they are threatened by changing family patterns and the loss of religious certainty; they are confused by corporate threats of plant shutdowns if environmental reforms are enacted.

But tomorrow (not literally, I'm afraid) will very likely demonstrate that the minor tax relief of the Jarvis-Gann bill will not really improve anyone's standard of living; that trying to halt the ERA cannot halt the erosion of family stability brought on by capitalism itself; that corporations will move when profit dictates unless they are legally prevented from doing so.

As these realities begin to emerge from the cloud of right-wing rhetoric that now hangs over so much of our national life, perhaps the myth that we must always swing on a pendulum between liberalism and conservatism, between progress and reaction, between reaching for perfection and settling for tranquility, will begin to disintegrate as well.

Perhaps people will begin to see that our potential lies in our ability to look beyond the given framework, to question not just our values, but the economic system that promotes such contradictory ones. That would be something to celebrate come some future Fourth of July. ■

Roberta Lynch is a national officer of the New American Movement.



PERSPECTIVES

□ FOR A NEW AMERICA □

Socialism means democracy and respect for nature

The following is a continuation of the discussion on an American-style socialism begun by Leland Stauber's three-part series, "For a Socialism That Works" (May 3, 10 and 17). We invite others to contribute to the discussion. Stauber's articles and the responses by John H. Brown (May 31) and Charles E. Lindblom (July 5) are available upon request for \$1.50.

By John Hardesty

There are only two problems with Leland Stauber's position in "For a Socialism That Works". (1) it isn't socialism, and (2) it won't work. There are at least three reasons why his system is not socialist: it is "commodity fetishist"; it is alienated and undemocratic; it is "productivist" without provision for what Marx called "the realm of freedom."

Commodity Fetishism.

According to Stauber's analysis, the only way to prevent "excessive government interference in the economy" and "a vast bureaucratic monstrosity" in a future socialist society is to organize the economy through the market. The forces of supply and demand and the profit-seeking motives of the individual firm, modified in unspecified ways by public policy, would determine prices, resource allocation, and output. He argues that the alternative of democratic planning is a "bankrupt idea." If so, then I submit socialism is a bankrupt idea.

Capitalism represents the ultimate development of an exchange-based, commodity producing society. It is no accident that Marx began *Capital* with an extensive section devoted to critical analysis of the commodity. As he pointed out, any society that relies primarily on commodity production suffers from "commodity fetishism." This means that inanimate material "things," such as money and the consumer items it purchases, by way of their visibility and economic function, take on enormous psychological significance and appear to people as what really matters in life; in fact, they seem to be life itself (and actually are).

Capitalist advertising and the sales effort merely magnify this effect present in all commodity producing societies. There

is a complementary tune played on the flip side of this phenomenon: the economic relationships between people become obscured because the only way people relate to each other as producers is through exchanges on the market. The market is alive and rules; people and social relations are inanimate and objectified.

Stauber doesn't mention the labor market, but it is precisely here that people learn to think of themselves as commodities, and thus to think of others as the same. Is this not a great part of the sickness of life in the U.S? Would a "socialism" that does not deal with this be worth having? Marx would certainly think not.

Socialism does not simply end private ownership of the means of production; equally important, it eliminates commodity production, replacing impersonal market forces with conscious social control (planning) of the economy. Socialism is production for use or it is not socialism at all. It seems to me that Stauber implicitly accepts the current consciousness as a given, setting up a system which perpetuates rather than changes it.

Alienation and democracy.

As John H. Brown has pointed out (*ITT*, May 31), in order to be socialist a society must solve the problem of alienation. This can only be done by maximizing control of the economy. In Stauber's conception, economic efficiency dictates that directors of public investment banks "hire and fire the top management of corporations, all with the sole aim of maximizing their own profits." Who appoints directors of public banks, which are "owned" by local governments and regulated by the national government, is anybody's guess. Even if local elected officials appoint these directors, this kind of two-stage-removed economic democracy is no democracy at all. Further, if work alienation is to be countered, and Stauber gives no indication it is, a firm's employees must continuously engage in the management process. Of course there are huge problems involved in implementing such a democratic system, but least important of all is the rationale Stauber uses for his market system in the first place: There is a great deal of evidence that greater participation and control by workers means higher productivity. It seems to me that

Stauber's socialism actually incorporates the worst of both the Yugoslavian system—commitment to the market—and the Soviet system—bureaucratic, hierarchical management structures.

