

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Outlook

IN THE LONG RUN, THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE—WHICH IS THE BEST IN THE WORLD—CAN BE BETTERED BY THE ELIMINATION OF ALL PRIVILEGES TO FAVORED CLASSES. IT WOULD BE WELL IF WE ALL UPHELD THE CONSTITUTION LITERALLY.

In the United States as here and elsewhere the movement toward dissolution of existing social forms and reorganization on a socialistic basis I believe to be inevitable. There are bad times before us and you have still more dreadful times before you—civil war, immense bloodshed and eventually military despotism of the severest type.

Truly yours,
HERBERT SPENCER

Liberty was the watchword of our fathers and so it is of ourselves but in their hearts, the masses of the nation cherish desires not only different from it, but inconsistent with it. They want equality more than liberty.

—FRANCIS PARKMAN in the *North American Review* July-August 1878

ONE might imagine that we must choose between an unchanging static social organization and communism, but this is far from true. Clinging to free enterprise, which for a century and a half brought our people steadily advancing standards of life, does not mean a fixed stolidity averse to change and blocking all progress. On the contrary, we attained our prosperity because we were actuated by a spirit of progress, constantly seeking a better way and ever ready to advance.

In material things we lead the world—the automobile, radio, television, telephone, a thousand applications of electricity, modern plumbing, refrigeration, farm machinery, household heating, office equipment, and countless things. In greater things too we excel, in sanitation and public health, broad education, tolerance of religions, charitable, educational, and philanthropic activities on a world-wide basis. If allowance be made for our youth, we have made surprising progress in art and architecture, literature, music, and in nearly every cultural line. By any standard we have succeeded. Both our economic way of life and our political system have proved their worth.

It would, therefore, be madness to abandon what has worked

so well and for so many years to revert to disastrous policies which reactionaries and mis-called progressives seek to promote. And yet, our system is far from perfect. No fair-minded man, and certainly no one with a background of Christianity, can rest content with what we have. The call, however, is not to discard it for something which has always failed and which always must fail, but to study the framework of our society, to detect its faults and correct its flaws.

We believe in that conservatism which keeps what has proved its worth. We believe also in progress—a restless search for something better, correcting the evils of the old, replacing defective parts, and seeking advance, through a tempered evolution, making sure that every change is for the better. We must keep at it until we attain perfection as closely as man can. We must keep alive the spirit of liberty, with the greatest possible freedom of every individual of every race, creed or color, consistent with the rights of others, *and we must resist uncompromisingly reaction to old failures.*

What are the characteristics of our system, and what are its weak spots? Our American way, until much of it was discarded to make way for Marxian ideas, was characterized by:

1. The liberty of every man to live his own life under law, but always with the restriction that he must never infringe on the equal rights and liberties of others. With this reservation, each individual must be free to make the most of his opportunities, with a minimum of regulation, regimentation, and interference.

2. Broad and, as far as it may be achieved, equal, opportunity to make the best possible use of our capabilities and to enjoy the full fruits of our labor.

3. Protection of these rights and recognition of the individual's right to protection of life, labor, and property.

4. A republican form of government, for the Union and for every state, as guaranteed by our Constitution, safe-guarding us from the evils of democracy, as that word is used in *The Federalist Papers* and as understood by the Founding Fathers.

5. A constitutional government with limited powers derived from the people, the legislative, executive and judicial branches checking and balancing one another.

6. A government which is the creation of the people with powers and rights rigidly limited, and with every power not delegated to the central government reserved to the states, to local governments, or to individuals.

7. The sovereignty, within constitutional limits, of the indi-

vidual states and the preservation of free local self-government.

But how about "security," of which we hear so much today—is not that a part of our American way of life? It is the first duty of government to give protection from enemies and dangers, both at home and abroad; but by its very nature life is hazardous, and security, as that word is commonly used, to mean economic security, is not a natural right. It is something that each one of us should earn for himself. To protect every citizen in his liberty, opportunity, and the full enjoyment of all that is honestly his, is the first obligation of the state, and government should do its utmost to protect all in sharing the resources of the globe, given us by the Creator, but this American conception has no room for any demand that the government shall provide for us. Those who built this nation had no idea of anyone ever being guaranteed a job or a living wage, or agreeable conditions of working, and there is no more reason why A should demand a job from B than why B should demand a job from A. Opportunities and jobs every man must find for himself. If the Mayflower Pilgrims had sat around waiting for jobs at "a living wage," they would still be sitting on Plymouth Rock.

