

The Personal
Practice of
Freedom

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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THE PERSONAL PRACTICE OF FREEDOM



GRADUALLY this nation of ours is making up its mind on the greatest question it has faced since the decision was made which brought it into being. It is a question from which there is no escape. It is this: Shall we modern Americans accept the pagan principle of the all-powerful state and insignificant citizen in place of the Christian concept on which this nation was founded and by which it has grown — the concept that the single function and purpose of government is to secure and protect the inalienable God-given rights and sovereignty of each individual man as the temporary, physical, personal embodiment of an immortal soul?

Call it by any name we please, put on it any tag we can find—that is the fundamental issue before us. We say we are fighting communism, and certainly that is right; but Karl Marx, the daddy of communism, says: “The democratic concept of man is false because it is Christian. Democracy holds that each man is a sovereign being. This is the illusion and dream of Christianity.”

Adolf Hitler in his bid for the socialization of Germany said: "To the Christian doctrine of infinite significance of the individual human soul I oppose with icy clarity the saving doctrine of the nothingness and insignificance of the human being."

On the home front we call it Fabianism or the welfare state or the planned economy, but the war minister in the recent socialist government of Great Britain joins us in the assurance that the difference is one of degree and not of principle.

Those who laid the foundations of this nation thought of it in terms of a new type of representative government based upon principles of individual dignity, independence, and responsibility which were set forth by Abraham, codified in the Ten Commandments by Moses, taught and amplified by Christ. From the time of the Mayflower Compact in 1620, through the Declaration of Independence, the federal Constitution, and the adoption of our state constitutions, every key document which went into the building of this country acknowledged that same philosophy and pledged fidelity to it. Throughout our history the individual has been sovereign, and throughout our history the state has been servant.

Outward Signs of Progress

IN MATERIAL THINGS we have done well under such a banner. Here we are — six per cent of the world's population on seven per cent of its land, a heterogeneous hodge-podge of races and blood lines, with no more natural resources than some other areas of the globe — creating more new industrial wealth than all the other 94 per cent together. One hundred and fifty million of us own nearly six times as many automobiles as the other two billion people on earth combined. We produce and consume more steel than all the rest together, and own similarly incredible proportions of bathtubs and telephones and most of the other manifestations of luxurious living.

We could go on and on with such a recitation of our tremendous material advantages. Our accomplishments are indeed fabulous. And yet we know that men will not risk "their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor" for bathtubs and automobiles. America had no such advantages in 1776, and when the day comes that our nation must defend itself with an army made up of men whose only motive in fighting is the defense of their bank accounts, it will surely disap-

pear from the earth in overwhelming defeat.

We know that the spirit which makes and is America — the spirit which has inspired and made possible our amazing achievements — has been able to flourish only because of a system of government deliberately established to protect the right of the individual citizen to make his own decisions, to accept the responsibility for them and the consequences of them, and to establish his own personal pattern of life within the limits of trespass upon the rights of his neighbor.

The question we face and which we cannot escape is whether or not we are going to abandon that principle of national life. Are we going to turn over to the state the job of making our decisions for us? Are we going to forsake political principles and economic practices which brought 40 million immigrants to our shores in the greatest voluntary migration in history, and adopt instead the political ideas of the countries they left?

Are we, above all, going to abandon here at home the liberty and freedom which constitutes the greatest single difference between us and those we are preparing to fight abroad? There are good reasons to think that we are — good reasons which cannot be blamed on Korea.

Lost Liberty

WE ALREADY have come a long way. We have come a long way in the creation of a central state so gigantic and unmanageable that neither its budget nor the complexity of its bureaus is within the understanding of men we elect to handle them in our behalf.

Even before Korea, the entire credit structure of the United States rested upon administrative decisions, and more than half of all private homes were being built under federal guarantee.

Over 20 per cent of all electric power was being generated by government, and plans were being pushed which would more than double this amount.

