

# In brief

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## WHAT DOES FREEDOM MEAN TO YOU?

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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## WHAT DOES FREEDOM MEAN TO YOU?



WHAT DO WE actually mean by freedom?

It is certainly true that in comparison with other peoples of the world—and at this time—the American citizen has a greater degree of freedom than anyone else. But remember those qualifications—*in comparison with other peoples and at this time*. Are they the true measurements of freedom?

In the early months of the year 1776, Thomas Jefferson was commissioned to frame a statement setting forth the reasons held by his fellow-citizens as to why the American colonies believed they should secede from the government of Great Britain and set up an independent nation. He left Monticello and drove to Philadelphia. After several weeks of work, he presented a document to the Continental Congress assembled in Independence Hall, and on July 4th of that year it was adopted.

The first sentences of the second paragraph of that document, which was called the *Declaration of Independence*, contain this idea of human freedom:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

Accepting these words as a basis for freedom, I think it is fair to say that a great majority of the people of the world today are not free; that there has been an alarming decrease of freedom in the countries of the Western world; and that there is a constantly decreasing degree of freedom in America.

#### STATE OF THE NATION

“**BUT,**” you reply, “that cannot be true about America. It is a land of universal education, high earning capacity, great production, international commerce, religious experience, and high prestige among civilized peoples. Such a nation does not lose its freedom.”

But wait a minute. That portrayal of America is also an exact description of Germany before 1914. That was only 20 years before Hitler came to power, and the change did not occur in the one election of 1933 when he was voted into office. It

was a slow but constant loss of freedom through the encroachment of the power of collectivism and of the state during two generations—while Germany outwardly was free and productive. Actually, it was not Hitler who began to corrode the freedom of the German people. It was Bismarck who, as Chancellor of Germany after 1862, conceived the plan for the transformation of the freedom of the people into the collectivism of a state-controlled economy. Hitler was simply the heir of Bismarck, and Hitler's brand of national socialism—called *fascism*—was the economic program of Bismarck reaching its inevitable conclusion.

If this loss of freedom and liberty could happen in Germany, with its amazing development of a civilization of religion, philosophy, music, art, literature, science, and industrial productivity, it can happen in any nation on the face of the earth. It can happen here.

#### UNCONSCIOUS ASSENT

**T**HAT IS WHY I asked you the question: "Would you like to be free?" All of us would give the same answer. But I discovered that during a time when I was answering in the affirmative, I was also unconsciously giving my assent to proposals and programs which, when brought to fruition, would lead to the destruction of the freedom of

myself and of others. Frankly, I think many of us may be in that same situation.

That is why I would like to ask you to submit yourself to an examination before you answer. I want you to study the measures proposed by *The Communist Manifesto* and by the British Socialist Labor party as the principles for the collectivization of society. These are announcements made in affirmation by both of these groups, and therefore it cannot be said that accusations are being made against them. In fact, I am not interested at all in accusations. Collectivists have the same right to announce their principles as I have, but I do want to ask you to study these proposals so that you can actually consider whether you are a disciple of collectivism or a disciple of freedom.

#### COMMUNIST IDEAS

THESE are the measures advocated by Karl Marx, in *The Communist Manifesto*,\* for the development of communism, socialism, or collectivism (not just for the attainment of the good life):

- “1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.

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\*Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*. (New York Labor News Co., 1948), pp. 33-34.

- “2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
- “3. Abolition of all right of inheritance.
- “4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
- “5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.
- “6. Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.
- “7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
- “8. Equal liability of all to labor. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
- “9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries: gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equitable distribution of the population over the country.
- “10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children’s factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production.”

A study of these proposals reveals that,

out of the ten, there are only three which are not already in operation, in some measure, in the economic and social life of America today. These are 1, 4, and 8. (Our Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930's bordered closely on number 8, and the vast amount of land now owned by the government is indicative of number 1.) To a considerable degree, and in some instances completely, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10 are now accepted as part of the American way of life. If any question should be raised concerning number 3, it should be remembered that an almost confiscatory inheritance tax is now in use. All of this means that more than 70 per cent of Marx's proposals have been accepted—in varying degrees—by the American people. Did you recognize that, when, at the beginning of our discussion, you said you were free from socialist control?