If we seek justice and free opportunity, and if we would put an end to conditions which place some at a disadvantage, we must do away with all privilege. In the long history of man, we have never had sufficient faith in the ultimate cause of things, and in the laws by which the universe is governed, to trust wholeheartedly to powers far greater than man and his little mind. Our social, political, and economic systems have always been bound up with the privileging of some and the exploitation of others.

Franklin Roosevelt saw this, before he was tempted, in higher office, to usurp broader powers. As Governor of New York, he said:

"The doctrine of regulation and legislation by 'master minds,' in whose judgment and will all the people may gladly and quietly acquiesce, has been too glaringly apparent at Washington during these last ten years. Were it possible to find 'master minds' so unselfish, so willing to decide unhesitatingly against their own personal interests or private prejudices, men almost god-like in their ability to hold the scales of justice with an even hand—such a government might be to the interests of the country; but there are none such on our political horizon, and we can not expect a complete reversal of all the teachings of history."

From the other side of the fence, the Republican, Coolidge said:

"The most free, progressive and satisfactory method ever devised for the equitable division of property is to permit the people to care for themselves by conducting their own business. They have more wisdom than any government."

Slowly, one by one, we have gotten rid of many of these injustices, but many still remain. Slavery, after long and bitter struggle, is wiped out, from the civilized world although not behind the Iron Curtain. Hereditary aristocracy, with special rights and privileges, is not generally tolerated, and benefit of clergy—the privileging of the educated to be above the laws binding the common man—is forgotten. In the eye of the law we all enjoy equality in political and legal rights; and yet, while we think we have this equality, there are still privileges which deny to some the opportunity enjoyed by others. As long as these are recognized and tolerated, true justice will be impossible. We accept as a matter of course, by custom and through long habits of thought, conditions which close the door of opportunity to millions, which shorten their lives and bring disaster.

The French have given us a phrase which has passed into general use—*laissez faire*. Freely translated, this means "leave alone." It is an answer to the old fallacious teachings of mercantilism, which looked to the state to regulate and control economic life. It is the only sound principle by which men can live, with faith in the individual and his ability to live his own life according to natural law, to make his own decisions, and to choose his own objectives, always on condition that he must respect the equal rights of others.

This phrase, *laissez faire*, describes something at which we may well aim. We often hear that it has failed; and, because of its alleged failure, some say that we must revert to the old reactionary doctrine of the supremacy of a totalitarian state, resurrected under such phrases as the welfare state, or a planned economy. The answer is that *laissez faire* has "failed" for exactly the same reason that Christianity has "failed"—it has never been tried. We have never given true allegiance to the laws of nature and trusted men to live their own lives—not even in America, where we make so much of liberty. *Laissez faire* will admit of no halfway loyalty. We cannot say that we will trust in the natural law to govern men's behaviour except . . .! It is like a theory of mechanics building upon all the laws of science except gravitation. We have never left men free. The government has always meddled.

Of course, for true freedom, we must have government, for

liberty is possible only under law. It is the duty of the state to protect us from our enemies and from our fellows and from some natural hazards. When the state goes beyond these limitations and trespasses on the natural rights of the individual it violates its trust.

A conspicuous case of the state interfering with natural rights lies in our commonly accepted system of *absolute* ownership of land. The world and its natural endowments are the gift of the Creator, and there is not the slightest reason to suppose that this, the first necessity of life, was put here for a few to the exclusion of the many. Yet we, and all the so-called civilized countries, have built up a system of land tenure which has made possible a monopoly of the earth so that the privileged can exact from the vast majority payment for a spot in which to be born, to live, or to die and be buried.

Contrary to common opinion, there is in many lands, including our own, very real monopoly of land. Relatively a small proportion of the people own a large proportion of desirable land. To make it worse, much of this land is held virtually idle, in the hope of an unearned profit resulting from the pressure of population and benefits of government for which all the people pay.

This absolute ownership of land is at variance with primitive custom, where land is a common possession, and contrary to our own traditions and to established law. It is a hangover from the old feudal system and its latterday counterparts, such as the "landed aristocracy," in which the masses were tenants, and the old "manorial" system of patroons in the Hudson Valley, ended by the Anti-rent War of the 1840s.

The idea of absolute property in land, with no restrictions, is quite unknown in English law, and the Constitutions of many of our states give no recognition to such absolute ownership. Nevertheless, and though leaders and thinkers have raised their voices in protest, ignorance, inertia, and indifference still keep alive this privilege. Can any man believe that the prime essentials of life, the basic things without which it is impossible to pick a fruit, to raise a blade of grass, or to catch a fish, or for that matter even to have a foothold upon the planet, were created to be monopolized by a few? Have the rest of mankind no right to so much as a spot whereon to be born or a grave in which to lie, without asking charity or paying tribute to a privileged class? We talk about monopoly, but there is no monopoly to be compared to the monopoly of the first essential of life, based on the system which condemns each newborn baby to pay throughout life a

tribute to the landowner, unless perchance he happens to be one of the fortunate ones who, instead of paying tribute, exacts it.

