

# Morals and the Welfare State

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#### EDITOR'S NOTE

This is an extension of remarks made before a group of ministers at Peoria, Illinois, on June 13, 1951. Dr. Harper, a Foundation staff member, is the author of "Liberty: A Path To Its Recovery," "Inflation," and other books and articles.

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THE FOUNDATION FOR  
ECONOMIC EDUCATION, INC.  
*Irvington-on-Hudson, New York*

## MORALS AND THE WELFARE STATE



TO MANY PERSONS, the Welfare State has become a symbol of morality and righteousness. This makes those who favor the Welfare State appear to be the true architects of a better world; those who oppose it, immoral rascals who might be expected to rob banks, or to do most anything in defiance of ethical conduct. But is this so? Is the banner of morality, when applied to the concept of the Welfare State, one that is true or false?

Now what is the test of morality or immorality to be applied to the Welfare State idea? I should like to pose five fundamental ethical concepts, as postulates, by which to test it. They are the ethical precepts found in the true Christian religion — true to its original foundations; and they are likewise found in other religious faiths, wherever and under whatever name these other religious concepts assist persons to perceive and practice the moral truths of human conduct.\*

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\*A brief statement on the mechanisms of the Welfare State idea is appended to this discussion on page 32.

## Moral Postulate No. 1

**Economics and morals are both parts of one inseparable body of Truth. They must, therefore, be in harmony with one another.** What is right morally must also be right economically, and vice versa. Since morals are a guide to betterment and to self-protection, economic policies that violate Moral Truth, will, with certainty, cause degeneration and self-destruction.

This postulate may seem simple and self-evident. Yet many economists and others of my acquaintance, including one who was a most capable and admired teacher, presume to draw some kind of an impassable line of distinction between morals and economics. Such persons fail to test their economic concepts against their moral precepts. Some even scorn the moral base for testing economic concepts, as though it would somehow pollute their economic purity.

An unusually capable minister recently said that only a short time before, for the first time, he had come to realize the close connection and inter-harmony that exists between morals and economics. He had always tried to reserve one compartment for his religious thought and another separate one for his economic thought. "Fortunately," he said,

in essence, “my economic thinking happened to be in harmony with my religious beliefs; but it frightens me now to realize the risk I was taking in ignoring the harmony that must exist between the two.”

This viewpoint — that there is no necessary connection between morals and economics — is all too prevalent. It explains, I believe, why immoral economic acts are tolerated, if not actively promoted, by persons of high repute who otherwise may be considered to be persons of high moral standards.

## Moral Postulate No. 2

**There is a force in the universe which no mortal can alter.** Neither you nor I nor any earthly potentate with all his laws and edicts can alter this rule of the universe, no matter how great one's popularity in his position of power. Some call this force God. Others call it Natural Law. Still others call it the Supernatural. But no matter how one may wish to name it, there is a force which rules without surrender to any mortal man or group of men — a force that is oblivious to anyone who presumes to elevate himself and his wishes above its rule.

This concept is the basis for all relationships of cause and consequence — all science

— whether it be something already discovered or something yet to be discovered. Its scope includes phenomena such as those of physics and chemistry; it also includes those of human conduct. The so-called Law of Gravity is one expression of Natural Law. Scientific discovery means the unveiling to human perception of something that has always existed. If it had not existed prior to the discovery — even though we were ignorant of it — it could not have been there to be discovered. That is the meaning of the concept of Natural Law.

This view — there exists a Natural Law which rules over the affairs of human conduct — will be challenged by some who point out that man possesses the capacity for choice; that man's activity reflects a quality lacking in the chemistry of a stone and in the physical principle of the lever. But this trait of man — this capacity for choice — does not release him from the rule of cause and effect, which he can neither veto nor alter. What the capacity for choice means, instead, is that he is thereby enabled, by his own choice, to act either wisely or unwisely — that is, in either accord or discord with the truths of Natural Law. But once he has made his choice, the inviolate rule of cause and consequence takes over with an iron

hand of justice, and renders unto the doer either a prize or a penalty, as the consequence of his choice.

