

AUGUST 19, 1950

## EDITORIALS

### We Can't Salvage Free Enterprise Without a Battle

**T**HE late Professor Schumpeter, of Harvard, used to contend that the most serious threat to capitalism was the ineptitude of the capitalists. As a current example you could take the weak response of too many businessmen and capitalists to the threat of the Buchanan lobbying committee, which is engaged in a counteroffensive against the few conservatives who have waged effective war against the socialist drift of the Truman Fair Deal.

The Buchanan committee has haled before it several groups which are engaged in propaganda in opposition to socialism. One of these groups is Frank Gannett's Committee for Constitutional Government, which is not charged with lobbying in Washington, but does print paper-covered editions of various books, including John T. Flynn's *The Road Ahead*, for distribution to the public.

Now comes the Buchanan committee and demands a full account of this operation, with a list of all those who have paid for bulk orders of *The Road Ahead*. The justification of this procedure, as attempted by Representative Buchanan, is that Congress is influenced by public opinion, therefore it is necessary to investigate bodies which influence public opinion. For the moment, the committee seems to be concerned mainly with certain unpopular individuals and with large corporations. But if the lobbying act is to be stretched out of its commonly accepted interpretation to include efforts to persuade the people as a whole, what becomes of freedom of press and opinion?

Opposition to the machinations of the Buchanan committee has usually taken the form of refusal to produce the information demanded by the committee. Inasmuch as a committee of Congress can compel the surrender of almost any information it wants, this is likely to be futile. Unaccompanied by adequate explanation, it also creates the impression that the individuals subpoenaed are trying to conceal something.

President W. C. Mullendore, of the Southern California Edison Company, did go to the bat with vigor on what he called the effort of the committee

to "use intimidation in limiting the exercise of the right of free speech in opposing or supporting proposed legislation"; and the Committee for Constitutional Government took the ground that the Buchanan committee was interfering with its constitutional right as a publisher to immunity from unreasonable search and seizure. These were justified defenses, but more is required.

What is lacking is an offensive, more or less like that suggested by Frank Chodorov in *Human Events*. He quotes the Buchanan committee's statement that the Committee for Constitutional Government spent \$1,571,240.72, or an average of \$40,000 a month for the thirty-eight months studied. Says Mr. Chodorov:

"Peanuts and fiddlesticks. Every hour of the day the agencies of the Government spend more than that monthly average to influence legislation, and the legislation they plug is to lengthen their tenure, increase their appropriations, better their emoluments, strengthen their hold on the public purse. . . . The biggest, most pernicious, most unscrupulous and entirely selfish lobby in Washington is the Government. . . . Its list of contributors includes every man, woman and child in the United States. And yet it has the effrontery to point the finger of scorn at an organization that digs up a piddling \$40,000 a month for printing and distribution of literature. . . ."

Let somebody add to the conventional lawyers' defense against the aggressions of the Buchanan committee something like this: "We challenge your authority under the Constitution, but we are not embarrassed or ashamed of what we are doing. John Flynn's *The Road Ahead* is an angry book, with here and there an excess of zeal, but it does expose the socialist nature of the Fair Deal program, an analysis already accepted by the British Labor Party. If there is any restriction in America on the right of persons, including corporations, to challenge the pretensions of a political group in this country, it hasn't yet been put in the form of law. Until freedom of speech has been outlawed by Congress, we intend to support our ideas by whatever authorities seem to us likely to arouse the people to their danger."

The only way the battle for a free economy will be understood, not exclusively by demurrers and legal responses and applications for injunctions, important as these are. If the fight can be staged in an arena where people can see what punches are being thrown, free enterprise may have a chance. It certainly has none if its protagonists always make themselves look like bad boys talking their way out of something sly and discreditable.

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