We cannot have true *laissez faire* as long as we create artificial conditions conducive to injustice; and, if we persist in perpetuating an artificial and disastrous monopoly, we resort to artificial measures for its remedy. "Nationalization" of the land and its redistribution, or its leasing by the state as universal landlord, would be the height of folly. Land titles must be preserved and respected, and the landowner must be protected in the full enjoyment of his land by untaxing its use. All we have comes from the land, and it becomes a question of whether we shall tax the ownership of land or its profitable and productive use. Taxation *must* fall on the landowner, and it is far better to tax the land than the use to which it is put.

Such a change will bring land into use and broaden opportunity for multitudes. It is true that many in the cities have no desire to turn farmer, but it is also true that many do so desire, and desire it most earnestly. They want to get into the country, where they can own some land, have gardens, raise some of their food, and perhaps keep a few animals. Unquestionably, if we had a saner policy, agriculture would be in far happier position and farmers would be able to earn decent incomes, without dependence upon wretched doles and pampering by the government. Under better conditions, unquestionably many would turn farmer in earnest, for there seems to be an instinctive desire to get closer to nature.

In the early days, life was simple, luxuries were few, many lived humbly, but everybody had enough. If a man did not like the terms of his employment, he could strike out into the wilderness and support himself and his family by what he could raise, shoot, and trap. Jefferson well said that our people would continue "independent and moral so long as there are vacant lands to which they could resort—they can quit their trade and labor in the earth." This was a great safeguard protecting us from exploitation in the early days.

The days are over when we can boast that "Uncle Sam is rich enough to give us all a farm." Land monopoly, with increasing population and increasing pressure on our resources, becomes daily a more threatening condition. With the disappearance of the last frontier, many lost their opportunity for free living; and poverty came; and this gives us a clue to the riddle of poverty, and why the wage-worker is often at a disadvantage; today he often has no choice but to accept employment at the hands of another.

Wages are earned; and, as we have seen, interest is the reward of self-denial and for doing without today in order to provide something of lasting service instead of consumption goods. But rent? It is the differential in desirability of different land holdings and is inescapable; but, if it can be said to be earned, it is earned by society and, in justice, should be returned to all. Failure to do this means that the exactions of the tax-collector must defraud the worker—be the work manual or mental—of a large part of the production which constitutes his natural wage.

To insure the greatest degree of freedom and of opportunity to all men, reform of our system of land taxation is imperative. We would go further: we believe that it will be utterly impossible to check the fast-growing canker of communism until we reestablish the right of man to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, giving full respect to property rights, whether individual in the product of life and labor, or in very essence communal, as products of our common life.

Coupled with this essential tax reform should go the reestablishment of the Constitution, compulsion on officeholders to observe the statutory oath which they take and impeachment of those who violate it. If we effect tax reform, we shall put an end to the utterly unprincipled extortion of private property and its corrupt use; and, if we reestablish the Constitution and clarify and strengthen its provisions, we shall again be safeguarded by many precautions against excesses of government. We shall be able to keep it within bounds and prevent its becoming an instrument of oppression, and we shall restore and preserve free local self-government, the keystone of our liberty. On the other hand, without these two essential changes, the situation looks hopeless, and tragic disaster looms ahead.

Such reforms would go far to restore the natural rights of men to life, liberty, and property, as Locke put it in what was the basis from which Jefferson drew when framing the Declaration of Independence. We often speak vaguely of property rights, and it is foolishly said that sometimes we place property rights ahead of the rights of man. This is nonsense: property has no rights whatever, but the individual has rights to the property which he produces by his life and labor. Your car has no right upon the highway unless you drive it there; your shoes have no right upon the pavement unless your feet are in them. Property cannot possibly have any rights, but men have a very sacred property right in the product of their life and labor, and upon this keystone the whole arch of civilization rests. If we would preserve this

right, we must untax it just as far as possible and support our government by collecting what is justly a common income.

We should also abandon everything which creates favored classes, enjoying special rights and privileges denied to others, or conferring special privileges and exemption from law on favored groups. It may seem a small matter, but the writer resents the formal recognition of a "labor" class in our supposedly classless society and the establishment of a holiday dedicated to its glorification. It seems to be human nature to clamor for freedom and equality; but, as soon as we win it, we want to go further and set up ourselves as a favored class. In early days the "working man" resented class distinctions: now he seeks them in favor and privilege for his own group.