Approximately 15 million individuals, who with their families and dependents represented nearly a third of the total population, were receiving government checks of one kind or another.

The level of farm commodity prices was determined or influenced by federal action — the exports of industry were largely financed by federal appropriations — all scarce imported metals were being stockpiled by government — all silver production was being bought by government — and government

was steadily increasing its holdings of land through purchase or condemnation.

We have likewise come a long way in the loss of individual economic freedom and the power of personal economic decision. You need no reminder of the fact that you no longer have the power to decide what you will do with 30 per cent or 40 per cent or — if you have been exceptionally effective — even 80 per cent of the money you earn in return for your total productive hours and energy and initiative. The chances are you cannot decide whether or not to buy insurance — and certainly not where to buy it — until you have first bought from government the amount it specifies, at a rate it establishes, and have had the premium deducted from your pay check whether you like it or not.

Think it over — the wages you must pay, the prices you can charge, the compulsory payments and contributions you must make, the hours you can work, the interest rate you can earn, the rent you can ask, and on and on — and you will find that the principal freedoms you still have intact are those of speech and worship — and that a major threat has recently been made to one of those.

Debauched Currency

WE HAVE COME a long way in the debauchery of our currency, which Lenin said was the best way to destroy the American system. We have been smug in our conviction that nothing could be more solid, more stable, more safe and secure than an adequate supply of good old American dollars. Yet, in ten years those dollars have shrunk at a rate which, if continued for 12 additional years, will leave them worth exactly their weight as scrap paper.

Most of what I have mentioned regarding the distance we have traveled down the road to statism has had to do with situations and conditions which predate the war in Korea. I would remind you that the effect of war is greatly to hasten and excuse the further concentration of power, further surrender of individual freedom, and further debasement of currency.

In the last year we have seen new billions tossed about with a casualness that is frightening. We have seen our unwieldy bureaucracy increased at the rate of 1500 new civilian employees per day, with plans already made for a total 50 per cent higher than that of a scant two years ago (April, 1950). Those

plans call for approximately as many federal employees as the total membership of the Communist party in Russia. Such a federal establishment, plus employees of local governments, means more civilians on the public payroll than the grand total manpower of our Army, Navy, and Air Force — including combat units, supply troops, and the arm-chair corps.

Yes, we have come a long way — a long way in the creation of an unmanageable central state — a long way in the loss of our power of personal economic decision — a long way in the debauchery of our currency.

The Federal Lobby

A SECOND MAJOR REASON for thinking that we will continue down the road we are traveling is the fact that the trend is being promoted by a powerful group of professional governmentals with tremendous resources of manpower and money at their disposal.

There is no question but that the greatest lobby to which any legislative body has ever been subjected is that operated today by federal bureaus and officials. So confident have they become that they no longer hesitate deliberately to circumvent the intent of

Congress through far-fetched interpretations of legislative phraseology. They openly threaten individual Congressmen with retaliation in their home districts, and wage vicious war in public print against minority groups who oppose them.

We have had no more alarming illustration than the slanderous campaign of official misrepresentation through which the Office of Price Stabilization has recently sought to make the meat industry an example of what it can and will do to those who do not willingly go along with its own ideas of what a price control law should be. After issuing voluminous regulations impossible of exact interpretation or accurate practical fulfillment, this new addition to bureaucratic confusion sent its agents into packing plants across the country to split whatever hairs they could find in order to "prove" its predetermined conclusion that a "shocking" proportion of packers were unpatriotic lawbreakers — enemies of the people — who were turning heaven and earth to rob the housewife and her working husband. Screaming headlines told of 1,849 violations. Within a week, however, after the meat industry had called its hand, OPS admitted that there were only 89 cases which its own agents thought

warranted injunctions, and just two which warranted criminal charges.

There is cause for goose pimples among free men in the spectacle of a powerful federal bureau writing its own regulations, interpreting them through its own legal department, conducting its own investigations, serving as its own judge and jury, and unjustly condemning and violently denouncing a major American industry in wild and determined efforts to force Congress to rewrite a law which does not quite suit it.

