

He stood up. No one answered him. He let his eyes move slowly from face to face and stop on Wesley Mouch.

"Do I get the Board, Wesley?" he asked casually.

"The selection of the specific personnel is only a technical detail," said Mouch pleasantly. "Suppose we discuss it later, you and I?"

Everybody in the room knew that this meant the answer Yes.

"Okay, pal," said Kinnan. He went back to the window, sat down on the sill and lighted a cigarette.

For some unadmitted reason, the others were looking at Dr. Ferris, as if seeking guidance.

"Don't be disturbed by oratory," said Dr. Ferris smoothly. "Mr. Kinnan is a fine speaker, but he has no sense of practical reality. He is unable to think dialectically."

There was another silence, then James Taggart spoke up suddenly. "I don't care. It doesn't matter. He'll have to hold things still. Everything will have to remain as it is. Just as it is. Nobody will be permitted to change anything. Except—" He turned sharply to Wesley Mouch. "Wesley, under Point Four, we'll have to close all research departments, experimental laboratories, scientific foundations and all the rest of the institutions of that kind. They'll have to be forbidden."

"Yes, that's right," said Mouch. "I hadn't thought of that. We'll have to stick in a couple of lines about that." He hunted around for a pencil and made a few scrawls on the margin of his paper.

"It will end wasteful competition," said James Taggart. "We'll stop scrambling to beat one another to the untried and the unknown. We won't have to worry about new inventions upsetting the market. We won't have to pour money down the drain in useless experiments just to keep up with overambitious competitors."

"Yes," said Orren Boyle. "Nobody should be allowed to waste money on the new until everybody has plenty of the old. Close all those damn research laboratories—and the sooner, the better."

"Yes," said Wesley Mouch. "We'll close them. All of them."

"The State Science Institute, too?" asked Fred Kinnan.

"Oh, no!" said Mouch. "That's different. That's government. Besides, it's a non-profit institution. And it will be sufficient to take care of all scientific progress."

"Quite sufficient," said Dr. Ferris.

"And what will become of all the engineers, professors and such, when you close all those laboratories?" asked Fred Kinnan. "What are they going to do for a living, with all the other jobs and businesses frozen?"

"Oh," said Wesley Mouch. He scratched his head. He turned to Mr. Weatherby. "Do we put them on relief, Clem?"

"No," said Mr. Weatherby. "What for? There's not enough of them to raise a squawk. Not enough to matter."

"I suppose," said Mouch, turning to Dr. Ferris, "that you'll be able to absorb some of them, Floyd?"

"Some," said Dr. Ferris slowly, as if relishing every syllable of his answer. "Those who prove co-operative."

"What about the rest?" said Fred Kinnan.

"They'll have to wait till the Unification Board finds some use for them," said Wesley Mouch.

"What will they eat while they're waiting?"

Mouch shrugged. "There's got to be some victims in times of national emergency. It can't be helped."

"We have the right to do it!" cried Taggart suddenly, in defiance to the stillness of the room. "We need it. We need it, don't we?" There was no answer. "We have the right to protect our livelihood!" Nobody opposed him, but he went on with a shrill, pleading, insistence. "We'll be safe for the first time in centuries. Everybody will know his place and job, and everybody else's place and job—and we won't be at the mercy of every stray crank with a new idea. Nobody will push us out of business or steal our markets or undersell us or make us obsolete. Nobody will come to us offering some damn new gadget and putting us on the spot to decide whether we'll lose our shirt if we buy it, or whether we'll lose our shirt if we don't but somebody else does! We won't have to decide. Nobody will be permitted to decide anything. It will be decided once and for all." His glance moved pleadingly from face to face. "There's been enough invented already—enough for everybody's comfort—why should they be allowed to go on inventing? Why should we permit them to blast the ground from under our feet every few steps? Why should we be kept on the go in eternal uncertainty? Just because of a few restless, ambitious adventurers? Should we sacrifice the contentment of the whole of mankind to the greed of a few non-conformists? We don't need them. We don't need them at all. I wish we'd get rid of that hero worship! Heroes? They've done nothing but harm, all through history. They've kept mankind running a wild race, with no breathing spell, no rest, no ease, no security. Running to catch up with them . . . always, without end . . . Just as we catch up, they're years ahead. . . . They leave us no chance . . . They've never left us a chance. . . ." His eyes were moving restlessly; he glanced at the window, but looked hastily away: he did not want to see the white obelisk in the distance. "We're through with them. We've won. This is our age. Our world. We're going to have security—for the first time in centuries—for the first time since the beginning of the industrial revolution!"

"Well, this, I guess," said Fred Kinnan, "is the anti-industrial revolution."

"That's a damn funny thing for you to say!" snapped Wesley Mouch. "We can't be permitted to say that to the public."

"Don't worry, brother. I won't say it to the public."

"It's a total fallacy," said Dr. Ferris. "It's a statement prompted by ignorance. Every expert has conceded long ago that a planned economy achieves the maximum of productive efficiency and that centralization leads to super-industrialization."

"Centralization destroys the blight of monopoly," said Boyle.

"How's that again?" drawled Kinnan.

Boyle did not catch the tone of mockery, and answered earnestly, "It destroys the blight of monopoly. It leads to the democratization of industry. It makes everything available to everybody. Now, for