#### SOCIALIST IDEAS

THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY published, in August, 1950, a pamphlet entitled *Labour and the New Society: A Statement of the Policy and Principles of British Democratic Socialism*. The following statements are taken from that publication:

1. "Public ownership is a means of controlling the basic industries and services on which the economic life and welfare

- of the community depend. Control cannot be left safely in the hands of groups of private owners not answerable to the community.”
2. “Municipal enterprise has developed in public services such as education and housing, markets and parks; there will be increasing scope for it in the future.”
  3. “Publicly owned factories and equipment can be leased to private manufacturers.”
  4. “Control over investment will be used to direct the development of industry.”
  5. “Limitations on dividends should continue. . . .”
  6. “Monopolies will be transferred to public ownership if they cannot be dealt with in any other way.”
  7. “Public enterprises will be set up to compete fairly and squarely with private firms. . . .”
  8. “Scientific and technical aid will be given to industry.”
  9. “Price control will be maintained wherever it is necessary to protect the consumer.”
  10. “The policy of giving food subsidies will be continued. . . .”
  11. “Our general purpose is to assure guaranteed markets and prices for the main products of our farms.”
  12. “We do not expect all the countries with which we co-operate to be social-

ist. All we ask is that they should have sufficient mastery over their own economic systems to fulfil their obligations in international planning.”

In regard to these statements of the British Labor party (and remember that it gladly announces that its program is socialism), it is important to note that all of the 12 proposals are already, in some measure, part of the American way of life today. But there are other programs of British socialism which are not mentioned here, such as state development of hydroelectric power, state control of international finance, and the National Health Service (socialized medicine)—all of which are partly in effect here and have been advocated for adoption by the Administrations of the past 20 years. And Earl Browder, former leader of the Communist party in America, has told us:\*

“State capitalism, in substance if not in formal aspects, has progressed farther in America than in Great Britain under the Labor Government, despite its nationalization of certain industries, which is a formal stage not yet reached in America; the actual, substantial concentration of the guiding reins of national economy in governmental hands is probably on a higher level in the U.S.A.”

When you instinctively said at the be-

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\*Earl Browder, from his 1950 pamphlet, *Keynes, Foster and Marx; State Capitalism and Progress*.

ginning that you were free, did you know that the major tenets of British socialism were already the basis for the planning and directing of your life?

#### SINCERE PERSONS

WE WHO ARE THINKING together now are, I assume, men and women who really want society to be composed of free, responsible individuals. Why was I then—why are you now—one of those who has so lost faith in those opening words of the *Declaration of Independence* that we have come to believe that government is instituted not merely to insure and protect our inalienable right to be free, but also to be the provider of all our needs and desires? Why have we been led to believe that we can find security in the state—which has no power nor resource which we do not grant it—if we cannot find security through ourselves? Why do we believe that anything can be achieved by passing our personal responsibilities on to a secular government so that it can have the power to regulate and control our attitudes, our responsibilities, and our purses? If we and our associates do not have intelligence and integrity enough to conduct a business, develop electric power, construct a great steel plant, or manage our finances (all of which free men have done), then who can be found in a government bureau who is

wiser or better than we? If the Pennsylvania Railroad can build a tunnel for a railroad under the Hudson River and can build the Hell Gate Bridge across the East River, why cannot the same kind of private enterprise build the Niagara River hydroelectric development, or the Golden Gate Bridge?

A dire confusion has beset the minds of men. We have become confused concerning the distinctions between the definitions of the voluntary society, the government, and the state.

#### VOLUNTARY SOCIETY

**T**HE *voluntary society* is composed of those persons who assume the responsibility for a free market in ideas, money, and goods. The responsibility for the nourishment and preservation of the body, mind, and spirit, and the exercise of their potentialities, are maintained by the person—on the condition that he is able to bargain and to trade in a free market with free associates, unhampered by any third party. Parents maintain the personal responsibility for children—how they will nurture their bodies, minds, and personalities—as well as for elderly dependents; each person arranges for personal security; the care of the indigent, the helpless, and the needy rests upon the voluntary association of those

who respond to religious and social vocation. In this society of the free, the only outcast is the person who—through theft, murder, or the denial of civil rights—violates the inherent right of another to be a person.

#### GOVERNMENT

**I**N A FREE SOCIETY, *government* is simply that form of communal activity which is instituted to protect the inherent rights of man to life, liberty, property, and expression. In the moral sense, these rights can never be taken away. A man can never be made a slave; he can only let himself become a slave. But his freedom to *exercise* these rights can be denied him by coercion of his body, mind, or spirit. Government is instituted to protect him against such coercion, to provide the machinery for freedom of movement without violence, and for the interpretation and enforcement of equal justice under law.

