

Two and a Half Per Cent

So that's the raise for this year,
With apologies for its relationship
To the inflation rate.

Oh, well, what the hell,
It's better than some poor devil,
Still an assistant professor,
Getting two and a half per cent
Of a whole lot less,
Or maybe two, and still
With kids to feed.
How can that be that fair?

But, then, I am surely worth more too.
These promises of upward mobility
Are obviously insufficient, and not
The key, I'd say, to understanding
Keynesian economics and the expanding
Of stratified society and concern for
Registering increases in the GNP,
Plus the fact that forty-seven people
Were stabbed or shot in NYC
While I was there for five days
At the meetings of the American Psychological Association,
Participated in by ten thousand or so souls
Spending at least \$500 each around the Waldorf Astoria
And afraid to walk outside at night.

Well, again, why not take the big risks
For the big promises? I'd do it
If I were poor in that clanless
Stratified horror of a place.

No one cares about being on the bottom
If he knows it's temporary.
But few can tolerate it
If they think it's permanent.
And, worse, more so for them than for the rest.

I'd be an outlaw there, sure as hell,
Lacking my two and a half per cent.

But, then, again, I am surely worth more,
So why not get on something like Red Fred
And dash into the local repositories one by one,
And snatch away their funds?

Three local kids did it, without masks,
Just walked into the Bridgewater Bank
And took it all and drove off
Like the modern James boys.

But they had no hideout, and, of course,
Almost every soul in there knew
Each of them quite well, and so
They were simply arrested forthwith.

But on Red Fred?
At least I would be doing it with style.
Dash, maybe.
Think of the headlines!

Cowboy professor on tall sorrel gelding
Holds up local bank
Escapes with thousands
Says society owes it to him
Because he is a slapdash genius

Perfectly willing all his life
To give out free advice
To anyone who asked
And even some who didn't.

If things didn't go right, I suppose,
The headlines might be saying: Aging
Professor falls on his butt . . .

But I'll not court such thoughts,
At least not for a few decades or so.

Maybe not ever.