

## VIII

### THE PRESENT TREND

THE consequences of years of folly, greed and injustice are glaringly apparent, and depression years have brought a recognition of evils which have long been tolerated. But our people are divided and class is set against class, all demanding privilege and seeking to correct one evil by the imposition of another. Discontent ripens into factionism and corrupts the state, imperiling its very existence, and disaster looms ahead.

The way to right these wrongs is simple and clear if only we will see it. Ours is a rich land abundantly blessed, and were freedom re-established, any who would work would find it easy to provide both for today and for the morrow. In the American way of life there can be no room for privilege, nor should we look to others to plan our lives for us. That is a personal responsibility, and the only just sharing which the state should compel is the sharing of the opportunity which the Creator has provided for all. No upheaval is necessary—only justice and the restoration of man's natural rights.

At every turn expedients are proposed to correct old iniquities, but quacks, charlatans, and demagogues are more in evidence than sane, constructive thinkers, and most of the panaceas offered are either harebrained schemes or are framed on the immorality of taking what is theirs from some to give to others. A few proposals have some merit, although, at best, they are superficial. The co-operative

movement, profit-sharing, and collective bargaining may be commended so long as they are voluntary and government takes no hand in compulsion, which violates our rights and freedom. Such plans may well supplement greater reform, but in themselves they accomplish little. Rochdale cooperation is a success so far as it goes, but it has done nothing to end poverty, and collective bargaining has done but little for the masses of our people.

In another category—for they are humanitarian and not economic—are laudable attempts to correct injustice by charity. We have said that to prevent war is better than to set up rickety machinery to stop it, or to accept the defeatist position that we must always have it so let's do our best to make it less a thing of hell and strive to turn it into a gentlemen's game. So, too, it is better to prevent poverty than to relieve it while we condone its causes and misinterpret Christ's saying to make it mean that poverty must always be tolerated.

But there is one school of thought which, corrupt as it is, cannot be summarily relegated to the limbo of crackpotism. It is aimed, professedly, at the root of evil, and if we accept its fallacious premises there is a degree of consistency in its deductions which entraps many minds. It goes under a diversity of names and follows many patterns, all essentially alike in the negation of liberty and the suppression of freedom. Socialism, communism, collectivism, new-dealism, and all similar schemes are alike in this, and they are all part and parcel of the totalitarian way of thought.

The epitome of communism, "From each according to his ability, unto each according to his needs," is a sound and Christian way of life and the ideal of the happy family, but in it coercion can have no part and it is outside the province of politics. Communism does not consist in adherence to cult or party: it is a way of thought and of

action. One can be a temperance advocate or a teetotaler without joining the prohibition party, just as many a true Christian belongs to no church and many who disclaim formal allegiance to frank and organized communism nevertheless support its tenets. If the reader will accept the dictum of Marx as a brief statement of communistic principles, let him ask himself in all honesty if we have not traveled far on the communist's path—a path which denies man's rights and can be defended only on a plea which disregards principles.

The President declares the social objectives of the Administration are to give the people "more of the good things of life, to give them a greater distribution, not only of wealth in the narrow terms but of wealth in the wider terms; to give them places to go in summer time—recreation; to give them assurance that they are not going to starve in their old age." To give to all a free and equal opportunity to earn these things is a commendable and proper objective of government, it is only justice, but to give these blessings outright, regardless of merit and with no consideration for those who have earned them by their sweat and toil, is pure communism.

It is easy to draw up idealistic declarations of aims which promise much but which give not the slightest thought to how these blessings are to be had. A great branch of the Church has published a "Bill of Rights," guaranteeing "economic and political security for every person in the world and of the rights of labor to decent working conditions, a living wage, reasonable hours, the abolition of child labor and other inequalities." Then other bewildered generalities are listed, but without a clue as to how these blessings are to be provided. But it is not said how political security is to be insured to all the world. Is the United States to engage in a great crusade of arms to end all oppression

and to give freedom and self-government to every Hottentot? Economic security, too, is as great a problem. How can it be guaranteed to those who refuse to work for it? Whence comes the living wage if labor does not produce it? If some will not earn their living, are others to be enslaved to earn it for them, and, if so, what becomes of their security? Like it or not, it has been ordained that "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," and if he who eats will not sweat, then another must sweat for him. Those who publish such platitudes might well give thought to the way to be followed before they give voice to idle dreams: whether or not men everywhere enjoy such blessings is their own affair and our effort should be to see how the barriers to earning them can be broken down.

Monopolizing the gifts of the Creator debars millions from all opportunity to earn a livelihood. Remove this great impediment and men can stand upon their feet, but to give outright what others have earned is robbery. It is downright immoral, and this is just exactly what the communist proposes and what we are doing today. Again we quote Fiske:

"Robbery may be committed by governments as well as by individuals. If the business of governing is placed in the hands of men who have an imperfect sense of their duty toward the public, if such men raise money by taxation and then spend it on their own pleasures, or to increase political influence, or for other illegitimate purposes, it is really robbery, just as much as if these men were to stand with pistols by the roadside and empty the wallets of people passing by. They make dishonest use of their high position as members of government, and extort money for which they make no return in the shape of services to the public."