#### THE STATE

**W**HEN GOVERNMENT exceeds these functions of insuring the inherent right of a man to exist as a free person, it becomes the *state*—inevitably the enemy rather than the servant of man and society. To his book on the study of the nature of the

state, Albert Jay Nock gave the title, *Our Enemy, The State*. This is an appropriate title because an enemy is one who takes over by force functions and possessions which belong to us, in order to enhance his own power and advantage. Mr. Nock quotes Herbert Spencer as saying:

“Ever since society has existed, disappointment has been preaching, ‘Put not your trust in legislation’; and yet the trust in legislation seems hardly diminished.”

This is an inevitable development, as all students of centralized power have known. Government is a necessary, valid, and representative function of certain communal services under law. But when it is allowed to absorb into itself the productive functions belonging to the citizenry, it then turns into the *state*—a monolithic monopoly, directing the entire life of the community by playing group interests against each other and through the bribery of the electorate with gratuities, subsidies, and area advantage. The next move of the state is to use every contingency or crisis in life—always formerly met by the self-reliance of the people—as a pretext for the further accumulation of power in its monopoly. This is the cause of three tragedies—the tyranny of the *state*, the death of honest and valid government, and the end of private charity.

## LOOK BEHIND THE LABEL

IT is the fashion today to call such states "liberal," "progressive," and "forward-looking." Actually, they are ancient and reactionary historical processes, led, in turn, by radicals of various groups in society.

Prince Otto von Bismarck was a member of the German nobility, the proudest and most class-conscious in Europe, and he devised the welfare state for Germany for the perpetuation of the monarchist groups, as had the emperors in Rome after 250 A.D. Bismarck believed that the German Emperor and the Empire would be safer if the people were kept mute and satisfied by the provisions of welfare and security granted to them by the state (at their own expense). Adolph Hitler, another radical from another class, who later wanted the power of the state in the hands of his Nazi party, found the system and laws perfectly suited to his ends.

In the nations of today which have developed the different forms of the welfare state, the initiative has been taken by the so-called proletarian groups, in order that their parties might secure and maintain their power in the state; but the course has been the same as that used by the Bismarckian monarchists in their time. No matter what the social and political con-

siderations may be, those who believe in centralized political power and in collectivist economics as the true and rightful nature of the state have the same aims. They believe that the state should be the director, planner, and subsidizer of the life and work of the people. They are well aware that the caretaker state is the ideal instrument for the perpetuation of power. This is the historical fact which all devotees of liberty can ignore only at their peril.

#### THE REAL ALTERNATIVE

**I**T IS FALSE to make an alternative of bread or freedom. If employers and employees, managers and laborers, entrepreneurs and scholars are unable to use the government for the acquisition of personal resources or power and are unable to live off the government at the expense of others, all men will be able to secure their own bread. And, what is more important, they will be able to secure and eat it in freedom.

One would readily admit that individuals and groups have used the government to advance their own personal interests and accumulation of wealth. That is a violation of freedom and of the function of government. It is also true that groups have used the government to secure sustenance, welfare, and subsidies. That is also a violation of freedom and of the function of govern-

ment. Both of these efforts to use such power for the increase of fortunes or the maintenance of life are perversions of the meaning of government. They can lead only to the growth of the omnipotent state and its absolute rule and power over its citizens.

#### TWO CASES

**I**F YOU feel this is farfetched—that it does not apply to conditions in the democratic countries which do not yet require absolute obedience of those to whom care is given—let me cite two examples that were reported in the press in July, 1952.\*

The first report is from India. It says that the state of Uttar Pradesh, with a population of 62 million people, is the first to implement the agrarian reforms of Nehru. In this state, the land is being redistributed and is being taken from the present landowners. From now on, no one may own more than 30 acres. The state has appropriated \$125 million to provide new occupations for the former owners of the land—most of whom owned so little land that they paid less than \$5 a year in taxes. The state will also bring under cultivation all cultivable land now idle. This will be done by the distribution of land

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\*The reports from which these paragraphs were taken are to be found in the *New York Times*—the one on India in the issue of July 2, page 1; the one on Norway in the issue of July 3, page 6.

to peasants, or by state-operated collective farming.

The second report is from Norway. It says that the government has proposed a "price and rationalization" bill which would establish government agencies to keep a watchful eye on business and industry. Its fundamental purpose would be to see that prices are "reasonable," and the agency would have authority to define that term. Dividends would be limited to 5 per cent. Factories that, in the mind of the government, were being uneconomically operated could be shut or merged with others.

Both of these decisions—by states as far apart and as unlike as India and Norway—proclaim the trend toward the belief that the state has the obligation to assume responsibility for the care of its citizens, to protect them from the vicissitudes of life and, by the same token, has the right to control their lives.

