looked down at his own hands. Dr. Ferris was the only one who seemed to be at ease.

"In the name of the general welfare," read Wesley Mouch, "to protect the people's security, to achieve full equality and total stability, it is decreed for the duration of the national emergency that—

"Point One. All workers, wage earners and employees of any kind whatsoever shall henceforth be attached to their jobs and shall not leave nor be dismissed nor change employment, under penalty of a term in jail. The penalty shall be determined by the Unification Board, such Board to be appointed by the Bureau of Economic Planning and National Resources. All persons reaching the age of twenty-one shall report to the Unification Board, which shall assign them to where, in its opinion, their services will best serve the interests of the nation.

"Point Two. All industrial, commercial, manufacturing and business establishments of any nature whatsoever shall henceforth remain in operation, and the owners of such establishments shall not quit nor leave nor retire, nor close, sell or transfer their business, under penalty of the nationalization of their establishment and of any and all of their property.

"Point Three. All patents and copyrights, pertaining to any devices, inventions, formulas, processes and works of any nature whatsoever, shall be turned over to the nation as a patriotic emergency gift by means of Gift Certificates to be signed voluntarily by the owners of all such patents and copyrights. The Unification Board shall then license the use of such patents and copyrights to all applicants, equally and without discrimination, for the purpose of eliminating monopolistic practices, discarding obsolete products and making the best available to the whole nation. No trademarks, brand names or copyrighted titles shall be used. Every formerly patented product shall be known by a new name and sold by all manufacturers under the same name, such name to be selected by the Unification Board. All private trademarks and brand names are hereby abolished.

"Point Four. No new devices, inventions, products, or goods of any nature whatsoever, not now on the market, shall be produced, invented, manufactured or sold after the date of this directive. The Office of Patents and Copyrights is hereby suspended.

"Point Five. Every establishment, concern, corporation or person engaged in production of any nature whatsoever shall henceforth produce the same amount of goods per year as it, they or he produced during the Basic Year, no more and no less. The year to be known as the Basic or Yardstick Year is to be the year ending on the date of this directive. Over or under production shall be fined, such fines to be determined by the Unification Board.

"Point Six. Every person of any age, sex, class or income, shall henceforth spend the same amount of money on the purchase of goods per year as he or she spent during the Basic Year, no more and no less. Over or under purchasing shall be fined, such fines to be determined by the Unification Board.

"Point Seven. All wages, prices, salaries, dividends, profits, inter-

est rates and forms of income of any nature whatsoever, shall be frozen at their present figures, as of the date of this directive.

"Point Eight. All cases arising from and rules not specifically provided for in this directive, shall be settled and determined by the Unification Board, whose decisions will be final."

There was, even within the four men who had listened, a remnant of human dignity, which made them sit still and feel sick for the length of one minute.

James Taggart spoke first. His voice was low, but it had the trembling intensity of an involuntary scream: "Well, why not? Why should they have it, if we don't? Why should they stand above us? If we are to perish, let's make sure that we all perish together. Let's make sure that we leave them no chance to survive!"

"That's a damn funny thing to say about a very practical plan that will benefit everybody," said Orren Boyle shrilly, looking at Taggart in frightened astonishment.

Dr. Ferris chuckled.

Taggart's eyes seemed to focus, and he said, his voice louder, "Yes, of course. It's a very practical plan. It's necessary, practical and just. It will solve everybody's problems. It will give everybody a chance to feel safe. A chance to rest."

"It will give security to the people," said Eugene Lawson, his mouth slithering into a smile. "Security—that's what the people want. If they want it, why shouldn't they have it? Just because a handful of rich will object?"

"It's not the rich who'll object," said Dr. Ferris lazily. "The rich drool for security more than any other sort of animal—haven't you discovered that yet?"

"Well, who'll object?" snapped Lawson.

Dr. Ferris smiled pointedly, and did not answer.

Lawson looked away. "To hell with them! Why should we worry about *them?* We've got to run the world for the sake of the little people. It's intelligence that's caused all the troubles of humanity. Man's mind is the root of all evil. This is the day of the heart. It's the weak, the meek, the sick and the humble that must be the only objects of our concern." His lower lip was twisting in soft, lecherous motions. "Those who're big are here to serve those who aren't. If they refuse to do their moral duty, we've got to force them. There once was an Age of Reason, but we've progressed beyond it. This is the Age of Love."

"Shut up!" screamed James Taggart.

They all stared at him. "For Christ's sake, Jim, what's the matter?" said Orren Boyle, shaking.

