

Self-sufficiency in America

The theory that we can best secure satisfactions by restricting trade stems from the de-civilizing idea of the planned economy. A plan must have limitations. One cannot blueprint an ever-expanding social order; nor can unlimited manifestations of human desire be fitted into a pre-conceived pattern. Restrictions are essential.

Self-sufficiency must first have territorial boundaries. For some occult reason, indigenous to planners, a certain spot of the earth's surface must provide all the satisfactions demanded by the inhabitants of that spot. This spot must be small enough to permit of the regulation necessary to the plan. The misguided inhabitants have a peculiar habit of seeking satisfactions by trading with people who inhabit other spots of earth that can better provide these satisfactions. This instinct of self-gratification with least effort seems to disregard political boundary lines.

This instinctive disregard of spot limitations is disconcerting to planners, because one cannot control the whole globe. The police powers necessary to planning are not unlimited. In fact, some political areas are so large that planning becomes a herculean task; the nation must be broken up into smaller self-sufficient units.

For instance, the United States. Local politicians, unwittingly borrowing the economic stupidity of Messrs. Hitler and Stalin, are building an increasing number of tariff walls around their respective bailiwicks. The silly slogan "Buy America" has been (logically) extended to "Buy Minnesota" and "Buy Chicago" and "Patronize Your Neighborhood." (There is even a crackpot movement based on the don't-buy-at-all idea, advocating the self-sufficiency of the motorized household.)

One State, to "protect" her wine products, imposes a tariff on beer made outside the State. Another has a heavy tax on vegetable fats imported from the rest of the Union, as an "encouragement" of her dairy industry. Some of the States do not recognize automobile license plates of other states. "Use" tax-

es, on articles bought outside and brought in to compete with sales-taxed articles, have been imposed, and maintained by the courts.

Underlying the minimum wage and child-labor laws is the policy of trying to equalize costs, and attempts to force parity are translated into exclusion acts. Under the guise of morality, States are building up quasi-monopolies within their confines, for the benefit of monopolists and at the expense of citizens.

The reason for this trend to self-sufficiency within States is, of course, the persistence of poverty. That is the excuse for all planned economies, for all restrictions on freedom of productive exchanges. That this method does not solve the problem is no assurance that it will be discontinued. The economic ignorance of the planners (plus the arrogance which comes of political power) rather indicates an increase of planning, with a complete breakdown of our economic system in sight. True, our Federal Constitution theoretically forbids tariffs between States; but economic forces laugh at political forms.