

SAN DIEGO

by Larry Gottlieb

When we were young, one of our favorite outings was a trip to the zoo. Our teachers even took us there, billing the expedition as one of tremendous educational value, a chance to learn all about the non-domesticated animals not normally a part of our 'civilized' experience.

Yet even then we knew intuitively that there was something basically wrong with the notion that a large, powerful animal trapped by iron bars and deep moats and subjected to the daily abuse of nervous laughter or just the open stares of awe bears any but the most cursory resemblance to the same animal in its natural state. It's something like trying to learn about human societies with doll houses and toy soldiers.

Yet this is essentially the manner in which we in this modern industrial society are expected to gain a functional knowledge of the various dynamics which operate in our society. Functional knowledge of the various dynamics which operate in our society. Functional knowledge, we say, because that is the only form of knowledge which enables us to utilize our understanding to make basic structural changes in the system under study, in this case our society. And surely the last decade has established that necessity beyond any doubt.

To study the nature of human society in the academic environment is in general to examine it, to whatever degree of subtlety and complexity, from the point of view of the classical 'disinterested observer', noting trends and basic characteristics in their appropriate historical perspectives and thereby drawing conclusions about human nature, generally punctuated with a sigh reflecting its apparent natural perversity.

Yet no scientist with any choice in the matter would study a physical system in that manner. The scientific method, the most effective and trustworthy method of gaining functional knowledge of the natural environment ever devised by man, consists essentially in imposing changes upon the observed system and noting the resulting changes in that system. Thus twentieth century physics, for example, learned that we can have no knowledge of what a thing is — only of what it does, or the way it reacts to stimuli such as light rays or sonar waves. Add an observer with control over the original stimulus and the ability to modify that stimulus in accordance with what he learns and you have a scientist capable of gaining functional knowledge.

So it is very curious indeed that the only topic of man's deliberations consistently denied the revealing exposure of this sort of analysis is his own society with regard to its social, economic and political characteristics. Without even bothering to consider the motivation for this failure, we can simply state that this has left us with such a dearth of real understanding of our society that we can but stand by helplessly and watch an entire civilization degenerate into an increasingly sterile, emotionless and destructive pathology motivated almost exclusively by fear.

(Fear, of course, is what creates, among many other things, the so-called generation gap, which might more functionally be called the motivation gap, in that it separates the bulk of our society from those who will not relinquish, in spite of all the pressure our society exerts upon us to do so, their belief that "since love, work and knowledge are the well-springs of our lives, they should also govern it" — the advice of Wilhelm Reich in a soon-to-be available book, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. It is this motivation gap which is the harbinger of the simultaneous collapse of the old culture with its ethics of "rugged individualism" and mechanical competitive enterprise and the emergence of a

Fear, of course, is what creates, among other things, the so-called generation gap.

new, far more human counter culture with its emphasis on collective solution of common problems. If we are to survive, as a culture, that transition, we had better comprehend the 'mass psychology' of that gap so that as it widens it does not engulf us all.) At this point, it seems most useful to call upon an example of an experimental nature for the purpose of illustrating the process of learning about the existing society in general and the dynamics which govern it in particular, through the use of the scientific method of functional analysis, which we may here abbreviate as the 'poke and duck' method. One can learn a great deal about the erogenous zones of one of those animals at the zoo in that manner. The same applies to the political nature of a society.

Basking in the bright sunshine of Southern California is the city of San Diego, popularly known as a dynamic, healthy resort and tourist town on the American end of the Tijuana border crossing to Mexico, the heaviest such border crossing in the United States.

If we are to survive, as a culture, we had better comprehend the 'mass psychology' of the generation gap so that as it widens it does not engulf us all.

The streets are exceptionally clean, and the atmosphere has not yet succumbed to the brown blight as has its larger neighbor to the north, Los Angeles. But most important, since its economic life is, aside from the transitory tourist industry, centered about defense and the military (more than 150,000 active duty servicemen are stationed in San Diego County alone), its economic and thus its political life functions with the smoothness characteristic of these enterprises in the context of a militaristic, corporate-mechanized society. And this is certainly central to the locally prevailing attitude that, aside from occasional procedural difficulties, the political life of the city is essentially democratic with due regard for the opinions and rights of all (except for an occasional black or chicano — and "we're working on that").

November, 1968 saw the emergence into this scene of what most considered to be another 'underground newspaper' then called the *San Diego Free Press*. After spending a year on the familiar but essentially unproductive battlefield of dope busts and alternative culture, the paper then turned its attention to the grand old American newspaper tradition of muckraking. Having recognized that muckraking on a national scale (e.g. *Dow Chemical Company*, or the *Institute for Defense Analysis*) is essentially a dead-end path as far as political



(Ray Ruge)

effect is concerned, it began with what was fundamentally a rehash and updating of a *Wall Street Journal* expose of one man, Conrad Arnholt Smith of the United States National Bank, and the financial empire he had apparently accumulated in San Diego involving a large number of interlocking directorships in such industries as those involving the entire tuna fishing and canning industry (the one which keeps getting its boats captured by the Equadorians et. al. and the entire Yellow Cab chain among many, many others. Yet that sort of financial empire is another apple pie American institution, checked only occasionally by Sherman, Taft-Hartley and crew. And the *Wall Street Journal* knew that their expose would boost only their circulation without endangering the empire itself.

"Since love, work and knowledge are the well-springs of our lives, they should also govern it."

Wilhelm Reich

Yet the article never got large scale *San Diego* distribution; perhaps the weekly scarcity of *Journals* should have been the first clue as to the nature of *San Diego's* business establishment. For the publicity received through the 'underground' publication of the then-known details of Smith's empire triggered a flood of informational leads long suppressed for want of a medium for their communication. (The city's only two daily newspapers are owned by one James Copley, a close personal friend of Smith's — one of those bits of information most useful in understanding the situation!)

Even at this early stage of this experiment in functional sociology, the "system" in *San Diego*, or its power structure, if you prefer, began to display certain revealing characteristics previously kept well hidden. The vigilantes were

the first to appear, riddling the front windows of the newspaper office with bullets on at least two occasions, breaking windows and on one night relieving the office of 2500 copies of the current issue, delivering bombs and death threats to the staff and their landlord, and on Christmas night breaking into the office and destroying with sledgehammers and thick paint \$4,000 worth of typesetting equipment.

The intent of these acts was clearly to frighten and later to impede the staff from publishing, and the timing strongly suggested that this was specifically aimed at the publication of facts pertaining to the economic, and thus political, structure of the city. The next issue, renamed *The Street Journal*, proclaimed the paper's intent not to be discouraged, printed as it was without the destroyed equipment. The vigilantes countered by firebombing a staffer's car right in front of the collective where they all live.

Meanwhile, the various police agencies had noticeably stepped up their harassment of the people associated with the paper, mostly in the form of greatly increased field interrogations of which the police department boasts of conducting some 180,000 per year. In one case, for example, another car was towed away for violating an ordinance against being parked for more than 72 hours in one place (also in front of the collective). The charge collapsed when it was recalled that the same car had been involved in a traffic violation during that time period some 10 miles from the alleged parking violation.

The staff went first to the city council and demanded to know why the acts of terrorism had not been investigated and, simultaneously, police harassment had been stepped up. A highly emotional exchange ensued during which they were told that the police department cannot be politically challenged by any other political agency in *San Diego*, and thus they could do nothing. A visit to the U.S. Attorney's office was met with a brief look at the files being gathered on the staff members themselves. It became clear that

whatever protection was to be gained had to be self-constructed.

Believing fully in the axiom that "the best defense is a good offense," the paper's "Street Bureau of Investigation" then began to act on the information it received from all manner of sources. The picture as it developed was one of a feudal city, controlled in a very real sense by a few 'robber barons' who appear to represent the largest concentration of National Republican power in the country. Yet that power is built upon ignorance, and this was demonstrated next when it was

The police department cannot be politically challenged by any other political agency in San Diego, and thus they could do nothing.

learned through national news media that a Federal Grand Jury investigation of *San Diego's* second most powerful family, the Alessio's, for income-tax violations had been stalled when Smith himself went to Washington to impress upon none other than President Nixon that indictment of the Alessios would seriously threaten the economic empire, and thus the concentration of Republican power, over which he presided. Four weeks of intensive legwork by the *Street Journal* staff produced a picture of the Alessio family presiding over an empire of their own, centered on Tijuana's famous Caliente race track, itself the cornerstone of the huge Tijuana tourist industry. And the race track, they discovered, is in every facet of its operation one of the finest models of complete and utter corruption ever imagined, from drugged horses to non-existent winners and including odds which change during a race when the winners become apparent.

An 11,000-copy press run of the *Street Journal* centered around

(Continued on page 5)