"Nothing," said Taggart, "nothing . . . Wesley, keep *him* still, will you?"

Mouch said uncomfortably, "But I fail to see—"

"Just keep him still. We don't have to listen to him, do we?"

"Why, no, but—"

"Then let's go on."

"What is this?" demanded Lawson. "I resent it. I most emphatically—" But he saw no support in the faces around him and stopped,

his mouth sagging into an expression of pouting hatred.

"Let's go on," said Taggart feverishly.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Orren Boyle, trying not to know what was the matter with himself and why he felt frightened.

"Genius is a superstition, Jim," said Dr. Ferris slowly, with an odd kind of emphasis, as if knowing that he was naming the unnamed in all their minds. "There's no such thing as the intellect. A man's brain is a social product. A sum of influences that he's picked up from those around him. Nobody invents anything, he merely reflects what's floating in the social atmosphere. A genius is an intellectual scavanger and a greedy hoarder of the ideas which rightfully belong to society, from which he stole them. All thought is theft. If we do away with private fortunes, we'll have a fairer distribution of wealth. If we do away with genius, we'll have a fairer distribution of ideas."

"Are we here to talk business or are we here to kid one another?" asked Fred Kinnan.

They turned to him. He was a muscular man with large features, but his face had the astonishing property of finely drawn lines that raised the corners of his mouth into the permanent hint of a wise, sardonic grin. He sat on the arm of the chair, hands in pockets, looking at Mouch with the smiling glance of a hardened policeman at a shoplifter.

"All I've got to say is that you'd better staff that Unification Board with my men," he said. "Better make sure of it, brother—or I'll blast your Point One to hell."

"I intend, of course, to have a representative of labor on that Board," said Mouch dryly, "as well as a representative of industry, of the professions and of every cross-section of—"

"No cross-sections," said Fred Kinnan evenly. "Just representatives of labor. Period."

"What the hell!" yelled Orren Boyle. "That's stacking the cards, isn't it?"

"Sure," said Fred Kinnan.

"But that will give *you* a stranglehold on every business in the country!"

"What do you think I'm after?"

"That's unfair!" yelled Boyle. "I won't stand for it! You have no right! You—"

"Right?" said Kinnan innocently. "Are we talking about rights?"

"But, I mean, after all, there are certain fundamental property rights which—"

"Listen, pal, you want Point Three, don't you?"

"Well, I—"

"Then you'd better keep your trap shut about property rights from now on. Keep it shut tight."

"Mr. Kinnan," said Dr. Ferris, "you must not make the old-fashioned mistake of drawing wide generalizations. Our policy has to be flexible. There are no absolute principles which—"

"Save it for Jim Taggart, Doc," said Fred Kinnan. "I know what I'm talking about. That's because I never went to college."

"I object," said Boyle, "to your dictatorial method of—"

Kinnan turned his back on him and said, "Listen, Wesley, my boys won't like Point One. If I get to run things, I'll make them swallow it. If not, not. Just make up your mind."

"Well—" said Mouch, and stopped.

"For Christ's sake, Wesley, what about us?" yelled Taggart.

"You'll come to me," said Kinnan, "when you'll need a deal to fix the Board. But I'll run that Board. Me and Wesley."

"Do you think the country will stand for it?" yelled Taggart.

"Stop kidding yourself," said Kinnan. "The country? If there aren't any principles any more—and I guess the doc is right, because there sure aren't—if there aren't any rules to this game and it's only a question of who robs whom—then I've got more votes than the bunch of you, there are more workers than employers, and don't you forget it, boys!"

"That's a funny attitude to take," said Taggart haughtily, "about a measure which, after all, is not designed for the selfish benefit of workers or employers, but for the general welfare of the public."

"Okay," said Kinnan amiably, "let's talk your lingo. Who is the public? If you go by quality—then it ain't you, Jim, and it ain't Orrie Boyle. If you go by quantity—then it sure is *me,* because quantity is what I've got behind me." His smile disappeared, and with a sudden, bitter look of weariness he added, "Only I'm not going to say that I'm working for the welfare of my public, because I know I'm not. I know that I'm delivering the poor bastards into slavery, and that's all there is to it. And they know it, too. But they know that I'll have to throw them a crumb once in a while, if I want to keep my racket, while with the rest of you they wouldn't have a chance in hell. So that's why, if they've got to be under a whip, they'd rather *I* held it, not you—you drooling, tear-jerking, mealy-mouthed bastards of the public welfare! Do you think that outside of your college-bred pansies there's one village idiot whom you're fooling? I'm a racketeer—but I know it and my boys know it, and they know that I'll pay off. Not out of the kindness of my heart, either, and not a cent more than I can get away with, but at least they can count on that much. Sure, it makes me sick sometimes, it makes me sick right now, but it's not me who's built this kind of world—*you* did—so I'm playing the game as you've set it up and I'm going to play it for as long as it lasts—which isn't going to be long for any of us!"