We find organized labor constantly seeking privileges denied to others, united to seek preferred treatment, favored employment, and special opportunity to the exclusion of other workers. Frequently, special legislation is sought, requiring that public contracts be placed in a way to give them advantage, by the closed shop and similar devices, to exclude non-affiliated workers from employment. By limiting the opportunity to learn a trade and the number of apprentices, they create something approaching a monopoly in trades and crafts. Generally speaking, the unions are exempt from all anti-monopoly and anti-conspiracy regulations and are free to unite to fight as a unit for special privileges. This is notably evident in the management of strikes, and particularly in sympathetic strikes, for the unions are free to follow policies which would land industrial leaders behind the bars or subject them to heavy fines.

The unions have succeeded in denying freedom of speech to employers, who were long forbidden from even expressing opinions about labor unions or about strikes. In contrast with this long-enforced control of employers, workers can say practically anything they please and are often free to resort to methods which would land others in jail.

Any full discussion of the complex question of labor relations and labor organizations is beyond the scope of this book. There are many problems, and we believe that in the long run the way to meet them is to eliminate all privilege to favored classes.

We should avoid all which sets one class against another, creditor against debtor, employer against employee, landlord against tenant, manual worker against mental worker, and all which gives one advantage over the other. Inflation is often aimed fallaciously at helping the debtor. Housing and rent-fixing pro-

grams discriminate against the landlord and in favor of the tenant. The tariff taxes consumers to pay a subsidy to favored manufacturers, and it hurts grievously our export trade. Today, the idle and the thriftless and those who just don't like to work have "security" paid for by the industrious and thrifty.

These are but a few illustrations of many, conferring special privilege on some and penalizing others, and then, when political expediency compels it, granting compensating benefits to groups against which we have discriminated. Thus we develop a society full of antagonistic elements, class prejudice, and ill feeling; and this inevitably leads to communism.

To end these conditions, we must go back to the Constitution and give it full respect and obedience. We should require all public servants from highest to lowest, in all three branches of government, to live up absolutely to the oaths which they take to support the Constitution. We must respect those clauses in the Bill of Rights which define and limit the powers delegated to the United States and forbid the encroachment of the federal government upon the states.

We hear much about our overworked lawmakers and bureaucrats, and there is constant effort to increase their compensation and to add to their numbers. As a matter of fact, a great deal of *this heavy load they have assumed for themselves by violating the Constitution and undertaking functions for which they have no constitutional authority.* If we would respect and enforce the Constitution, the load of those in government service, from top to bottom, would be lighter, the national payroll would be cut, expenses and taxes would be vastly reduced, and there would be a far greater measure of general prosperity. Obedience to the Constitution, its clarification in some points, and renewed emphasis in other places, would be a simple change which few could oppose.

Jefferson wrote, in 1823, "I believe the states can best govern over home concerns, and the general government over foreign ones. I wish therefore to see maintained a fulsome distribution of powers established by the Constitution for the limitation of both and never to see all offices transferred to Washington." Again in 1911 the Supreme Court said, "Among the powers of the states not surrendered, and which power therefore remains with the states, is the power to so regulate the rights and duties of all within its jurisdiction as to guard public morals, the public safety, and the public health as to promote the public convenience and the common good."

Although he followed quite a different track when President, Roosevelt, when Governor of New York, wisely said:

"The preservation of . . . home rule by the States is not a cry of jealous commonwealths seeking their own aggrandizement at the expense of sister states. It is a fundamental necessity if we are to remain a truly united country."

This mere limitation on the powers of the federal government, if properly enforced, would put an end to much that paves the way for communism. There is nothing in the Constitution to justify the TVA, nor to authorize the federal government to engage in charity, the building of houses, the giving of doles, the interference with education, or a hundred other things upon which the federal government is every day trespassing. And then our legislators complain of being overworked! Let them mind their own business and obey the Constitution! If these things must be done politically, leave them to the states.

Ours is an enormously rich land, abundantly endowed with natural resources, and our people were, until demoralized, independent, resourceful, courageous, self-reliant and self-respecting. With these two combinations—a rich country and a sound citizenry, strong in its passion for liberty—there is no reason on earth why we should not be uniformly prosperous, with no unmerited poverty. This is especially true in this modern age when there has been such a marked advance in scientific knowledge and in developing the means of production.