Communism, under whatever name, consists essentially in such practices—taking from some what is theirs for ad-

ministrators to give as they will, and this we are doing today in ever-increasing measure.

To illustrate what is being done, we mention but a few examples, which can be multiplied indefinitely if we read the daily papers. Enough has been said of doles, pensions, and "social security," paid for by all but dispensed only to a few. They are the perfect embodiment of the maxim of Marx and inevitably undermine character, for it is demoralizing for some to get what others earn. If we must have old-age pensions they should be on an actuarial basis, similar to many retirement plans for employees whereby allowances, when the age of usefulness is passed, are made proportional to what has been paid through pay-roll deductions, regardless of needs and to rich and poor, thriftless and thrifty, alike. To say that the cost of such pensions would be prohibitive is the shallowest of reasoning. The funds come from our pockets in any event and we could far better pay more and get back the benefits for which we pay than pay out less and derive no return.

Class legislation in every form and the appropriation of national funds for local benefits is distinctly communistic for one group or one section reaps benefits paid by others. It is sometimes said that all government, being a co-operative enterprise, involves sharing, but the argument must not be stretched too far, for in all sound co-operation benefits are proportioned to contributions. Government does much for the benefit of all: we maintain armies and navies for common defense; we build roads and sidewalks for all the people, and we unite in providing all with fire and police protection, but these services are so broad and general and so universal in their benefits, that it is impossible to allocate their costs on individual beneficiaries. Even at that, something is done at apportioning costs: for the use of roads and bridges there is often a

charge in tolls, and though fire and police departments give general protection to all, when individual needs go beyond this public service we pay our own watchmen and buy our own extinguishers and sprinkler systems.

At first glance there may seem to be little objection in following the same course in dispensing some of the charity, which is the duty of all, by pooling through governmental channels, but once embarked on a policy of public giving, it is almost impossible to call a halt. Each class, each group, even individuals, as exemplified in private pension bills, clamor for more and more, until the state devours the substance of the people and destroys the Frankenstein to whom it owes its birth.

If impatient of theory and seeking a pragmatic test, consider how often the schemes of government defeat the avowed purpose of helping "the forgotten man." Taxation bears hardest on the unfortunate, for those closest to the edge of mere subsistence can least stand the increased living costs which indirect taxation always brings. Yet the very poor must pay in this indirect way for operations from which they derive no benefit whatever. "Places to go in summer time"—how nice it sounds, but of what avail are they to those kept at home by the wolf at the door? Do the poor benefit by public ski trails, municipal golf courses, or a host of "cultural" advantages, when the struggle for bare existence precludes their enjoyment? Free education in the higher brackets is grand for some, but it is far from just to exact the cost from families so circumstanced that their children cannot benefit.

Countless undertakings of government only broaden the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots." The demagogue delights in attacks on Wall Street and "the trusts," but how do such persecutions react? The first to suffer are those who lose their jobs, and all that restricts the expansion

of business limits employment. The corporation is a lifeless thing, "with neither a body to be kicked nor a soul to be damned," and, when we attack it, we injure not an impersonal legal fiction but the stockholders who own it. Often the greatest corporations are largely owned by many of very limited means, possessed of only a very few shares, which represent the savings of a lifetime of industry and thrift. When the investments of savings banks and insurance companies are jeopardized, it is often those living on a very narrow margin who suffer the most. Even the absolute pauper does not escape when endowments of foundations, homes and hospitals are impaired, for it is to such institutions that the flotsam and jetsam of humanity must turn when disaster strikes. All our lives and interests are intertwined and interdependent, and no injustice can be tolerated without injury to all. Each yielding to pressure groups and every undertaking tainted with any policy of "dividing up" speed the corruption of both state and electorate, and already we have gone far enough to delight the hearts of the extreme reds in inciting a class consciousness which brings hope to them of the "class struggle" to which they look forward.

Every day old failures are resurrected as new proposals, and to oppose them is to oppose what the half-baked and unscrupulous call progress. The whole new deal is as old as time and nothing but a reversion to old failures. Even in our own short history we have many a bitter lesson if we will but learn. The first English colony on our shores was built on a collectivist economy. Read the history of the Jamestown settlement and of the terrible "starving time" which would have annihilated the whole enterprise had not that doughty old warrior Captain John Smith put an end to its madness by insisting that he who would not work should not eat. Read the stories of innumerable commu-

nities, established by starry-eyed zealots bent on sharing and dividing up—all a succession of dismal failure. Those who say that going a little way does not commit us to following the path to its end may well bear in mind that a taste for getting without earning grows upon that upon which it feeds. Such policies fast build up interests which cannot be dislodged and continually ask for more. We have a lesson in the insatiable demands of some of the veterans of the First World War and in Congressional blocs, never satisfied and always insistent on the preservation of privilege. Sometimes those at a distance see a situation clearer than those close to it, and Winston Churchill, commenting on American policy, has sounded a warning:

“Immense use is made of the borrowing power for relieving unemployment which would largely cure itself, if even for a single year the normal conditions of confidence were restored. Party politics invade every aspect of economic life. . . . When one measures the prodigious sums which are being expended on various forms of relief, pump priming, and new deal ideology, it is possible to visualize the innumerable official and semi-official classes and hierarchies inevitably called into being in the process, who will henceforth cherish a vested interest of their own.”