#### FREEDOM IS CHOICE

**W**ITHOUT the possibility of failure, there is no meaning to achievement; without the possibility of disease, there is no meaning to health; without the possibility of sin, there is no meaning to goodness; without the possibility of hell, there is no meaning to heaven. Freedom means a choice be-

tween those alternatives and a resort to the moral and natural order of the universe for a judgment upon the choice. If a parent continues forever to make choices for a child, the child will never be mature and will never be free. If the state is given power and responsibility to make choices for men, and thereby to save them from any result of making personal choices, the people never attain political freedom and moral responsibility. They are perennial serfs and suppliants.

One can measure his loss of freedom by the degree to which the state has been given, or has assumed, those prerogatives of human responsibility by which man maintains his status as a person. It can be measured by the degree to which you allow the government to control *your attitudes* toward other persons through political devices such as the F.E.P.C. and Point Four programs; to control *your mind* through devices such as government education and censorship; to control *your spiritual obligations of voluntary Christian benevolences* through devices such as governmental disbursement of your money to the indigent and unfortunate people at home and abroad; to control *your business* through governmental devices such as price and wage controls, subsidies, compulsory membership in unions in order to get a job, compulsory limitation of ex-

change by tariffs and quotas, confiscation of the fruits of one's labor through excesses in taxation, and a host of other restrictions on a once-free people in a once-free market.

#### OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

**T**HE STATE should possess no authority to determine whether my personal attitude toward another should be brotherly or unbrotherly, for if it can inculcate one of those attitudes it can inculcate the other. If the state should rightly have the power to control attitudes, then it must be conceded that Hitler used authentic power in his decrees as to how Jews should be treated in the Third Reich.

The same thesis is true regarding the power of the state to use a person's money for "benevolences" to certain peoples or nations. That act precludes any personal determination, which is the heart and soul of benevolence. I can only be benevolent and charitable when I have decided that other persons or peoples are deserving of my help, and on that basis I make a conscious response to that need. A clergyman may suggest that his parishioners should give to a certain cause, but he is not allowed to take money out of the pocket-books of his parishioners, no matter how righteous the clergyman may believe the

cause to be. If a man of good will is not allowed to do that because it would be considered coercion and theft, it is surely also theft if the secular and impersonal majority vote of the state—practically always accomplished by a minority manipulation of the majority—should do so. Such an act by the state is an abrogation of the whole sense and power of Christian vocation—a denial of the personal response to the call of Christ.

DO UNTO OTHERS . . . .

**F**RANKLY, I do not think that you want me personally to coerce you in any of these ways. I do not know any of my friends who would allow me to do any of these things to any one of them. Why, then, would they and you want to do them to me—or to anyone else—through the agency of government?

When the state is given the power to legislate what my attitude toward others, as well as my benevolences and business, should be, it is controlling my life and depleting my freedom. The accumulation of these powers by the state is slowly, but constantly, increasing in every country in the world. If it continues at the present rate, it will engulf the world before the close of the life of the present generation of our youth.

What kind of people have we Americans become that we have felt such a lure in such a program?

#### STUDENTS OF LIBERTY

THERE IS only one thing the matter with us. We have ceased to believe in liberty. What is there that should distinguish Americans? Certainly they are no better nor wiser nor more able than the German people. With all their endowment, those people succumbed to the tyranny of collectivism and of the state because they did not understand the principles of liberty. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." Those words, together with the concepts of the *Declaration of Independence* and the Biblical admonition to have faith in God, should be the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts. And, as is said in Deuteronomy: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

The basis for the study of liberty is the understanding that our freedom is a birth-right for which God holds us responsible, and therefore we cannot sell, nor give away, that responsibility for any coin of any nature to any earthly power. Free-

dom must mean that man has a right to life and liberty of action which cannot be denied by any condition of race, color, sex, or previous condition of servitude. Under God, the person stands as a free man or woman, unconquerable in the possibility of the human spirit. With that freedom, he will assume voluntary association with those who wish freely to associate for the development of personal attitudes of ethics, benevolence, and human relationships, without coercion of any government or state. There is the society of the free mind, the free heart, the free soul.

Responsibility and freedom are the reverse sides of the same coin. Neither can exist independently of the other.

Would you like to be free? Then you must assume the responsibility for helping to form such a way of life in the world. The first step is that you yourself become a student of liberty.

*“If, to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterwards defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair. The event is in the hand of God.”*

Attributed to George Washington  
during the Constitutional Convention

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