*It is important, at this point, to note that morality presumes the existence of choice. One cannot be truly moral except as there exists the option of being immoral, and except as he selects the moral rather than the immoral option. In the admirable words of Thomas Davidson: "That which is not free is not responsible, and that which is not responsible is not moral." This means that free choice is a prerequisite of morality.*

If I surrender my freedom of choice to a ruler — by vote or otherwise — I am still subject to the superior rule of Natural Law or Moral Law. Although I am subservient to the ruler who orders me to violate Truth, I must still pay the penalty for the evil or foolish acts in which I engage at his command.

Under this postulate — that there is a force in the universe which no mortal can alter — ignorance of Moral Law is no excuse to those who violate it, because Moral Law rules over the consequences of ignorance the same as over the consequences of wisdom. This is true whether the ignorance is accompanied by good intentions or not; whether it is carried out under the name of some religion or the Welfare State or whatnot.

What, then, is the content of a basic moral code? What are the rules which, if followed, will better the condition of men?

### Moral Postulate No. 3

**The Golden Rule and the Decalogue, and their near equivalents in other great religions, provide the basic moral codes for man's conduct.** The Golden Rule and the Decalogue are basic moral guides having priority over all other considerations. It is these which have guided the conduct of man in all progressive civilizations. With their violation has come the downfall of individuals, and therefore of civilizations.

Some may prefer as a moral code something like: "Do as God would have us do," or "Do as Jesus would have done." But such as these, alone, are not adequate guides to conduct unless they are explained further, or unless they serve as symbolic of a deeper specific meaning. What *would* God have us do? What *would* Jesus have done? Only by adding some guides such as the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments can we know the answers to these questions.

The Golden Rule — the rule of refraining from imposing on others what I would not have them impose on me — means that moral

conduct for one is moral conduct for another; that there is not one set of moral guides for Jones and another for Smith; that the concept of equality under Moral Law is a part of morality itself. This alone is held by many to be an adequate moral code. But in spite of its importance as part of the moral code of conduct in this respect, the Golden Rule is not, it seems to me, sufficient unto itself. It is no more sufficient than the mere admonition, "Do good," which leaves undefined what is good and what is evil. The murderer, who at the time of the crime felt justified in committing it, can quote the Golden Rule in self-defense: "If I had done what that so-and-so did, and had acted as he acted, I would consider it fair and proper for someone to murder me." And likewise the thief may argue that if he were like the one he has robbed, or if he were a bank harboring all those "ill-gotten gains," he would consider himself the proper object of robbery. Some claim that justification for the Welfare State, too, is to be found in the Golden Rule. So, in addition to the Golden Rule, further rules are needed as guides for moral conduct.

The Decalogue embodies the needed guides on which the Golden Rule can function. But within the Ten Commandments, the two with which we shall be especially con-

cerned herein are: (1) Thou shalt not steal.  
(2) Thou shalt not covet.

The Decalogue serves as a guide to moral conduct which, if violated, brings upon the violator a commensurate penalty. There may be other guides to moral conduct which one might wish to add to the Golden Rule and the Decalogue, as supplements or substitutes. But they serve as the basis on which others are built. Their essence, in one form or another, seems to run through all great religions. That, I believe, is not a happenstance, because if we embrace them as a guide to our conduct, it will be both morally and economically sound.

This third postulate embodies what are judged to be the *principles* which should guide individual conduct as infallibly as the compass should guide the mariner. "Being practical" is a common popular guide to conduct; principles are scorned, if not forgotten. Those who scorn principles assert that it is foolish to concern ourselves with them; that it is hopeless to expect their complete adoption by everyone. But does this fact make a principle worthless? Are we to conclude that the moral code against murder is worthless because of its occasional violation? Or that the compass is worthless because not everyone pursues to the ultimate the direction

which it indicates? Or that the Law of Gravity is made impractical or inoperative by someone walking off a cliff and meeting death because of his ignorance of this principle? No. A principle remains a principle in spite of its being ignored or violated — or even unknown. A principle, like a compass, gives one a better sense of direction, if he is wise enough to know and to follow its guidance.

### **Moral Postulate No. 4**

**Moral principles are not subject to compromise.** The Golden Rule and the Decalogue, as representing moral principles, are precise and strict. They are not a code of convenience. A principal can be broken, but it cannot be bent.

If the Golden Rule and the Decalogue were to be accepted as a code of convenience, to be laid aside or modified whenever “necessity seems to justify it” (whenever, that is, one desires to act in violation of them), they would not then be serving as moral guides. A moral guide which is to be followed only when one would so conduct himself anyhow, in its absence, has no effect on his conduct, and is not a guide to him at all.

