

# Two Paths to Collectivism

TWO announcements were recently made by governments 3,000 miles apart. A study of these decrees will be enlightening, first because the new one can be assayed against the experience of the older one, and second because both announcements reveal the rate of speed at which the revolution toward a secular state socialism in the two great democracies is taking place.

Let us study the American announcement first because the Administration has stated that its aim is not socialism. This is the gist of the proposal of the administration for a long-range agricultural program for America—a sweeping new farm program which would remove the price of floors from many foods, create a new system of subsidies to producers, and subject farms to drastic controls such as compliance with all government decrees as to the kind of a crop, and the amount of it, that may be produced.

This, of course, is one of those sleight-of-hand tricks that bewilder the beholder at first glance, and one asks, "How is it done? How are high prices guaranteed when a farmer sells, and low prices offered when a consumer buys?" The answer is subsidies. A subsidy is money paid by the government, and the only money a government possesses is that which is raised through the taxation of the people. Therefore the government hopes the majority of the people will not understand the trick which takes their money by taxation to pay the difference between what the farmer receives and the public pays. It must be this, for just as soon as the boy discovers how the magician brought the rabbit out of the hat he knows it is hocus-pocus. An economic system based on perpetual subsidies becomes as silly as the hat trick as soon as it is understood. Under the hat trick no new rabbit is produced; so in the subsidy trick no new profit is achieved.

The other announcement was made by the British Chancellor, Sir Stafford Cripps, in his presentation of the new budget.

In regard to it he made two statements.

First, he said that the food subsidy program had grown beyond anything that had been contemplated. The government buys the basic foods from the farmers and producers and sells them to the people at a loss. The cost of this loss, the subsidy, for this coming year is estimated at two and one-quarter billion dollars. "That," said Sir Stafford, "just cannot go on."

Second, he pointed out that "social services expenditures will inevitably increase over the next ten years, and we must recognize the unpleasant fact that the services must be paid for by taxation, direct or indirect." He went on to say, "When I hear people speak of reducing taxation, when at the same time the cost of the social services is rising in response to the demands of these same people, I sometimes wonder whether they understand the old adage that we cannot eat our cake and have it, too."

By RUSSELL J. CLINCHY

Then he told the British people that because of these facts there would be a rise in prices, and that the tax rate must remain at the same devastating level, 45 per cent of the pay of an average worker. In commenting upon this, "The Economist," of London, stated that no people in history had ever paid out such an amount of their income in taxation and survived.

Two observations can be made about this story of their economic life which was given

to the British people by their Chancellor. First, it is an honest, straightforward statement that subsidies are grants from the national treasury which must be paid for by consumers. The second is also a forthright affirmation—this program is socialism in action.

The program of the present American administration parallels the program of the British Labor party in almost every detail, with only this difference. The American administration attempts to hide the truth about subsidies under carefully formed phrases, and to disguise the fact that its program is the creation of national socialism by the same kind of figures of speech the Russians use when they call a collectivized state a "people's democracy." It is a bitter experience to admit that an American administration will not treat its people with the same honesty with which the British administration faces its people. Because of this, it becomes necessary for the opposition groups among the American people to proclaim the truth which the Administration will not state—that the payment of subsidies is the foundation of the welfare state, and that the welfare state is the foundation of socialism.

But the American proposal has an even more frightening aspect than its dishonesty, if that is possible. It is the request that the Congress give to the Administration absolute power to control the kind of crops and produce, and the amount of them, that can be raised on American farms. Beyond that, there is a provision which allows the government to dictate how large a farm may be, and to decide whether the land of a farm can be used for farming, for grazing, or must remain idle.

This is a program for a planned economy to an extent never before contemplated in America. But it is not merely a plan for the control of farms; it is, of necessity, a plan for the control of persons, the farmers. Nothing is said about this, but it is actually the first consideration, for before the government can control the land and its produce, it must first control the man who lives and works upon that land, and that means his mind and spirit. That is exactly what the Soviet leaders found when they decided to

collectivize first the minds and spirits of those who had been independent kulak farmers. It is also important for us to remind ourselves that no such plan for the control of farms can stop with the farms. The produce of the farms go on to processing and distributing businesses and so control must be extended to those areas if the plan for the control of farms is not to break down. That such a program is contemplated is implicit in the first message of the President to the new Congress.

The executives and adherents of the American administration are not Communists. They are bewildered and deluded men and women, uneducated in the principles of the philosophy of freedom. The concepts of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution were not formed by expediency, but upon the philosophical and religious studies of the sources of the rights of man. Jefferson was a student of the principles of Hobbes, Locke and Milton, and his writings, such as the Declaration and the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, were founded upon these precepts. He accepted the premise of Hooker that "all authority is derived

of God and resides in the free consent of the governed," and so the rights of man to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are not grants of a sovereign or of a state, but are inalienable because they are received of God. Then, as a matter of course, these rights demand the assumption of personal responsibility upon the part of the receiver, and these responsibilities cannot be allocated to the ruler or to the state without the loss of the moral and spiritual integrity of the person. No clearer illustration of this can be found than that of the German people who lost their moral and spiritual significance, not because they were inherently evil, but through their grant of responsibility to the state.

Our leaders today are confused as to why they want to oppose communism, and that confusion is reflected in the minds of the people. Some say it is because Communist Russia wants to control Europe and Asia. But that was the policy of all the Czars, and is Russian national policy, not necessarily communism. Others say it is because communism seeks the violent overthrow of our government. That is true, and it must be prevented. But that is not peculiar to Communists. The Fascists would have done the same thing if they could.

Communism is an evil because it is a philosophy which seeks to become the program of a state which then will make the state the master and controller not only of the property but of the mind and spirit of the mass of the people. Its basic program is two-fold—the state control of property and the state control of thought and worship.

The day of decision draws near. Right now we must begin to retrace our way to that place where once we lost the road to our destiny. We do not belong on the road to serfdom, that land wherein men sell their souls for what they call security, but which turns out to be a nightmare in which man is a lost soul without a home. Instead, we belong to the land of those who have learned that where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.

Let us turn again, as Americans of the great heritage, and determine that we shall not allow the state to be our master, but that we shall be the masters of the state. The long road of history is lined with the ruin of those states which brought the souls and wills of their peoples by the lure of a granted security, and then led the people to ruin by that mirage. The world does not need one more such ruin. It needs, for the first time in all the twenty-four civilizations, a people who will be really secure and enduring, as far as mortal life is possible, because each member of the society is a person who accepts his and her responsibilities as duties, and asks only that the state act to keep the avenues of freedom open. And that will come, as Toynbee has reminded us, not by copying the ruins of the past, but by a free people rising to meet the challenge of their present as a free society, willing to put their trust in freedom because their faith is placed in God.

*[This article appeared as a letter to the New York Herald Tribune on April 16, 1949 and is reprinted by permission of the author. The Rev. Russell J. Clinchy is pastor of Center Church in Hartford, Connecticut. He writes that he has always been interested in the ideas of Henry George and feels the truth of these ideas is becoming more and more apparent.]*