
Commies Don't Count

The Chamber of Commerce of the United States is as fretful as a rooster whose harem is being eyed by a rival. Its agitation is recorded in a report, "approved unanimously by the board of directors," titled *Communist Infiltration in the United States*, with the subtitle, in red ink, *Its Nature and How to Combat It*. The thing is well done and is worth the quarter asked for it; that is, if you are not familiar with what is going on along those lines.

When you read this pamphlet you get the idea that these communists are a pretty bad lot, unscrupulous, ruthless, lying, and altogether Machiavellian. No doubt they are. I would not know; the few communists I have come into contact with have irritated me with their stupid vulgarity and I therefore try to avoid them. They do not concern me. Why does the Chamber of Commerce of the United States interest itself in them? The pamphlet suggests purely patriotic motivation. It warns the reader that what the communists hope to impose on him violates the institutions collectively called Americanism. One wishes the Chamber had supplemented its report with a detailed description of the Americanism it is anxious to preserve. Lacking

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such a description, we must supply one from our knowledge of the inclinations of all chambers of commerce which flourish or have flourished in these United States.

WHAT THE COMMIES WANT

Putting that aside for the moment, let us consider what these communist fellows want. Their ultimate aim, about which they are unequivocal, regardless of the methods by which they hope to attain it, is to establish a committee of men who by virtue of their control of the political machinery of the country would order the private and public affairs of all citizens. They claim that such a committee would bring to us that full measure of happiness for which men have always yearned. That the claim is subject to doubt is unimportant; the goal of centralization of power is what we are concerned with. The Chamber of Commerce says that this in itself is very bad.

Considering the nature of political power, we must agree with the Chamber. Political power has always been the instrument by which those who control it have feathered their nests at the expense of those upon whom that power is imposed. In economic terminology this process of getting something for nothing is called exploitation. The seed of exploitation is the human inclination to satisfy desires without expending labor, and we must conclude that all humans, you and I, are exploiters at heart. The crude, uncertain and dangerous method of exploitation is taking by force; the sophisticated method is taking by means of a recognized privilege. The privilege way is better because it achieves regularity through common adulation of the law, on which the privilege is based, and has the further advantage of being supported by the physical force at the command of the political power which created it. Thus, the veterans

could overpower the artisans and merchants of the community and take the goods they want; or, they can apply to the Congress, using their votes as a bribe, for a regularized grant of goods.

The communists claim that their kind of committee will not use political power in this historic way. It is a claim which we must, on the basis of all the evidence, dismiss out of hand; it is predicated on the assumption that the communist is *sui generis*, different in kind from all other men. That partakes something of the miraculous, and until the miracle is seen we shall have to assume that the communistic political committee will operate as all political committeemen have always operated; they will take care of themselves and their friends. The only difference between it and the others is that its exercise of power will be without limit, and that means that the committee will dispose of the entire national output as they see fit. All privilege will be centered in those who control political power. In that respect it will be different from the American procedure, wherein various pressure groups share in the munificence of political power. It will be monolithic rather than pluralistic exploitation.

In either system those who produce the goods and services by which they hope to live are defrauded; assuming, of course, that the producer has a right to enjoy the products of his labors. The difference between the two seems to lie in the extent and incidence of fraud. That's all.

The unhorsing of privilege can be effected only by a revolt against political power *per se*, and for that enterprise the people who make up chambers of commerce show no passion. They engage in no movement for the abolition of taxes, without which the state would fold up, and one is justified in assuming that they do not wish this to happen; the state has proven itself a

valuable ally. They make no demand for the abolition of all subventions, but, rather, are feverishly lobbying Congress and the local politicians for every conceivable tax aid their cupidity can invent. The purpose and practice of every organization of businessmen—industrialists, bankers, farmers, and now laborers—have been to secure from political power some economic advantage for its members. Hence, the current fretfulness about the communists must be laid to the fear of competition in the control of political power.