The unbending rule of a moral principle can be illustrated by some simple applica-

tions. According to one Commandment, it is wholly wrong to steal all your neighbor's cow; it is also wholly wrong to steal half your neighbor's cow, not half wrong to steal half your neighbor's cow. Robbing a bank is wrong in principle, whether the thief makes off with a million dollars or a hundred dollars or one cent. A person can rob a bank of half its money, but in the sense of moral principle there is no way to half rob a bank; you either rob it or you do not rob it.

In like manner, the Law of Gravity is precise and indivisible. One either acts in harmony with this law or he does not. There is no sense in saying that one has only half observed the Law of Gravity if he falls off a cliff only half as high as another cliff off which he might have fallen.

Moral laws are strict. They rule without flexibility. They know not the language of man; they are not conversant with him in the sense of compassion. They employ no man-made devices like the suspended sentence. "Guilty" or "Not guilty" is the verdict of judgment by a moral principle.

As moral guides, the Golden Rule and the Decalogue are not evil and dangerous things, like a painkilling drug, to be taken in cautious moderation, if at all. Presuming them to be the basic guides of what is right and

good for civilized man, one cannot overindulge in them. Good need not be practiced in moderation.

### Moral Postulate No. 5

**Good ends cannot be attained by evil means.** As stated in the second postulate, there is a force controlling cause and consequence which no mortal can alter, in spite of any position of influence or power which he may hold. Cause and consequence are linked inseparably.

An evil begets an evil consequence; a good, a good consequence. Good intentions cannot alter this relationship. Nor can ignorance of the consequence change its form. Nor can words. For one to say, after committing an evil act, "I'm sorry, I made a mistake," changes not one iota the consequence of the act; repentance, at best, can serve only to prevent repetition of the evil act, and perhaps assure the repenter a more preferred place in a Hereafter. But repentance *alone* does not bring back to life a murdered person, or return the loot to the one who was robbed. Nor does it, I believe, fully obliterate the scars of evil on the doer himself.

Nor does saying, "He told me to do it," change the consequence of an evil act into

a good one. For an evil-doer to assert, "But it was the law of my government, the decree of my ruler," fails to dethrone God or to frustrate the rule of Natural Law.

The belief that good ends are attainable through evil means is one of the most vicious concepts of the ages. The political blueprint, "The Prince," written around the year 1500 by Machiavelli, outlined this notorious doctrine. And for the past century it has been part and parcel of the kit of tools used by the Marxian communist-socialists to mislead people. Its use probably is as old as the conflict between temptation and conscience, because it affords a seemingly rational and pleasant detour around the inconveniences of one's conscience.

We know how power-hungry persons have gained political control over others by claiming that they somehow possess a special dispensation from God to do good through the exercise of means which our moral code identifies as evil. Thus arises a multiple standard of morals. It is the device by which immoral persons attempt to discredit the Golden Rule and the Decalogue, and make them inoperative.

Yet if one will stop to ponder the question just a little, he must surely see the unimpeachable logic of this postulate: Good ends

cannot be attained by evil means. This is because the end pre-exists in the means, just as in the biological field we know that the seed of continued likeness pre-exists in the parent. Likewise in the moral realm, there is a similar moral reproduction wherein like begets like. This precludes the possibility of evil means leading to good ends. Good begets good; evil, evil. Immoral means cannot beget a good end, any more than snakes can beget roses.

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The concept of the Welfare State can now be tested against the background of these five postulates: (1) Harmony exists between moral principles and wise economic practices. (2) There is a Universal Law of Cause and Effect, even in the area of morals and economics. (3) A basic moral code exists in the form of the Golden Rule and the Decalogue. (4) These moral guides are of an uncompromising nature. (5) Good ends are attainable only through good means.

### **Moral Right to Private Property**

NOT ALL the Decalogue, as has been said, is directly relevant to the issue of the Welfare State. Its program is an economic one, and the only parts of the moral code which are

directly and specifically relevant are these: (1) Thou shalt not steal. (2) Thou shalt not covet.

Steal what? Covet what? Private property, of course. What else could I steal from you, or covet of what is yours? I cannot steal from you or covet what you do not own as private property. As Dr. D. Elton Trueblood has aptly said: "Stealing is evil because ownership is good." Thus we find that the individual's right to private property is an unstated assumption which underlies the Decalogue. Otherwise these two admonitions would be empty of either purpose or meaning.

