

THE POWER OF THE INTELLECTUAL

As the nation and for that matter the world turns increasingly toward socialism, the question naturally arises how did this occur?

Why should America, which has been dedicated to the principles of private enterprise be so avid in its efforts to overthrow these principles in favor of governmental interventionism? It continues to do this while all the time its politicians constantly bemoan the increasing role of government and the need for less interventionism.

If the noted Austrian Economist, F. A. Hayek is correct, it is because of the intellectuals.

Everyone likes to believe he is an intellectual even if he does not call himself one, because everyone associates the intellectual with intelligence, and, of course, we all like to think that we are intelligent.

To Hayek, intellectual constitute a class of people. They are journalist, teachers, ministers, lecturers, publicists, radio commentators, fiction writers, cartoonists, artists, as well as professional men, as scientists and doctors. The fact that they are intellectuals does not mean that they are necessarily very intelligent. In their particular specialty, they may be experts and so have acquired a reputation, but as regards the ability to analyze situations and conditions outside their milieu they are often sadly lacking. One thing, however, they are necessarily expert at is the art of communication. They can convey ideas to others. Most of them may be incapable of coming up with original ideas, but whatever ideas they do have they can pass on quite convincingly to others.

Most of them are also men and women of good will. They sincerely wish the betterment of their fellowman as well as their own. Unfortunately, however, too many of them have little first hand experience with practical affairs. How many teachers could run a business? It is an old cliché that those who can do, run businesses, those who cannot, teach. How many professional men can actually run a business? Most of them, as scientists, are on the staffs of universities and corporations, but have little or nothing to do with the actual administration of those enterprises. The cases of scientists who started companies in esoteric fields as electronics have been instances almost invariably of failure.

Not having a practical turn of mind and yet having an emotional bias toward the unfortunate, they too easily succumb to the blandishments of the socialists, who portray a utopia which superficially appears possible.

"To each according to his needs, from each according to his ability", sounds very fetching. Only when one actually tries to run a business on such principles does he learn that human nature doesn't operate that way. The man of ability isn't going to support the man who needs. He probably suspects he's just lazy.

But the intellectuals never really understand this. It all sounds good and being experts in spreading ideas they become the means by which socialistic tenets are spread among the populace. The TV audience listens to some commentator who in discussing current events cannot help putting his bias on his interpretation. Since his bias is socialistic, whether he is conscious of it or not, his interpretation tends to veer that way. How often do we hear commentators denounce fascist countries for some injustice and yet ignore or excuse the same injustice perpetrated by a communist country? The commentators may not even be aware that they are biased in that way. If asked why no mention was made of some injustice by the communist country, he may say there was more important news at the time. He may sincerely believe that is the reason he neglected mentioning it.

Unfortunately, since the intellectuals have adopted socialism, consciously or not, the populace is constantly inundated with socialistic ideas, and usually done with brilliance for, as mentioned before, intellectuals are masters of purveying information.

It takes time for ideas to percolate into action, which is why businessmen and doers in society often tend to depreciate intellectuals. The practical man immediately sees the absurdity of some proposal of the intellectual and so dismisses it. However, through constant reiteration, the mass of the people begin to believe it has merit. The populace has been led to believe from what the intellectuals tell them that the oil companies have been "ripping off the public" for years, and now when the Arab embargo took place, the public was ready to accept all kinds of governmental interference which has only exacerbated the energy problem.

The intellectual has power - the power to communicate ideas. The effect of those ideas may not be felt for years, but eventually action will result.

The Henry George Schools should try to reach the intellectuals. If we do, the intellectuals will do our work for us. If we do not, we may be hitting our heads against a wall indefinitely and getting nowhere. Our program is one which will take generations to bear fruit so we have time on our side, But the seeds we must plant must be in the intellectuals. The sooner we teach them, the better.

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