That many of our liberties are already destroyed no fair-minded observer can deny, and we may well remember what Franklin said: “They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.” We sing about the sweet land of liberty and the land of the free and we celebrate Constitution Day, professing to revere that great charter, while its guarantees are desecrated and our rights slip away. Each year there are hullabaloes celebrating the enactment of the Bill of Rights, but do those who hand out platitudes on such occasions ever bestir themselves to preserve the rights therein pledged?



"Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation," but what can be said of the enforced surrender of gold for questionable vouchers for fifty-nine per cent of its value? Freedom of speech is guaranteed, but what do these pledges mean when the National Labor Relations Board rules, and courts sustain the rulings, that an expression of opinion by an employer regarding labor unions constitutes "unfair labor practice" and brings heavy penalties? Even favorable comment falls under the ban, if the union which the employer favors is in official disfavor.

To hold respect, a government, like an individual, must respect contracts freely made and not prejudicial to public interest. What can be said of the sale of "gold" bonds and the repudiation of the contract made within three months? Is there either justice or liberty in prohibiting men from contracting for the sale of their labor, or prohibiting others from employing them, unless they become members of irresponsible organizations? With the organization of labor and with collective bargaining there can be no quarrel, and, when these associations stray and become rackets, the fault lies with unscrupulous leaders and not with the rank and file. Why should a business be compelled to bear the burden and expense of collecting dues and enforcing membership in an organization in which it has no part? The employer may even be compelled to make substantial payments to men who had rendered no services whatever and with whom there was no contract definite or implied. Read the Labor Board decisions of September 1, 1939, by which the Waumbec Mills was compelled to pay what was called wages, covering some two years, and to give employment to two men with whom it had refused to have any dealings whatever, for absolutely no reason other than that the men belonged to a favored labor union. Read a similar decision of October 20, 1941, in the case of the Veta Mills,

and if it be questioned that our rights have been taken from us, peruse other volumes of the rulings of the Labor Board and examine case after case, where, whatever be the rights and wrongs of the controversies, there cannot be the slightest justification of measures taken for their correction. Employers are punished not only for expressing opinion but also for such acts as making a room available for meetings of employees, for paying them for holidays, and for announcing, "We are operating tomorrow as usual and your job is open to you if you care to come in."

Again and again, some are permitted and even encouraged to do what would land others in jail. The prosecution of "the trusts" for conspiracy in restraint of trade is an old story, but under the NRA we compelled this very action and then prosecutions were ordered for compliance with these regulations when the government believed itself to suffer from conditions imposed in ordinary commerce. Business must generally incorporate and submit to some audit and control, but labor unions have no such obligation and often do business under a loose association, with no accounting even to their own members, sometimes opening the way to crookedness, blackmail and coercion. And while business is often taxed to the point of ruin, the overflowing treasuries of labor unions are not taxed a penny. Justice has torn off her blindfold and no longer holds impartial scales.

Not always is it big business that suffers, for injury falls on all—small business, the workers, the unemployed, and the pauper. We have in mind a wretchedly poor man with a very large family who parted with all his savings to secure admission to a labor union. For years he has had no job, except such odd jobs as he can pick up, for his own union persistently refuses him all opportunity because of the seniority of membership of others.

Let us face the facts squarely. If communism is our

choice, and if we elect to go the way of the dictator countries, that is our privilege, but if we take it, let us be honest about it and stop all cant about democracy, liberty, man's rights, and the ideals for which we pretend to fight. The war must be fought relentlessly, but there is another danger which must be faced, a danger perhaps more imminent than defeat of arms. It is the danger foreseen by Macaulay, a danger engendered by our own institutions and one upon which the Nazis build. Defeat in this struggle is more probable than defeat on the battlefield, although that possibility, too, we do not discount, and in both struggles we are terribly weakened by our own follies and self-seeking. Fortunate it is that the same measures which will make us strong against aggression will also strengthen us at home.

This is no time for overinsistence on every petty right. Interests must be pooled for the safety of all, and the call for sacrifice is universal. From it there can be no exemptions and none must take advantage. We must all make concessions and yield much, but the burden must be shared as equitably as is possible. If justice is betrayed and if all morality is forgotten, it may be written of us, as it was of another far-away country long ago: "God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it."