If we live in freedom under a government which no longer oppresses us, if we are protected in the enjoyment of those things which are ours, if we live in accordance with the laws of a free economic society, we can rest assured that all will prosper. Of course there may be individual cases of suffering frequently undeserved. There will be natural disasters, times of drought and flood, disease, pestilence, and accidental death; but the American people are generous, sympathetic and kindly; and, *if the government will protect us in true freedom and no longer exploit us, these problems will be easily and willingly met by private charity and far more wisely than through a political bureaucracy.*

It may strike the reader that our statements are extreme, but they are borne out by the best of evidence and by long experience. Possibly the reader will think that we are unduly alarmed at recent changes in national life and in our attitude, and that we exaggerate the dangers ahead. We believe, on the contrary, that

not nearly enough has been done or said to rouse our people to action.

Today, unfortunately, there seems to be a passion, sometimes inspired by those who seek the overthrow of our government, to urge that we go slow, that we disregard charges made and abundantly proven against those in high office. Whenever charges are made against officials in public life or dangerous elements in society, there is always clamor against those who bring the charges and an attempt to place them in the wrong, rather than give attention to the charges. It is exactly as if, when we see a policeman arresting a burglar, the onlookers, instead of assisting in the apprehension of the wrong-doer, should turn their wrath upon the policeman and refuse to give him aid because he is not a churchgoer, or because his life has not been blameless.

The question is, can we trust the individual to work out his own salvation in freedom, under the laws of God and man, and to stand upon his feet, or shall we look to political control to regulate the lives of all our people? We have believed that the state was the creation of the people: if so, is it not wise to trust the people, and to rely on their intelligence, ability and integrity, rather than to delegate control to a political bureaucracy? Is it wise for the state to assume the responsibility of caring for every individual, or is it better that each individual, standing on his own feet, and making his own decisions, shall provide for his future? Should we not do better to rid our society of handicaps which make the future precarious, and to leave it to the individual to work out his own salvation, rather than to make each citizen a pawn of the state?

Frankly, we think the outlook is black unless there is a radical change very soon. The generation to which the writer belongs will soon be passing away, and we must admit in all honesty that we have made a mess of nearly every problem that has come before us. The whole world is in turmoil, fighting everywhere, with prospects of greater and worse wars looming large upon the horizon. Our own country is saddled with a debt absolutely unprecedented. The annual interest alone is far in excess of total expenditures of our national government for *everything* in any *five-year* period, during the first century or more of our national life. We have betrayed our people by repudiating promises and breaking contracts, and in all probability this will happen again if our debt continues to grow; for, if this happens, it is hard to see how we can escape another devaluation. We have abandoned liberty and personal responsibility, and the majority of our people

look to the state to protect them and to provide for them, as sheep look to the shepherd.

Unless there is a sharp about-face and that very soon, there is only disaster ahead; and if there is a note of pessimism in these pages, it is only because we see a danger in the conditions and trends of today. The writer believes that the freedom for which our forefathers fought nearly two centuries ago is worth preserving. He believes that it is wiser for each man to develop a sense of responsibility and to realize his obligations to himself and to society than to make us all wards of the state. Then, wiping the slate clean of all schemes built upon the philosophy of Marx, we will be in a position to continue to improve our government, our politics, our economics, our whole social life.

It is to the younger generation, to those in our schools and colleges, that we must look; and the responsibility of averting disaster lies upon those to whom we must soon turn over the reins. Let us hope that they will do a better job in their generation than we have done in ours, that they will save the ship of state from wreck, and that they will put our nation once more upon a path of evolution toward a brighter future than any civilization on earth has ever seen. The possibilities are great and they are within our grasp.

QUESTIONS

Has any other great country ever developed as high a standard of living and as efficient economic machinery as the United States enjoyed under free enterprise?

Granting that there are weak spots in our system, which is the better, to correct and improve things by progressive evolution, or to reject a system which has proved its worth and revert to ancient practices which have always failed?

Which system is reactionary and which is progressive?

Is absolute ownership of land desirable and ethical or should we accept the opinion of jurists, that land ownership should be subject to the supreme rights of all the people?

Would it be wise, in order to restore to the dispossessed their opportunities, to confiscate land and redistribute it?

Is it wiser to protect our people in the tenure of land and in the enjoyment of things which they do in, on and to the land, and to effect the just distribution through the collection of ground rent, to be used for the good of all through government?

If such a program would make it possible to abolish a great part of our taxes on labor or its products, would it be a social advance?

Is it wise to set up organized labor as a favored class to enjoy privileges and exemptions granted to no other group?

Would you favor going back to the Constitution, obeying it and supporting it and, if desirable, modifying it by amendment?

Do you recognize it as the duty of citizenship to study these questions and to give them fair, unbiased consideration? Do you consider it your duty to fit yourself for coping with problems of this nature so often mishandled in the past?