Far from being a handicap, the Korean War has been a godsend to disciples of the superstate. On the one hand they are able to disguise their demands in terms of emergency needs, and on the other to wrap themselves in the flag and shout "Obstructionist!" and "Traitor!" at those who disagree with them.

The makers of "crises" tell us that the answer to every difficulty is new legislation — that we need only to turn over our problems, our pay checks, and our independence to political agents and appointees, and everything we need will be provided. May the Lord protect us from men in public office who feel it is their mission in life to do good things for us with our own money.

May we never permit ourselves to be persuaded that any politician can give you or me anything whatever. He hasn't got it to give, and there is but one way in which he can get it. That is by taking it away from us. What he "gives" is what he takes under the compulsion of taxes or through bonded mortgages on our future earnings, less the amount necessary for maintenance of the bureaucracy and overhead of government operation.

There is, indeed, cause for discouragement in the distance we already have come. There is further cause for concern in the aggressiveness with which we are being shoved or lured, as the case may be, ever further and further by militant and often well-intentioned men who have at their disposal a tremendous bureaucracy plus unlimited power to tax and borrow and buy their way under the name of social welfare into complete centralized control of our personal lives.

Finding a Stopping Place

A THIRD REASON for pessimism is the extreme difficulty in many instances of finding a definite place at which to stand and fight — the problem of finding a clearly defined line where any substantial number of people are

willing to agree that "this is it — they shall not pass." In occasional instances, like the open proposal for socialization of medicine, it is relatively easy; but such cases are the exception rather than the rule.

Do you believe, for instance, that government should protect the individual citizen from deliberate exploitation of his physical body — from sweatshop hours and sweatshop pay — by imposing wage and hour regulations which assure minimum animal subsistence under conditions of work not ruinous to safety and health? And if you do, then at what point does protection against exploitation cross the line into socialistic use of police power to equalize or redistribute income — 40¢ per hour? 75¢? \$1.00? where?

At what point does public charity for those too old to work cross over from protection against starvation into the communistic doctrine, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need"?

Where does taxation cease to be a method of raising necessary funds for the legitimate purposes of a representative republic and become the tool of professional governmentals bent on multiplying the power of the state and bringing about political domination of the daily life of the individual citizen?

Where would you draw the line? At what point would you stop and fight? Unquestionably there is always a point at which the decision should be made, but agreement on it will vary so widely from case to case and from group to group as to create a serious handicap for defenders of American fundamentals.

Don't Start with Me

THE FOURTH and last source of discouragement I shall mention here is the fact that almost nobody is 100 per cent opposed to the trend that threatens to engulf us. If you will ask around, you will find that practically everybody is against communism and socialism and even welfare-statism. Practically everybody is also against the government extravagance and inflation which can so easily bring them to us. At least practically everybody says he is, and the chances are he really is — except the part that may be putting a few temporary extra dollars into his own particular personal pocket.

Even if a man is really at heart opposed to all statism — including the part that promises personal profit — the chances are he can think of a lot of reasons why his particular

part should not be eliminated until many other things are done first. I have heard real estate men denounce socialized housing with eloquence and intelligence who had not made a sale in five years which you and I as taxpayers had not been forced by the authority of the state to underwrite through the Federal Housing Administration. I recently saw a classroom of young bankers criticize a farm speaker about government crop loans, and then act hurt and offended when he asked about the tremendous contribution they were making to inflation and to the undermining of their own depositors' dollars by filling their vaults with government-pegged bonds.

All of us howl for a return to some sort of sanity in government spending, yet how many instances do you know of in which any group in this whole nation has been willing to suggest a cut in any fund from which its own members derive benefits? Perhaps the most recent instance was the suggestion of the American Farm Bureau that soil conservation payments to farmers for the current year be reduced from \$285 million to \$150 million. Do you remember what happened to that one? Congressmen took the floor to protest that the Farm Bureau was not truly representing the interests or the sentiment of

its membership, and finally reduced the appropriation less than one-fifth as much as the farmers themselves recommended.

You may remember the dramatic effort of one Senator several months ago to bring about a cut in some of the pork-barrel portions of the Rivers and Harbors Bill. After careful study, he proposed 84 immediate and specific cuts in the bill then under consideration, and 50 additional specific cuts for the future. Without exception, the group interested in each item screamed so quickly and so loudly that the Senator's economy program was defeated — not in five or 15 or 50 of the 134 cases, but in all 134 of them. It was one more illustration of the fact that the number of individuals and organizations who refuse to fight that part of statism which yields them immediate benefits is so large as to bring discouragement and at times dismay.

Here, then, are four reasons — all powerful and all easy to prove — why it seems that we are voluntarily about to abandon our original Christian concept of American government in favor of the same pagan philosophy which we openly denounce and greatly fear from abroad. First, we have already come a long way. Second, we are being pushed steadily further by political professionals who promise

all material things to all people, and who have tremendous public power and payrolls at their disposal. Third, it is extremely difficult to find a clear and easily recognizable line on which to make a concentrated fight. Fourth, almost nobody is 100 per cent against the trend.

We Can Look and Learn

IF THIS WERE the entire story, the future indeed would be forbidding. There would be little point in discussing the matter.

There are definite reasons to believe, however, that we are not going to accept in this country the pattern of life and government which has wrought such havoc in other lands throughout the world, from which our forefathers fled, and from which uncounted millions would flee today if they could.

First, we have had ample opportunity to see and to know beyond all possible doubt the results which follow the replacement of personal sovereignty and responsibility with dependence upon the state. In our own generation we have seen a number of centrally planned economies reach full maturity. Every one of them has produced terror, cruelty, and insecurity. In every one, force became the

dominant element in national life. Every one of them found it necessary to shut itself off from the world, to lie to its own people about what was happening abroad, and to lie to the world about what was happening at home. Free speech was forbidden and criticism became crime. Men's minds and souls and self-respect shrank as the state expanded and they submitted to its tyranny.

In not one case has a central government eliminated poverty or achieved its promises of increased welfare. It has always offered Utopia in the future in exchange for ever-greater sacrifices today. But Utopia has never come closer. The sacrifices have never diminished. So far as actual experience and records go, the depths of human wretchedness and a centrally planned economy have invariably gone together.

We have seen the whole sordid story in Russia, in Germany, and in Italy. We have looked at part of it in Britain. Britain — the great coal nation — no longer exporting coal, but needing millions of tons from us to keep her factories going. Britain — the birthplace of the Magna Charta — fining four farmers \$4,800 for growing canary seed without government permission. British planners — so confused that they find themselves with a

surplus of shaving mugs and a shortage of vegetable dishes, plenty of pants for women and not enough for men, and 100,000 more publicly trained construction workers than could possibly find materials with which to construct. British citizens — thought of around the world as law-abiding models of propriety — so frustrated, so disgusted with the complexity of new rules and new laws, that their unashamed patronage of black markets causes a member of the cabinet to wail in public: “We cannot keep a policeman behind every hedge.”

What does it take to get us to accept in this field a universal law which we readily admit to be inviolable in so many others — the law of cause and effect? If we plant cottonseed, we don’t expect to get tulips. If we breed white-faced Herefords, we don’t expect baby lions. It is just as clear that if we sow the seeds of socialism, call it welfare or what you please, we are going to reap exactly the same harvest that has been reaped by every other people that has sown the same seed.

We have had abundant opportunity to observe both the planting and the harvest.

A second cause for optimism is the fact that we are making history’s greatest effort to learn the economic facts of life.

We Are Spreading the Truth

LITERALLY DOZENS of programs are under way — by volunteer national committees, by foundations, by national business organizations, by farm groups and labor groups — to bring to the individual citizen in terms he can understand the story of this nation's fundamental structure and the secret of its progress.

