

La Belle France

Dictatorship does not necessarily follow from a false economy. Poverty does. Political democracy may obtain, in form at least, long after all semblance of human rights has been wiped out by the bureaucracies that flow from a monopolistic economy.

Some weeks ago the government of France—under "emergency powers"—issued in one fell swoop fifty-eight decrees affecting the life of every citizen. Whenever a government goes in for wholesale law-making one expects a batch of new levies on the production of its people. As a result of these "emergency" measures, Frenchmen will pay more for coffee, sugar, tobacco, wine, alcohol, gasoline, telephone calls, bus and subway rides and postage. (Note that where utilities are owned by the government they serve as another instrument of taxation.) Higher income taxes are also provided for.

News reports indicate that these decrees forecast a "three-year-recovery" period, during which, the government hopes, production will be increased by making it easier for business to get capital and by lengthening the work-week.

The proposal to lengthen the work-week is being opposed by the Popular Front—a conglomeration of befuddled socialists of all shades. The forty-hour, five-day week has so decreased production that French economy is on the precipice. The conservatives ask the French worker to work harder; the Popular Front demand more taxation of the "rich" to make up the deficit, overlooking

the fact that the rich have nothing to tax when production stops.

The upshot of this increased taxation will be less, not more, production, for every levy has the immediate tendency of reducing productive enterprise. This will mean less wages, more poverty—and then more governmental bureaucracies to take care of the poor, more decrees robbing the producers of their wealth. Nobody thinks of abolishing all taxes, all restrictions on production, and collecting rent for the social needs of the people. That would be freedom, which neither Marxists nor monopolists desire.

The use of the military to suppress strikes is merely an incident in the political process resulting from underlying economic forces. France may for a long time continue to be ostensibly a democracy. Some day the impoverished people will lend a willing ear to a loud-mouthed promoter—and France will go the way of all democracies.