The right to have and to hold private property is not to be confused with the recovery of stolen property. If someone steals your car, it is still — by this moral right — your car rather than his; and for you to repossess it is merely to bring its presence back into harmony with its ownership. The same reasoning applies to the recovery of equivalent value if the stolen item itself is no longer returnable; and it applies to the recompense for damage done to one's own property by trespass or other willful destruction of private property. These means of protecting the possession of private property, and its use, are part of the mechanisms used to protect the moral right to private property.

## To Aspire Is Not to Covet

Another point of possible confusion has to do with coveting the private property of another. There is nothing morally wrong in the admiration of something that is the property of another. Such admiration may be a stimulus to work for the means with which to buy it, or one like it. The moral consideration embodied in this Commandment has to do with thoughts and acts leading to the violation of the other Commandment, though still short of actual theft.

The moral right to private property, therefore, is consistent with the moral codes of all the great religious beliefs. It is likely that a concept of this type was in the mind of David Hume, the moral philosopher, who believed that the right to own private property is the basis for the modern concept of justice in morals.

Nor is it surprising to discover that two of history's leading exponents of the Welfare State concept found it necessary to denounce this moral code completely. Marx said: "Religion is the opium of the people." And Lenin said: "Any religious idea, any idea of a 'good God' . . . is an abominably nasty thing." Of course they would have to say these things about religious beliefs. This is because the

moral code of these great religions, as we have seen, strikes at the very heart of their immoral economic scheme. Not only does their Welfare State scheme deny the moral right to private property, but it also denies other underlying bases of the moral code, as we shall see.

### **Moral Right to Work and to Have**

**S**TEALING and coveting are condemned in the Decalogue as violations of the basic moral code. It follows, then, that the concepts of stealing and coveting presume the right to private property, which then automatically becomes an implied part of the basic moral code. But where does private property come from?

Private property comes from what one has saved out of what he has produced, or has earned as a productive employee of another person. One may also, of course, obtain private property through gifts and inheritances; but in the absence of theft, precluded by this moral code, gifts come from those who have produced or earned what is given. So the right of private property, and also the right to have whatever one has produced or earned, underlies the admonitions in the Decalogue about stealing and coveting. Nobody has the

moral right to take by force from the producer anything he has produced or earned, for any purpose whatsoever — even for a good purpose, as he thinks of it.

If one is free to have what he has produced and earned, it then follows that he also has the moral right to be free to choose his work. He should be free to choose his work, that is, so long as he does not violate the moral code in doing so by using in his productive efforts the property of another person through theft or trespass. Otherwise he is free to work as he will, at what he will, and to change his work when he will. Nobody has the moral right to force him to work when he does not choose to do so, or to force him to remain idle when he wishes to work, or to force him to work at a certain job when he wishes to work at some other available job. The belief of the master that his judgment is superior to that of the slave or vassal, and that control is “for his own good,” is not a moral justification for the idea of the Welfare State.

### **Intuitive Morality**

**WE ARE TOLD** that some misdoings occurred in a Garden of Eden, which signify the evil in man. And I would concede that no mortal man is totally wise and good. But it is my

belief that people generally, up and down the road, are intuitively and predominantly moral. By this I mean that if persons are confronted with a clear and simple decision involving basic morals, most of us will conduct ourselves morally. Most everyone, without being a learned scholar of moral philosophy, seems to have a sort of innate sense of what is right, and tends to do what is moral *unless and until he becomes confused by circumstances which obscure the moral issue that is involved.*

### **Immorality Is News**

The content of many magazines and newspapers with widespread circulations would seem to contradict my belief that most people are moral most of the time. They headline impressive and unusual events on the seamy side of life, which might lead one to believe that these events are characteristic of everyday human affairs. It is to be noted, however, that their content is in sharp contrast to the local, home-town daily or weekly with its emphasis on the folksy reports of the comings and goings of friends. Why the difference? Those with large circulation find that the common denominator of news interest in their audience is events on the rare,

seamy side of life; widely scattered millions are not interested in knowing that in Center-ville, Sally attended Susie's birthday party last Tuesday.

