

Book Review

Wilhelm Reich. *Listen, Little Man.* Penguin.
109pp. £0.50.

This book ranks with Perls 'In and Out of the Garbage Pail' as one of the very few books which are honest works of creative expression. Honest in the sense of being unguarded and unpretentious. It must be read.

The book was not written for publication but for the archives of the Orgone Institute in the summer of 1945. The book is often sad and often bitter. It is also biting and sarcastic and critical of the little man in all of us. This book is written from the heart of an independent man, a heart that has been hurt time and time again. Reich while writing the book knew full well what his fate could be at the hands of the little man. The fact that Reich died in prison, following his refusal to obey an injunction, shows that in himself the great man triumphed.

While Reich may be a controversial figure whose beliefs and claims are not to everyone's taste there can be little doubt his views in this book are sound and confirmed by history. He writes 'A great many great, courageous and lonely men have told you long since what you should do. Again and again you have twisted their teachings, torn them apart and destroyed them. Again and again you tackled them from the wrong end, made the small error instead of the great truth the guiding line of your life, in Christianity, in the teaching of socialism.' Also 'True enough you want to have 'geniuses' and you are willing to pay them homage. But you want a good genius, one with moderation and decorum, one without folly, in brief, a seemingly measured and adjusted genius, not an unruly untamed genius which breaks down all your barriers and limitations.'

It is not that Reich wishes to be respected as a genius. He is at all times anxious to avoid such acclaim. He writes with simple clarity on the folly of following. He is equally concerned at the dangers of leadership, the way in which the leader is compromised by his acclaim. He believes passionately that we are all great but for our lack of honesty, courage and our tendency to believe in abstract concepts rather than human life. He cares for the living energy that is most clearly seen in young children and hates the hypocritical conformist.

Reich uses the term 'emotional plague' to describe those aspects of man which inhibit his ability to love, work and seek knowledge. This plague is the result of early sexual inhibitions, the way in which parents force their children to be 'normal' and 'decent'.

While he is often pompous and dogmatic in his criticism of the little man, the essential truth remains clear.

Mark Matthews

