

darkening counsel

by URQUHART ADAMS

"NEVER underestimate the power of complexity," said Dean Rusk, implying no doubt that complexity, like adversity, has its uses. Diplomats have long been familiar with conferences that solved no problems because they deliberately confused issues with double talk designed to prevent the finding of solutions. Complexity can be useful, no doubt, for weaving a tangled web such as our forbears used to deceive the people with whom they dealt, in the hope of taking advantage of their confusion and perplexity. It is a technique much admired among charlatans of every description, and the science of economics has its share of men who are very clever at the deceptive art of darkening counsel.

Observe for a moment that politics, the business of government, is always designed to further some particular economic policy — and government is the most powerful organized influence in our lives. So if people can be persuaded to think that the economic principles which determine whether a government is good or bad, are too complex for them to understand, they will lose interest and leave all decision making to the bureaucrats. Eventually things get so bad that they rise in revolt as a last resort when it is evident that reason will not avail.

These cycles of deterioration, climaxing in revolution, solve nothing. This ever-recurring waste of human effort can be avoided if people can be made to realize that economic principles, and the political policies resulting from them, are so simple that practically all untutored savages have understood them and, in consequence, have

been able to survive, sometimes in the most inhospitable environments.

All it is necessary for any man to know about economics in order to comprehend the principle of good government is this: man is a creature of the earth from which he came, to which he returns, and on whose fruits he lives all his life. He must have access to land in order to live. Good political policies are such as make for easy access to land, bad policies make access to land difficult, or prohibitive in price.

Freedom means nothing unless we see in it essentially the right of man to use the land and take from it the means of life. Wherever that right is denied, trouble follows. No one can tell what form the trouble will take. It may be the death of millions, as in the Irish famine, or a large scale genocide as in Germany. Or it may be a Civil War like the unpleasantness in the United States a hundred years ago. We cannot foresee what will happen, or what form it will take, but we can be sure that it will be bad.

And that is in accord with the precepts of our religion, one of which is that the wages of sin are death. Sin, we can suppose, is disobedience to the laws of God, which, as a wise man said, are the laws of Nature.

Our political and economic institutions must conform to the nature of man, because he is a land animal and his base of supplies is the earth. There can be little freedom when a majority of men, the great masses of mankind, have to pay tribute to a minority for the right to live on this earth. That is the situation all over the world today, and nobody but a fool or a tyrant could expect any good to come of it.