The realm of freedom.

As Marx said, the true realm of freedom "begins only where labor which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases"; it is a sphere of life where "the development of human energy...is an end in itself." Where Marx, and the majority of socialists down to the present, have erred was in conceiving this realm of freedom as based on a superabundant, fully-automated society. Nevertheless, contrary to the implication of Stauber's articles, life in socialist society would be all about human growth not economic efficiency.

To sum up, socialism in my view must embody four fundamental characteristics: (1) Social ownership of the means of production, (2) production for use, not the market, (3) maximum participation and direct democracy wherever feasible in all spheres of life, and (4) commitment to human growth not productive growth. This, of course, must be understood as an ultimate goal which is undoubtedly beyond our lifetimes. Of shorter-run and more immediate importance are the transition to socialism, the transition to the transition and so on. But in order to know how to get there we need to know where it is we want to go.

Natural limits.

I think Stauber might reply: "Your concept of socialism cannot work because it is not at least as economically efficient as capitalism." My rejoinder is that the market system cannot work because its emphasis on capitalist-defined economic efficiency violates long-run laws of ecological and energy efficiency that are becoming of paramount importance in our time.

There are three fundamental principles we have learned (or, rather, are beginning to learn) from the ecological and physical sciences:

(1) The ecosphere is a unified, delicate web of life which has evolved to its present dynamic equilibrium over the course of several billions of years and is to be tampered with—and everything humans do (especially at the present stage of economic development) is potential tampering—only with the greatest caution and reserve. Its specific capacity to withstand human pressure is unknown but assuredly finite.

(2) Useful work (as defined in physics) is carried out only at the expense of net increases in entropy; that is, decreases in the long-term ability of the earth to support life (second law of thermodynamics); and therefore,

(3) There are limits to the absolute size, thus the growth, of economic production and also to the longevity of human econ-

omic activity on this planet. From the point of view of either eco-catastrophe or entropy, the more we insist on producing today, the fewer our tomorrows are likely to be.

I cannot stress enough that socialists (especially Marxists) must come to terms with the fact that these principles represent the most advanced scientific thought available. Despite Engels and the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in Moscow, the second law of thermodynamics is not an idealist conception.

The capitalist criteria of economic efficiency endorsed by Stauber boil down to the allocation of economic resources so as to maintain a maximum sustainable long-run economic growth path. Here Stauber's analysis would seem consistent with the traditional socialist emphasis on rapid accumulation, superabundance of material goods, and maximum leisure time achieved through capital and energy-intensive, automated production processes.

It is important to have some notion of the history of this discussion. Marx spent the greatest portion of his *Theories of Surplus Value*, part II, castigating David Ricardo for his insistence that there were limits to the economic exploitation of the earth. Ricardo foresaw that the ultimate barrier to economic growth would be the rising costs of placing ever-greater demands on a finite planet. This would increase the return (rent) to those who owned a valuable piece of the earth (landowners) at the expense of capitalist profit. The falling rate of profit would eventually bring a halt to capital accumulation and the economy would enter a permanent "stationary state."

Marx saw a barrier to capitalist economic growth but not to economic growth in general. Everything from the ruin of agricultural soil to the falling tendency of the rate of profit was strictly due to internal contradictions of capitalism having nothing to do with natural limits. Socialists today frequently pick up this attitude to blame the (static) profit-motive of monopoly corporations for energy difficulties and pollution. This view is dangerously close to the mainstream economic perspective that while market economies (including market "socialism") cannot handle such relatively unimportant "externalities," it is up to the state to carry out the merely technical task of "internalizing" environmental costs.

Thus socialists encourage (and reflect) popular beliefs that environmental considerations are not a crucial issue and the energy crisis is simply due to a corporate conspiracy to withhold supplies and jack up profits. These attitudes make a socialism that works for people and nature more difficult to achieve by aiding and abetting the impossible "American Dream" of endless affluence. The only socialism that can work for us is a socialism of the stationary state.

John Hardesty is professor of economics, San Diego State University, California.

Can a new left emerge and grow successfully in the United States in the 1970s and '80s?

Not unless its participants know about the success and failures of the American left from 1900 to 1970. In those years, three movements—the old Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the New Left of the 1960s—started and failed. Without knowledge of these experiences a new movement will have no more chance of survival than its predecessors.

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