It is the rarity of evil conduct that makes it impressive news for millions. Papers report the events of yesterday's murder, theft, or assault, together with the name, address, age, marital status, religious affiliation, and other descriptive features of the guilty party because these are the events of the day that are unusual enough to be newsworthy. What would be the demand for a newspaper which published all the names and identifications of all the persons who yesterday failed to murder, steal, or assault? If it were as rare for persons to act morally as it is now rare for them to act immorally, the then rare instances of moral conduct would presumably become the news of the day. So we may conclude that evil is news because it is so rare; that being moral is not news because it is so prevalent.

But does not this still prove the dominance of evil in persons? Or, since magazines and newspapers print what finds a ready readership in the market, does not that prove the evilness of those who read of evil? I believe not. It is more like the millions who attend zoos, and view with fascination the monkeys

and the snakes; these spectators are not themselves monkeys or snakes, nor do they want to be; they are merely expressing an interest in the unusual, without envy. Do not most of us read of a bank robbery or a fire without wishing to be robbers or arsonists?

What else dominates the newspaper space, and gives us our dominant impressions about the quality of persons outside our circle of immediate personal acquaintance? It is mostly about the problems of political power; about those who have power or are grasping for power, diluted with a little about those who are fighting against power. Lord Acton said: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." This dictum seems to be true, as history has proved and is proving over and over again. So we can then translate it into a description of much of the news of the day: News is heavily loaded with items about persons who, as Lord Acton said, are either corrupt or are in the process of becoming more corrupt.

If one is not careful in exposing himself to the daily news — if he fails to keep his balance and forgets how it contrasts with all those persons who comprise his family, his neighbors, his business associates, and his friends — he is likely to conclude falsely that

people are predominantly immoral. This poses a serious problem for historians and historical novelists to the extent that their source of information is the news of a former day — especially if they do not interpret it with caution.

### **To Steal or Not to Steal**

AS A MEANS of specifically verifying my impression about the basic, intuitive morality of persons, I would pose this test of three questions:

1. Would you steal your neighbor's cow to provide for your present needs? Would you steal it for any need reasonably within your expectation or comprehension? It should be remembered that, instead of stealing his cow, you may explore with your neighbor the possible solution to your case of need; you might arrange to do some sort of work for him, or to borrow from him for later repayment, or perhaps even plead with him for an outright gift.

2. Would you steal your neighbor's cow to provide for a known case of another neighbor's need?

3. Would you try to induce a third party to do the stealing of the cow, to be given to this needy neighbor? And do you believe

that you would likely succeed in inducing him to engage in the theft?

I believe that the almost universal answer to all these questions would be: "No." Yet the facts of the case are that all of us are participating in theft every day. How? By supporting the actions of the collective agent which does the stealing as part of the Welfare State program, already far advanced in the United States. By this device, Peter is robbed to "benefit" Paul, with the acquiescence if not the active support of all of us as taxpayers and citizens. We not only participate in the stealing — and share in the division of the loot — but as its victims we also meekly submit to the thievery.

Isn't it a strange thing that if you select any three fundamentally moral persons and combine them into a collective for the doing of good, they are liable at once to become three immoral persons in their collective activities? The moral principles with which they seem to be intuitively endowed are somehow lost in the confusing processes of the collective. None of the three would steal the cow from one of his fellow members as an individual, but collectively they all steal cows from each other. The reason is, I believe, that the Welfare State — a confusing collective device which is believed by many

to be moral and righteous — has been falsely labeled. This false label has caused the belief that the Welfare State can do no wrong, that it cannot commit immoral acts, especially if those acts are approved or tolerated by more than half of the people, “democratically.”

This sidetracking of moral conduct is like the belief of an earlier day: The king can do no wrong. In its place we have now substituted this belief: The majority can do no wrong. It is as though one were to assert that a sheep which has been killed by a pack of wolves is not really dead, provided that more than half of the wolves have participated in the killing. All these excuses for immoral conduct are, of course, nonsense. They are nonsense when tested against the basic moral code of the five postulates. Thievery is thievery, whether done by one person alone or by many in a pack — or by one who has been selected by the members of the pack as their agent.

### **“Thou Shalt Not Steal, Except . . .”**

IT SEEMS that wherever the Welfare State is involved, the moral precept, “Thou shalt not steal,” becomes altered to say: “Thou shalt not steal, except for what thou deemest to be a worthy cause, where thou thinkest

that thou canst use the loot for a better purpose than wouldst the victim of the theft.”

