

## Traditions

Traditions are thought habits that have crystallized into behavior habits. They are beneficial or harmful in so far as the idea which fostered this habit of action is good or bad.

The rivalry between neighboring colleges is a pleasant tradition; it makes for kindly memories, stimulates ideals, results in friendly understanding between young men in the formative stage of life. The underlying idea is to bring about through healthy competition the moral, physical and mental improvement of the contestants on both

sides.

But, the idea underlying exclusive clubs, based upon the accident of birth or riches, is that their members are ipso facto superior to those excluded from membership. The resulting habits of snobbery and hypocrisy—for a member must be accepted socially regardless of personal limitations—are degrading. The traditions of an exclusive club tend to destroy any sense of proportion in its members, to lower their moral and intellectual standards.

Very frequently traditions become instruments of social oppression. That is because the ideas that gave rise to these traditions were socially wrong. In England, for instance, where tradition is a fetish, the idea that anything un-English simply is "not done" has resulted in a peculiar subservience of the people that is far more degrading, because self-imposed, than the enforced subservience of totalitarian-ruled subjects. Trace English traditions to their source-ideas and it will be found that these habits of mind have been fostered by the landlords of England for the preservation of their privileges.

The decapitation of the law in the seventeenth century taught these English landlords a lesson. Through control of the church, the school and the law they have since then built up a body of traditions which have successfully protected their vested

rights from skeptical investigation. "Law and order"—"unconstitutional"—and, above all, "un-British"—are the taboos which an economically depressed nation has been taught to respect. So seductively has this process been carried out—by disguising the real purpose with such alluring shibboleths as "freedom of speech," "rights of man," "parliamentarism," etc.—that Englishmen have not felt the shackles of economic slavery slipped upon their wrists and ankles. So strongly entrenched are these traditions that no political party in power has ventured a policy detrimental to the vested interests of England.

The constantly increasing load of taxation, the levy of heavy tariffs, bureaucracy, and finally, Conscription, have been imposed on the English worker so slyly as to make him embrace these burdens as a "duty." The traditions of two hundred years have blinded him to his own slavery. He therefore accepts every burden, not with shame and resentment, or even resignation, but with a sense of martyrdom.

How low can the English worker be reduced by his traducers? The Japanese have traditions, and so have the coolies of China.

All of which applies equally to America, where the modern technique of propaganda is destroying the tradition of freedom born on our frontiers, and replacing it with a quickly made tradition of state-ism. Ten years of depression have aided the process.