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.

[illegible] be disturbed by oratory," said Dr. Ferris smoothly. "[illegible] is a fine speaker, but he has no sense of practical reality. He [illegible] 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 down. 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 all gambling 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 instance, at a time like this, when there's such a desperate shortage of iron ore, is there any sense in my wasting money, labor and national resources on making old-fashioned steel, when there exists a much better metal that I could be making? A metal that everybody wants, but nobody can get. Now is that good economics or sound social efficiency or democratic justice? Why shouldn't I be allowed to manufacture that metal and why shouldn't the people get it when they need it? Just because of the private monopoly of one selfish individual? Should we sacrifice our rights to his personal interests?"

"Skip it, brother," said Fred Kinnan. "I've read it all in the same newspapers you did."

"I don't like your attitude," said Boyle, in a sudden tone of righteousness, with a look which, in a barroom, would have signified a prelude to a fist fight. He sat up straight, buttressed by the columns of paragraphs on yellow-tinged paper, which he was seeing in his mind:

"At a time of crucial public need, are we to waste social effort on the manufacture of obsolete products? Are we to let the many remain in want while the few withhold from us the better products and methods available? Are we to be stopped by the superstition of patent rights?"

"Is it not obvious that private industry is unable to cope with the present economic crisis? How long, for instance, are we going to put up with the disgraceful shortage of Rearden Metal? There is a crying public demand for it, which Rearden has failed to supply."

"When are we going to put an end to economic injustice and special privileges? Why should Rearden be the only one permitted to manufacture Rearden Metal?"

"I don't like your attitude," said Orren Boyle. "So long as we respect the rights of the workers, we'll want you to respect the rights of the industrialists."

"Which rights of which industrialists?" drawled Kinnan.

"I'm inclined to think," said Dr. Ferris hastily, "that Point Two, perhaps, is the most essential one of all at present. We must put an end to that peculiar business of industrialists retiring and vanishing. We must stop them. It's playing havoc with our entire economy."

"Why are they doing it?" asked Taggart nervously. "Where are they all going?"

"Nobody knows," said Dr. Ferris. "We've been unable to find any information or explanation. But it must be stopped. In times of crisis, economic service to the nation is just as much of a duty as military service. Anyone who abandons it should be regarded as a deserter. I have recommended that we introduce the death penalty for those men, but Wesley wouldn't agree to it."

"Take it easy, boy," said Fred Kinnan in an odd, slow voice. He sat suddenly and perfectly still, his arms crossed, looking at Ferris in a manner that made it suddenly real to the room that Ferris had proposed murder. "Don't let me hear you talk about any death penalties in industry."

Dr. Ferris shrugged.

"We don't have to go to extremes," said Mouch hastily. "We don't want to frighten people. We want to have them on our side. Our top problem is, will they . . . will they accept it at all?"

"They will," said Dr. Ferris.

"I'm a little worried," said Eugene Lawson, "about Points Three and Four. Taking over the patents is fine. Nobody's going to defend industrialists. But I'm worried about taking over the copyrights. That's going to antagonize the intellectuals. It's dangerous. It's a

spiritual issue. Doesn't Point Four mean that no new books are to be written or published from now on?"

"Yes," said Mouch, "it does. But we can't make an exception for the book-publishing business. It's an industry like any other. When we say 'no new products,' it's got to mean 'no new products.'"

"But this is a matter of the spirit," said Lawson; his voice had a tone, not of rational respect, but of superstitious awe.

"We're not interfering with anybody's spirit. But when you print a book on paper, it becomes a material commodity—and if we grant an exception to one commodity, we won't be able to hold the others in line and we won't be able to make anything stick."

"Yes, that's true. But—"

"Don't be a chump, Gene," said Dr. Ferris. "You don't want some recalcitrant hacks to come out with treatises that will wreck our entire program, do you? If you breathe the word 'censorship' now, they'll all scream bloody murder. They're not ready for it—as yet. But if you leave the spirit alone and make it a simple material issue—not a matter of ideas, but just a matter of paper, ink and printing presses—you accomplish your purpose much more smoothly. You'll make sure that nothing dangerous gets printed or heard—and nobody is going to fight over a material issue."

