

down beneath the spreading wave of socialism, freedom would be gone in the United States. In 1946 he acted.

GATHERING to his support an impressive group of business and educational leaders, Read established The Foundation for Economic Education. The Foundation combats socialism with understanding. Read says: "Collectivism, with its totalitarian arrangements and 'managed economy,' is sweeping the world — in America as elsewhere. The primary reason for this is that so few persons are capable of explaining its opposite — individual liberty and the free market. Not only is socialism being advanced by governments, but also by business, farm and labor leaders. The Foundation's purpose is to study and to *explain* the economic freedom we must have if we are to remain a free people."

The Foundation staff labors in an old converted house at Irvington, New York. From the pens of Trustees and staff flow such works as *Economics in One Lesson* by Henry Hazlitt — and treatises on rent control, prices, and other questions of current economic importance. Read is the author of *The Romance of Reality* and *Pattern for Revolt*. Between his writing and conferences with his staff, Read travels 100,000 miles a year addressing meetings all over the country. He has nothing to sell but freedom. He says: "We have no solicitors for funds. This is realism. The voluntary society can be preserved only by voluntary methods. And if the Foundation's work is not of a superior brand there is no reason for its existence."

Leonard Read's power as a speaker stems from three facts. He knows his subject by personal experience. He has no axe to grind, since he represents neither government, business nor labor. And he has the facts and figures to expose the fallacies of socialism and *explain* the voluntary society — the "last best hope of earth."



LEONARD E. READ

ADVOCATE OF LIBERTY

LEONARD E. READ, 50-year-old president of The Foundation for Economic Education, is a speaker as unique as the institution he represents. Mr. Read's argument is simple, yet startling. He says: "We are fast losing our liberty. We are losing it because we don't really know what it is. If we are going to save it, we had better begin to understand it."

Widening that understanding is the purpose of the Foundation Mr. Read heads — a non-profit organization, staffed by researchers and economists at Irvington-on-Hudson, New York. Like other institutions, The Foundation for Economic Education is a supporter of the "free enterprise

system." But here the similarity ends. The Foundation exists to arouse thought rather than to direct political action, to explain rather than to promote. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it has no axe to grind—imposed or inherited. It owes its existence to no one group, benefactor or interest. It represents neither management, labor, agriculture, nor government. Its only commitment is to a better understanding of the freedom philosophy.

As spokesman for that philosophy, and founder of the Foundation, Leonard Read throws down a challenge to all who hear him: "How are you going to keep your own liberty unless you fight for the liberty of others? How can you expect others to abstain from seeking special privilege unless you yourself deny it?"

Mr. Read blames special privilege for the destruction of liberty throughout the world. And he finds special privilege in every aspect of our life, in every segment of our economy: in laws to favor voting "blocs," in tariffs to protect the inefficient, in subsidies to favor producers at the expense of consumers, in the discriminatory progressive income tax, in the financing of socialism abroad. He attacks special privilege with a two-edged sword of facts and logic. His argument is forthright but not dogmatic, his presentation as disturbing as it is convincing. Mr. Read's embarkation on his crusade for individual liberty was a natural result of his own experience as a businessman and student of economics, all of which he learned the hard way.

BORN ON A FARM near tiny Hubbardston, Michigan, Read early learned the demands of self-discipline and hard work. When he was eleven years old his father died. Read had to get up at four each morning, milk cows, clean stables, bolt his breakfast and hustle to the village store to sweep out and set up stock. He attended school from nine till four. After school he went

back to farm chores. Following supper he returned to work in the store till nine each night. Nevertheless, he finished high school and went on to be graduated from the Ferris Institute in Big Rapids. When the U. S. entered World War I, Read, who was 19, entered the air force, "just a mechanic and a private."

After the war he sold insurance, worked as a cashier, then opened his own produce business in Ann Arbor, "on a shoestring." The produce business was no place for sissies. Read worked 100 hours a week, escaped the strong arm squads of his competitors simply because he was a youngster. But one entrenched competitor "fixed" him by selling produce at retail for prices lower than Read could buy it, wholesale, in Detroit. The free market exacted its penalty and Read liquidated his business. But he was far from disgruntled. He had learned. Next Read sold real estate in California. Within a year he was asked to become Secretary of the Burlingame Chamber of Commerce. He accepted, and began an ascending career in chamber-of-commerce work.

A YEAR LATER he took over as Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce at Palo Alto. His record there brought him to the post of Assistant Manager of the Western Division of the United States Chamber of Commerce. In 1932 he became Manager of that division. Seven years later, the famous Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce named him as its General Manager. Read's work in Los Angeles won him the executive vice-presidency of the National Industrial Conference Board, in New York City. By this time, 1945, Read was about ready to act on the conviction which had been consuming him for many years. During his chamber-of-commerce work, he had become convinced that the voluntary society and the free market economy were little understood, that they were the foundation of individual freedom, and that if they went