

The Conspiracy of Conspiracy

AS a good citizen, you try hard to keep abreast of Washington. You read editorials, you listen to radio commentaries, you follow the pros and cons, but your mind is not quite up to the task of mastering the legislative proposals that follow hard on one another. You are inadequate.

Right now, for instance, you are knee-deep in the argument over socialized medicine. If you were a Congressman, under obligation to decide on this momentous matter, you know you would need months, at least one full session, to come up with a well-fortified verdict. The effect on the nation's economy of loading another six billions on production, annually, deserves your careful consideration, to say nothing of what might happen to the practice of medicine. The health of millions is involved. You cannot afford to cast your vote in a hurry.

But, hardly have you had time to get at the gist of the measure when another of vast importance is thrown at you—the one about donating a billion or two to the military establishments of Europe. And on top of this comes a housing bill calling for another billion, which seems to be the minimum amount the bill-makers will consider these days. So it goes, bills and billions follow one another pell-mell. You are bewildered.

It occurs to you to ask yourself, are the Congressmen who vote on these measures in better case than you? You have known one of them and did not find his intellectual potential much above your own. How could he possibly digest this profusion of legislation and come to a considered judgment in every instance?

Then, there is the President and his cabinet and other advisors, what mental equipment are they possessed of that they can grasp the full meaning of all they propose to do? Are they geniuses? Have they the omniscience that you know has been denied you?

The more you think about the matter, the more confused you become, and finally you give up; you need your wits for the making of a living, to say nothing of meeting the tax-bill. Nevertheless, you cannot put the general trend out of mind. What does it all mean? You cannot help recalling that this legislative machine has been working at top speed these twenty years past. During the depression and through the war and since the hectic peace that shapes up as a prelude to another war, a steady procession of plans and programs has been pouring out of Washington. To what purpose?

You were always told, as you are told now, that each piece of legislation would make for the "good life" in some way. In retrospect, however, the performance seems far below the promise. The grandiose plans and the colossal expenditures did not, as advertised, pull us out of the depression; the war did that. And the war, which was to bring peace to the world and didn't, put upon you and your children's children unto the end of time, as far as you can see, an indecent debt-load that must wind up in the ignominy of default. The political

pledges of the past two decades have not been redeemed. That is obvious.

Nor can you avoid the thought that the new promises, as embodied in the preambles of the proposed laws, are but apologies for past failures. You have a feeling that the whole thing is a bit of necromancy, demanding more faith than understanding, and admonishing that the spell will be broken if you look back on unfulfilled prophesy.

Nevertheless, as you cogitate thus on the political panorama, having given up on the specific items, you see something that begins to make sense. The picture has a pattern after all. The net result of these twenty years of social improvement through political action has deposited a solid residue: a stupendous and firmly entrenched bureaucracy. Of that there can be no doubt. Can it be, your sub-conscious mind asks, that this is the purpose of all legislation? Is Washington merely a conspiracy to load upon the producers of the country a class of privileged parasites?

You are inclined to reject the thought. It is distasteful, to begin with. Then there is the fact that the politicians are always at odds on every proposal, and dissension is not characteristic of cabalistic practices. As far as you can observe, Washington is free of the shush-shush, dimmed lights and locked-door technique you associate with conspiracy; such as, for instance, the communists go in for.

Yet you cannot get away from the certainty that the touted "social gains" did leave a monstrous pay-roll on the country's doorstep. Rejecting the idea that this is done with malice aforethought, you come upon another that is even more disturbing. Perhaps, you reflect, the political mind is drawn by an irresistible inner force toward this bureaucratic ideal, and this is so regardless of party ideology. If all politicians suffer from a common psychological complex, they are in a conspiracy, whether they know it or not.

Legally speaking, a conspiracy is an agreement entered into by two or more persons to do an illegal thing. However, if two or more persons, acting independently and apparently at odds with one another, come by a common impulse to an immoral act, the result is the same as if they were in conspiratorial agreement. And history tells you that the common impulse of all politicians since the beginning of time is toward the acquisition of power. The objective of political power is economic power; in plain language, the goal of all politics is well-paying jobs for its votaries.

It is only when you recognize this psychological fact that you begin to make sense of Washington—or London, or Moscow. If you start with any other assumption—as, for instance, that any social good can result from political action—you let yourself into a maze of irrationality. On the other hand, the contradictions of politics fall into an understandable pattern when you realize that it is a conspiracy to acquire power, more power and still more power.

Well, what are you going to do about it?