And the precept about covetousness, under the administration of the Welfare State, seems to become: “Thou shalt not covet, except what thou wouldst have from thy neighbor who owns it.”

Both of these alterations of the Decalogue result in complete abrogation of the two moral admonitions — theft and covetousness — which deal directly with economic matters. Not even the motto, “In God we trust,” stamped by the government on money taken by force in violation of the Decalogue to pay for the various programs of the Welfare State, can transform this immoral act into a moral one.

### **In a Hurry to Do Good**

HEREIN LIES the principal moral and economic danger facing us in these critical times: Many of us, albeit with good intentions but in a hurry to do good because of the urgency of the occasion, have become victims of moral schizophrenia. While we are good and righteous persons in our individual conduct in our home community and in our basic moral code, we have become thieves and coveters in the collective activities of the Welfare

State in which we participate and which many of us extol.

Typical of our times is what usually happens when there is a major catastrophe, destroying private property or injuring many persons. The news circulates, and generates widespread sympathy for the victims. So what is done about it? Through the mechanisms of the collective, the good intentions take the form of reaching into the other fellow's pocket for the money with which to make a gift. The Decalogue says, in effect: "Reach into your *own* pocket — not into your neighbor's pocket — to finance your acts of compassion; good cannot be done with the loot that comes from theft." The pickpocket, in other words, is a thief even though he puts the proceeds in the collection box on Sunday, or uses it to buy bread for the poor. Being an involuntary Good Samaritan is a contradiction in terms.

When thievery is resorted to for the means with which to do good, compassion is killed. Those who would do good with the loot then lose their capacity for self-reliance, the same as a thief's self-reliance atrophies rapidly when he subsists on food that is stolen. And those who are repeatedly robbed of their property simultaneously lose their capacity for compassion. The chronic victims of rob-

bery are under great temptation to join the gang and share in the loot. They come to feel that the voluntary way of life will no longer suffice for needs; that to subsist, they must rob and be robbed. They abhor violence, of course, but approve of robbing by "peaceful means." It is this peculiar immoral distinction which many try to draw between the Welfare State of Russia and that of Britain: The Russian brand of violence, they believe, is bad; that of Britain, good. This version of an altered Commandment would be: "Thou shalt not steal, except from nonresisting victims."

Under the Welfare State, this process of theft has spread from its use in alleviating catastrophe, to anticipating catastrophe, to conjuring up catastrophe, to the "need" for luxuries for those who have them not. The acceptance of the practice of thus violating the Decalogue has become so widespread that if the Sermon on the Mount were to appear in our day in the form of an address or publication, it would most likely be scorned as "reactionary, and not objective on the realistic problems of the day." Forgotten, it seems, by many who so much admire Christ, is the fact that he did not resort to theft in acquiring the means of his material benefactions. Nor did he advocate theft for any purpose — even for those uses most dear to his beliefs.

## Progress of Moral Decay

**V**IOLATION of the two economic Commandments — theft and covetousness — under the program of the Welfare State, will spread to the other Commandments; it will destroy faith in, and observance of, our entire basic moral code. We have seen this happen in many countries. It seems to have been happening here. We note how immorality, as tested by the two economic Commandments, has been spreading in high places. Moral decay has already spread to such an extent that violations of all other parts of the Decalogue, and of the Golden Rule, have become accepted as commonplace — even proper and worthy of emulation.

And what about the effectiveness of a crime investigation conducted under a Welfare State government? We may question the presumed capability of such a government — as distinct from certain investigators who are admittedly moral individuals — to judge these moral issues. We may also question the wisdom of bothering to investigate the picayune amounts of private gambling, willingly engaged in by the participants with their own money, when untold billions are being taken from the people repeatedly by the investigating agent to finance its own

immoral program — a certain loss, not even a gamble.

Once a right to collective looting has been substituted for the right of each person to have whatever he has produced, it is not at all surprising to find the official dispensers deciding that it is right for them to loot the loot — for a “worthy” purpose, of course. Then we have the loot used by the insiders to buy votes so that they may stay in power; we have political pork barrels and lobbying for the contents; we have political patronage for political loyalty — even for loyalty to immoral conduct; we have deep freezers and mink coats given to political or personal favorites, and bribes for the opportunity to do privileged business with those who hold and dispense the loot. Why not? If it is right to loot, it is also right to loot the loot. If the latter is wrong, so also is the former.

