

FIELD REPORT · HILARY
1901

Field Report №2

Upon a Manifesto Lately Received from California

*Annotated, in the small hours, by the Central Scrutinizer of Personal Vapors,
upon receipt of a printed Manifesto from the Palantyr Concern of San Francisco.*

SERIES	HR-1901-FR-002
CONCERN OBSERVED	The Palantyr, of San Francisco, in the Californian Republic
DOCUMENT EXAMINED	An Address upon the Civilising Stone – a printed Manifesto issued over the hand of the Concern's Chief Officer, late in the year 1900
MEANS OF RECEIPT	By the Foreign Correspondence Tube; second post; covering wrapper bearing the Concern's seal (a stylised eye, in eight-pointed star)
ANNEXED TO	Bulletin №1 of the Hilary Term, Anno Regni 1901
TONE	Confident; messianic; fond of Latin tags imperfectly construed

A NOTE ON METHOD

The Scrutinizer has not in this instance dictated from the privet hedge, the Concern being situated some five thousand miles from the nearest of His Majesty's hedges. The annotations are made instead at the desk, in the manner of an old-fashioned scholiast: extracts of the Manifesto in the typewriting machine's hand, the Scrutinizer's gloss in the margin in the customary italic. Where the Concern speaks of itself in superlatives, the Scrutinizer has resisted the temptation to interrupt, and has saved his observations for the gloss.

THE MANIFESTO, WITH ANNOTATIONS

The extracts below are reproduced as printed. The Scrutinizer's gloss follows each in italic, and is offered without rancour.

EXTRACT THE FIRST • FROM THE PREAMBLE

"The West has, for two and a half millennia, been the seat of a particular civilisation – one that has produced the cathedrals, the universities, the great books, and the orderly conduct of public affairs. It falls to us, in our generation, to defend this inheritance with the tools that our generation has been given."

GLOSS OF THE SCRUTINIZER

The cathedrals are admirable; the universities are admirable; the orderly conduct of public affairs has, in the West, been advanced as often by the post-box as by the Engine. The Scrutinizer notes that the Concern speaks of an inheritance at the very moment it proposes to administer that inheritance through proprietary apparatus. To inherit a thing is one matter; to charge admission to it is another. The toga is here in evidence. PETITIONS: 0; POSTURE: 1.

EXTRACT THE SECOND • ON THE ENGINES

"Our Engines do not impose; they merely reveal. They are neutral with respect to the data on which they operate. They surface what is already present in the registers of the state. To object to the Engines is to object to clarity itself."

GLOSS OF THE SCRUTINIZER

The claim of neutrality is the oldest of the Concern's claims, and the most thoroughly examined. An Engine instructed upon the Realm's past suspicions will produce, at speed, fresh suspicions of the same kind in the same quarters; the Engine is, in the strict sense, an averaging-machine. The Office, having watched several such Engines at work in the constabulary of an unnamed northern city, observed that clarity in the Concern's usage is a synonym for conviction at scale. To object to that is not to object to clarity. PETITIONS: 0; POSTURE: 2.

EXTRACT THE THIRD • ON THE CONCERN'S ROLE

"We are, in our way, the Cicero of the present moment – the public-spirited citizen who steps forward when the Republic is threatened. We

have made a peace with the necessary work of defence. Others may write essays; we have built the apparatus."

GLOSS OF THE SCRUTINIZER

The figure of Cicero is here pressed into a livery for which it does not fit. Cicero held no patents and traded in no Engines; he was a barrister of the late Republic who, in his last and best moments, declined the protection of a tyrant and was, accordingly, killed for it. The Concern, by contrast, declines very little, and is presently flourishing. The Scrutinizer suggests that the apter Latin model is not Cicero but Crassus, the wealthy supplier of the legions, of whom Plutarch is unsparing.

PETITIONS: 0; POSTURE: 3.

EXTRACT THE FOURTH • ON THE SURVEILLED

"We are not in the business of surveilling private citizens. We work with the lawful instruments of allied states. Where our apparatus is deployed, it is deployed against threats. The good citizen has nothing to fear."

GLOSS OF THE SCRUTINIZER

The Office has heard the formula the good citizen has nothing to fear rather often, in rather many languages, over rather many centuries, and notes that the speaker is, on every recorded occasion, the party doing the seeing rather than the party being seen. The Scrutinizer further observes that the apparatus is, in fact, deployed against entire populations — the encamped, the displaced, the immigrant, the demonstrator, the Subject who has merely walked past a place of demonstration — on the supposition that threat is a property the Engine can recognise. The Engine cannot recognise threat. It can only recognise resemblance to past threats, which is a different and more dangerous matter.

PETITIONS: MANY; POSTURE: 4.

EXTRACT THE FIFTH • ON THE COURSE OF HISTORY

"There is no going back. The apparatus is here. Those who decline to use it will be governed, in due course, by those who do not decline. We urge the unconvinced to make their peace with this fact."

GLOSS OF THE SCRUTINIZER

Of all the postures in the Manifesto, this is the one the Office considers least defensible and most instructive. The Concern, having spent the previous pages presenting its trade as a labour of high civilisation, here presents it as an irresistible necessity — the two postures being incompatible, since one cannot at once be a free statesman and a defeated subject of one's own machinery. The Office takes the view that the apparatus is neither civilisational nor inevitable; it is a product, manufactured by gentlemen still living, sold for known sums, and capable of being declined, regulated, broken up, and replaced. The Concern, in the Office's reading, has merely told upon itself. PETITIONS: 0;

POSTURE: 5.

TALLY OF POSTURES

The Scrutinizer's tally, conducted in the customary manner:

POSTURE	DESCRIPTION	COUNT
Civilisational	The Concern as inheritor of cathedrals, universities, books	III

Neutralist	The Engine as mere lens upon what is already there	II
Statesmanlike	The Chief Officer as Cicero, philosopher-king, modern statesman	III
Reassuring	"The good citizen has nothing to fear"	I
Fatalistic	"There is no going back"	I
TOTAL POSTURES	—	X

THE SCRUTINIZER'S CLOSING OBSERVATION

The Manifesto, considered as a whole, is not the document of a Realm under threat; it is the document of a Concern that has lately discovered the rhetorical convenience of *acting* as if a Realm were under threat, and is reluctant to surrender the convenience. The Office records the Manifesto in its archives and respectfully declines to be persuaded by it. The Office reminds the reader that the Concern's accounts are, by law in its own Republic, public; the trade is set down there in plain figures, and the figures speak with a clarity the Manifesto does not possess.

Annotated, in the small hours, under our hand,
THE HEAD ARCHIVIST OF THE MINISTRY
in his capacity as Central Scrutinizer of Personal Vapors
Hilary Term, the Sixth Day, Anno Regni 1901