Probably more books have been written on this subject in America in the last five years than in the entire world outside in the previous hundred. Colleges and universities are organizing special campaigns to carry the story beyond the campus; preachers are telling it from pulpits; hundreds of corporations are bringing it to their employees; and organizations are giving of the time of staff members to serve a cause which mutually affects us all.

The same economic and political system which has given us more newspaper and magazine circulation than all the rest of the world combined, which has given us half of all the world's radios and telephones, and which has made us virtually the only nation with a television industry, has in so doing given us the means, if we will but use them

for that purpose, of saving it from destruction.

Our second reason for optimism, then, is our relatively recent but intensive and continuing crusade for better public understanding of economics and the meaning of freedom.

We Are Basically Christian

ANOTHER REASON for optimism is the fact that America is essentially a Christian nation. That statement may suggest immediately some of the front page headlines of recent months — shady dealings by top-flight political figures — the Reconstruction Finance Corporation hearings — the internal revenue racket — the honor system exposé at our national Army school — the basketball scandal among college teams — and many more. Yet the very diligence with which some of these evils were sought out, the fullness with which they were exposed, and the revulsion they created in the public consciousness bear witness to the fact that we are basically a Christian people.

The record is clean and clear. The evidence is overwhelming. During the lifetime of some of us, the U. S. Supreme Court has reviewed all of the charters, commissions, proclamations, and constitutions which have gone into

the creation of this nation and has written into an official decision the finding that "there is a universal language pervading them all, having one meaning; they affirm and reaffirm that this is a religious nation."

Despite all the evil and corruption we see about us, America today still merits that designation. A higher percentage of its population belongs to some church than ever before in its history — 55 per cent as against 20 per cent in the good old days of 70 years ago. We are setting new records for attendance at religious services. We are giving more than ever before to Christian causes.

As Christian citizens, examining the programs and proposals of those who promise economic Utopia in exchange for votes, we know that we are forbidden to take our neighbor's property against his will for our own use and welfare, whether we employ the force of a blackjack or the force of a ballot box. We further know that there is no defense in the fact that individually we may be only one voter among millions who band themselves together to take away the property of their neighbors through an instrument of force we call "government."

The fact that we are essentially a Christian nation, the fact that we are seeking increased

economic comprehension, and the fact that we have had ample opportunity to see the results of rampant statism in other lands — in these lies our hope that we may yet see in our nation a conclusive victory over the political paganism which has engulfed so much of the world in our time.

A Personal Matter

AMERICA has not yet made known its answer to those who — because they do not understand, because they do not care, because of ambition for personal power, or for purposes of deliberate political gangsterism — would see us join the parade of states which have traveled the road from paternalism to dictatorship to destruction. The answer still is in the making. The decision still is being worked out.

What can you and I do about it? What can we do personally about anything so big and broad and hard to get hold of as the decision which the world's foremost nation must make on so fundamental an issue?

The answer to that question contains the heart and core of the whole problem we are facing. Insofar as this fight is concerned, it doesn't matter what you think if you don't

do something about it. St. James was right when he declared that faith without works is dead, and Edmund Burke was equally right 17 centuries later when he said that all that is necessary for the forces of evil to win in this world is for enough good men to do nothing.

The average person, when he thinks of his part in this problem, is inclined to do so in a spirit of frustration or cynicism which implies that he would like to do something but that the situation from his individual standpoint is helpless and hopeless. He is inclined to think immediately of great campaigns and national movements, and to forget the all-important fundamental truth which Whitman expressed when he said: "The whole theory of the universe is pointed unerringly to one single individual — namely, to you."

He is inclined to forget that freedom has no hands with which to work, no eyes with which to see, no funds with which to fight, no mind with which to discern and plan and guide, no voice with which to speak, but yours and mine. There is no such thing as doing nothing on a problem of this kind, for inactivity itself is the result of a personal decision *not* to help.