"Yes, but . . . but I don't think the writers will like it."

"Are you sure?" asked Wesley Mouch, with a glance that was almost a smile. "Don't forget that under Point Five, the publishers will have to publish as many books as they did in the Basic Year. Since there will be no new ones, they will have to reprint—and the public will have to buy—some of the old ones. There are many very worthy books that have never had a fair chance."

"Oh," said Lawson; he remembered that he had seen Mouch lunching with Balph Eubank two weeks ago. Then he shook his head and frowned. "Still, I'm worried. The intellectuals are our friends. We don't want to lose them. They can make an awful lot of trouble."

"They won't," said Fred Kinnan. "Your kind of intellectuals are the first to scream when it's safe—and the first to shut their traps at the first sign of danger. They spend years spitting at the man who feeds them—and they lick the hand of the man who slaps their drooling faces. Didn't they deliver every country of Europe, one after another, to committees of goons, just like this one here? Didn't they scream their heads off to shut out every burglar alarm and to break every padlock open for the goons? Have you heard a peep out of them since? Didn't they scream that they were the friends of labor? Do you hear them raising their voices about the chain gangs, the slave camps, the fourteen-hour workday and the mortality from scurvy in the People's States of Europe? No, but you do hear them telling the whip-beaten wretches that starvation is prosperity, that slavery is freedom, that torture chambers are brother-love and that if the wretches don't understand it, then it's their own fault that they suffer, and it's the mangled corpses in the jail cellars who're to blame for all their troubles, not the benevolent leaders! Intellectuals? You might have to worry about any other breed of men, but not

about the modern intellectuals: they'll swallow anything. I don't feel so safe about the lousiest wharf rat in the longshoremen's union: he's liable to remember suddenly that he is a man—and then I won't be able to keep him in line. But the intellectuals? That's the one thing they've forgotten long ago. I guess it's the one thing that all their education was aimed to make them forget. Do anything you please to the intellectuals. They'll take it."

"For once," said Dr. Ferris, "I agree with Mr. Kinnan. I agree with his facts, if not with his feelings. You don't have to worry about the intellectuals, Wesley. Just put a few of them on the government payroll and send them out to preach precisely the sort of thing Mr. Kinnan mentioned: that the blame rests on the victims. Give them moderately comfortable salaries and extremely loud titles—and they'll forget their copyrights and do a better job for you than whole squads of enforcement officers."

"Yes," said Mouch. "I know."

"The danger that I'm worried about will come from a different quarter," said Dr. Ferris thoughtfully. "You might run into quite a bit of trouble on that 'voluntary Gift Certificate' business, Wesley."

"I know," said Mouch glumly. "That's the point I wanted Thompson to help us out on. But I guess he can't. We don't actually have the legal power to seize the patents. Oh, there's plenty of clauses in dozens of laws that can be stretched to cover it—almost, but not quite. Any tycoon who'd want to make a test case would have a very good chance to beat us. And we have to preserve a semblance of legality—or the populace won't take it."

"Precisely," said Dr. Ferris. "It's extremely important to get those patents turned over to us *voluntarily*. Even if we had a law permitting outright nationalization, it would be much better to get them as a gift. We want to leave the people the illusion that they're still preserving their private property rights. And most of them will play along. They'll sign the Gift Certificates. Just raise a lot of noise about its being a patriotic duty and that anyone who refuses is a prince of greed, and they'll sign. But—" He stopped.

"I know," said Mouch; he was growing visibly more nervous. "There will be, I think, a few old-fashioned bastards here and there who'll refuse to sign—but they won't be prominent enough to make a noise, nobody will hear about it, their own communities and friends will turn against them for their being selfish, so it won't give us any trouble. We'll just take the patents over, anyway—and those guys won't have the nerve or the money to start a test case. But—" He stopped.

James Taggart leaned back in his chair, watching them; he was beginning to enjoy the conversation.

"Yes," said Dr. Ferris, "I'm thinking of it, too. I'm thinking of a certain tycoon who is in a position to blast us to pieces. Whether we'll recover the pieces or not, is hard to tell. God knows what is liable to happen at a hysterical time like the present and in a situation as delicate as this. Anything can throw everything off balance. Blow up the whole works. And if there's anyone who wants to do it, he does. He does and can. He knows the real issue, he knows the