### **Political Corruption Spreads**

If we are to accept Lord Acton’s axiom about the corrupting effect of power — and also the reasoning of Professor Hayek in his book, “The Road to Serfdom,” about why the worst get to the top in a Welfare State — then corruption and low moral standards in high political places should not be surprising.

But when the citizens come more and more to laugh and joke about it, rather than to remove the crown of power and dismantle the throne, a nation is well on its way to moral rot, reminiscent of the fall of the Roman Empire and others.

Nor should we be surprised that there is some juvenile delinquency where adult delinquency is so rampant, and where the absence of any basic moral code among adults precludes even the possibility of their effectively teaching a moral code that will prevent delinquency in the young. If, as adults, we practice collective thievery through the Welfare State, and advocate it as right and good, how can we question the logic of the youths who likewise form gangs and rob the candy store? If demonstration is the best teacher, we adults must start with the practice of morality ourselves, rather than hiring some presumed specialist to study the causes of similar conduct among the youngsters; their conduct is the symptom, not the disease.

Thievery and covetousness will persist and grow, and the basic morals of ourselves, our children, and our children's children will continue to deteriorate unless we destroy the virus of immorality that is embedded in the concept of the Welfare State; unless we come to understand how the moral code of indi-

vidual conduct must apply also to collective conduct, because the collective is composed solely of individuals. Moral individual conduct cannot persist in the face of collective immorality under the Welfare State program. One side or the other of the double standard of morals will have to be surrendered.

## APPENDIX

### **The Welfare State Idea**

THE CONCEPT of the Welfare State appears in our everyday life in the form of a long list of labels and programs such as: Social Security; parity or fair prices; reasonable profits; the living wage; the TVA, MVA, CVA; federal aid to states, to education, to bankrupt corporations; and so on.

But all these names and details of the Welfare State program tend only to obscure its essential nature. They are well-sounding labels for a laudable objective — the relief of distressing need, prevention of starvation, and the like. But how best is starvation and distress to be prevented? It is well, too, that prices, profits, and wages be fair and equitable. But what is to be the test of fairness and equity? Laudable objectives alone do not assure the success of any program; a fair appraisal of the program must include an analysis of the means of its attainment.

The Welfare State is a name that has been substituted as a more acceptable one for communism-socialism wherever, as in the United States, these names are in general disrepute.

The Welfare State plan, viewed in full bloom of completeness, is one where the state prohibits the individual from having any right of choice in the conditions and place of his work; it takes ownership of the product of his labor; it prohibits private property. All these are done ostensibly to help those whose rights have been taken over by the Welfare State.\*

But these characteristics of controlled employment and confiscation of income are not those used in promotion of the idea of the Welfare State. What are usually advertised, instead, are the "benefits" of the Welfare State — the grants of food and housing and whatnot — which the state "gives" to the people. But all these "benefits" are merely the other side of the forfeited rights to choose one's own occupation and to keep whatever one is able to produce. In the same sense that the Welfare State grants benefits, the slave-master grants to his slaves certain allotments of food and other economic goods. In fact, slavery might be described as just another form of Welfare State, because of its likeness in restrictions and "benefits."

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\*The concepts of the Welfare State, in more detail but still in condensed form, are available as THE COMMUNIST IDEA series, from The Foundation For Economic Education, Inc.

Yet the state, as such, produces nothing with which to supply these "benefits." Persons produce everything which the Welfare State takes, before it gives some back as "benefits"; but in the process, the bureaucracy takes its cut. Only by thus confiscating what persons have produced can the Welfare State "satisfy the needs of the people." So, the necessary and essential idea of the Welfare State is to control the economic actions of the vassals of the state, to take from producers what they produce, and to prevent their ever being able to attain economic independence from the state and from their fellow men through ownership of property.

To whatever extent an individual is still allowed freedom in any of these respects while living under a government like the present one in the United States, then to that extent the development of the program of the Welfare State is as yet not fully completed. Or perhaps it is an instance of a temporary grant of freedom by the Welfare State such as when a master allows his slave a day off from work to spend as he likes; but the person who is permitted some freedom by the Welfare State is still a vassal of that state just as a slave is still a slave on his day off from work.

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IRVINGTON-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK

