

## The Goodies and the Baddies

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I RECOLLECT the use of the term "do-gooders" in a recent issue of this journal and it was used of course in a pejorative sense as it usually is. It is interesting how this term has come into use, implying that it is bad to do good to your neighbour. The instruction to boy scouts to do a good deed every day provokes a smile from the sophisticated and the injunction taught for centuries that we should love our neighbours as ourselves, or do unto others . . . etc. seems to earn more lip service than action.

Why then, has "doing good" now become of such doubtful merit?

It is true of course that many who mean well, may press their benevolent intentions where they are not wanted. Some retired people have been known to complain of the good intentions of neighbours and welfare workers who have tried with the very highest of motives to run their lives for them. And we must all have experienced the attentions of the busybody who was "only trying to help."

But these instances of unwanted help are small in comparison with the much needed good that is done by societies and individuals and gratefully received; they have always existed in society and probably always will—they are not important—and certainly are no reason for withholding needed help.

No, for an explanation of the modern tendency to deride do-gooders we must look to the growth of socialism—both the Tory and the Labour versions—which hands out "good" to the masses indiscriminately whether wanted or not and then sends in the bill.

The essential feature of socialistic do-gooding is its total disregard of the wishes of the recipient—or victim—of state benevolence or paternalism. You would like a home? Certainly; you have a basic right to one paid for by other people. Just get in

the queue and if you qualify you can have one that we, who know best what is good for you, will choose, and if it is at the top of a huge block of upended concrete, then be grateful and don't complain.

I sometimes wonder whether the recipients of state welfare, most of whom contribute to greater or less degree towards its cost, need the state as much as the state needs them.

How would election manifestos read and politicians' speeches sound, without widows and orphans, the sick, old age pensioners, the homeless and the unemployed to bestow their do-gooding promises upon?

Politicians brag about the number of houses and flats "they" build and congratulate themselves if they build more hospitals, mental institutions and prisons. They ought really be ashamed that they are needed.

Let's do good to the homeless, they say, and give them security of tenure and statutory lower than market rents. Never mind that the market in furnished and unfurnished flats virtually disappears creating more homeless than before. Let's do good for the homeless and build (for a few of them) expensive flats. The cost, of course, falls heavily on the rates. Never mind, let's subsidize the rates out of taxation and do good to the rate-payers and do good to those who still can't pay, by giving them a rate rebate.

Let's do good to the workers and give them security of tenure of their jobs and never mind the cost to society generally. Let's protect everyone by supporting unions, trade associations, professional associations. Let's do good and artificially stimulate employment with inflation and when prices rise, do more good by controlling them. Let's do good to the car industry, the footwear industry and the textile industry by protecting them from outside competition and if this raises the cost of living, why we can always subsidize everyone by printing more money.

Education, health, the arts—you name it, they'll deal with it with their Big State Brothers, State Sisters and State Mothers.

If someone screams to be left alone, they are at best accused of rocking the boat and at worst of being fascists.

Thus has doing good become debased—we've had a surfeit of it. And why bother to give to private charities when we have our wonderful welfare state? And above all why bother about causes when we have such magnificent state machinery for dealing with effects?

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