COMMUNISM VIA AMERICANISM

The essence of communism is the concentration of political power. That will come about, is coming about, in the historic American way; that is, by the outright sale to political power of big chunks of social power in return for privilege. It is a matter of trade pure and simple. This bargaining between privilege and power is so characteristic of our public affairs that it must be accounted an essential of Americanism. The very inception of our centralized government was attended by an urgency to transform worthless Continental money, held largely by patriotic speculators, into purchasing power by means of federal excise and tariff taxes. Tradition has conveniently obscured the fact that our Constitution was framed by the "rich and well-born," on the doctrine that only such are entitled to govern. For about a hundred years thereafter a favorite Americanism was the granting of monopoly land privileges to various groups whose support at election time was the *quid pro quo*; the more important groups got title to the more important forest and mineral resources; the less influential, like the Grand Army of the Republic, had to be satisfied with homesteads. The rise of railroad empires is a prime lesson in Americanism, while the protective

tariff swindle runs it a close second. More recently, centralized power has battered on various "relief" grants, such as handouts to the indigent, parity prices for farmers, aid to educational institutions, and so on; by all of which the membership of American chambers of commerce has profited.

Looking ahead just a little bit, perhaps not more than a year or two, we can discern a development in Americanism which will bring us to the brink of the communistic goal. Industry will force the politician into business by demanding of him a guarantee against capital losses, if not an assurance of dividends. The present situation in the coal industry is a signpost. The industry was taken over by the government when its owners refused to operate it at a loss. The government then concluded the contract with the labor union, and since the owners have refused to assume this obligation, the operation of coal mines became a sovereign function of government. Meanwhile, be it noted, the stocks of the corporations taken over by the government have maintained comparable market values. That is to say, the capital of the coal companies has not been impaired; the owners know that the government cannot force them to absorb losses incurred by its operation; and if they recover their business, any deficit due to operations in the interim will be made up by a tax grant. That is why the stocks of these corporations hold up.

HOW IT WILL COME ABOUT

Time was when Americanism shook at its foundations at the mere suggestion of government intervention in the field of business, except as a benefactor. But now this step is looked upon with complacency, if not as good Americanism. An airline company actually invites the government to take over its business

when the squeeze between fixed rates and wage demands leaves nothing in the way of a return on capital. That seems to be the latest in Americanism. The next step is as straight as the crow flies. Industry will proposition government as follows: regulate us, fix prices, fix wages, if you will, but for the sake of 100 percent Americanism guarantee us some rate of return, or at least assure us against losses. It is not outside the range of possibility that the government will respond by establishing insurance of stock values, similar to the insurance of bank deposits. This will facilitate a transition to the British scheme of translating stocks into government bonds. Either as guaranteed stocks or as bonds, the support comes from taxation. Therefore the holders have a vested interest in government and, having in mind the preservation and perpetuation of their incomes, must skill themselves in the business of politics. They will perforce become the controlling committee. Thus the communistic goal of centralization will be achieved by means of on-the-barrel Americanism.

The commies don't count. That miserable crew of Moscow-led slaves have neither the strength nor the skill to push themselves into a position of predominance. They present no competitive force. But they may, and probably will, hasten centralization by creating a fear of it. We have an historic precedent to go by. In 1786, Captain Daniel Shays, a soldier of the Revolution, organized the debt-ridden farmers of Massachusetts and marched them against the government of the commonwealth. This violence galvanized the privileged classes into action against the dissatisfaction which was current throughout the colonies, and the result was a demand for strong government. There is reason to believe that the cause of Hamiltonian centralization was advanced by "Shays' Rebellion," and that but for the clamoring of the mob for relief from taxation and

mortgaged indebtedness, the substitution of the Constitution for the Articles of Confederation might not have been effected. Whenever the mob starts acting up, the privileged citizenry comes to the aid of political power. Never have these people asked for a decomposition of political power. That being so, the clamoring of the Chamber of Commerce against the threat of communism is more of a portent of centralization than the antics and the slogans of the commies.