To say we are helpless, or that our cause is

hopeless because it involves resistance to a worldwide trend, is to attempt to escape personal responsibility which cannot be escaped. Since Adam ate the apple, man whether he likes it or not has lived under a system of natural law which forces him to make decisions and to suffer the consequences or enjoy the fruits of them. The condemnation of the unfaithful servant who buried his talent did not come because of evil-doing. It came because of his failure to do anything.

What, then, can we do? There are two things. There are only two. They are all that are expected, and I can guarantee by the promises of scripture and the proven experience of the human race that if you will do them you will achieve a position of personal invincibility which no conceivable amount of security legislation could bring.

Personal Job No. 1

FIRST, you can practice what you profess to believe. There never was a salesman who really went to town if he didn't believe in his product enough to use it himself. You can't sell Fords effectively if you ride up to see your prospect in a Chevrolet. You can't sell Camels convincingly with a package of

Chesterfields sticking out of your pocket.

Your friends and acquaintances may not always believe what you say, but none will question for one moment the fact that your personal conduct and consistent personal practices speak the truth as you see it. You cannot convince your neighbor by word of mouth that you are a believer in temperance if he sees you staggering around your house each Saturday night. You cannot convince him that you are in favor of government economy and then sign resolutions calling for federal funds with which to build your town a bathing beach or even a hospital. You cannot convince him that you believe in economic freedom and independence for the individual and then ask that Washington underwrite your personal or business risks.

The first step, then, is to make certain that we actually believe in this thing. We have got to want it enough to practice it personally. If not, the answer is already given as far as we are concerned.

Personal Job No. 2

THE SECOND THING you can do is to initiate among those about you, in your own particular area of personal influence and knowl-

edge — as large or as small as that area may be — an opinion-moulding program of your own.

You and I individually may not be able to do a thing on earth about the attitude of people in Cleveland or New York or Seattle. We may not be able to handle our own home state, or even our own home town. But there is not one of us who cannot concentrate on the job of reducing this whole problem into terms of the people we see and talk to every day. I can assure you that one good, careful, analytical look around, just one good evening of thought and study, will bring to light more opportunities than you can hope to meet.

Perhaps your own most effective program is through a civic club or business association to which you belong. Perhaps it is through a class you teach, a pulpit you occupy, or through employees in your office or plant. Perhaps it is through writing or speaking or conducting a campaign of personal contact. Certainly there is no printed plan or program or idea on earth which has half the conviction which you can achieve among your own friends and neighbors by your own personal influence. Your voice among those you know has possibilities with which ink and paper

and radio waves cannot successfully compete.

Whatever your program is, one thing is sure — there is a part of this job you can do. Out of 150 million people in this country, there is some part of it that *only* you can do, and which isn't going to get done unless you do it. There is another thing which also is sure — the Lord himself is going to hold you responsible for but one record — your own. Neither He nor your conscience nor your country is going to hold you responsible for my record, for opportunities you do not have, or for results beyond your capacity to achieve.

Personal Answer

No, America has not yet made known its answer. The decision is still in the making. It is slowly and inexorably being worked out — not by Congress, or state legislatures, or labor leaders, or politicians, or heads of industry — it is being worked out by you and me.

Freedom rests, and always will, on individual responsibility, individual integrity, individual effort, individual courage, and individual religious faith. It does not rest in Washington. It rests with you and me.

Two things you and I can do, and two only. First, we can practice what we profess. Second, we can each preach, from our own personal pulpit, the principles we practice, whether that pulpit looks out upon a continent, a country town, or a single cottage.

As we thus prove our faith by our works — as we accept with diligence and devotion the responsibility for areas within our reach — as we inspire those about us and send them in turn to inspire others — we shall find that we are making an ever-increasing contribution to the accomplishment of our century's most challenging job.

Over and above all else we shall find — you and I, individually — that ours have become unconquerable souls.

“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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