

TECHNOLOGISTS vs INTELLECTUALS

Largely as a result of the founding of America with its emphasis on the freedom of the individual, and the huge land area which was sold or given away on relatively easy terms, the 19th and 20th Centuries fostered a gigantic technological development raising the standard of living for millions of people.

Surprisingly, however, few of the engineers, scientists and technicians responsible for this development are known. An Einstein is known, but who knows the men who invented the intricate devices required for broadcasting television programs for example.

It may well be that they are much too busy working and trying to produce ever better houses, factories, and inventions to get into popular notice. About the only time one hears about them is when they may appear at a senatorial or congressional hearing trying to explain why some of the hair brained schemes of some do-gooder will cause more problems than they are supposed to solve.

Today, the popular hero seems to be some professional do-gooder who demonstrates his love of the people by advocating something which will prevent our engineers and technicians producing. In the name of ecology, do-gooders prevented the construction of the Alaskan pipeline for four years, in spite of the fact that the engineers went to considerable trouble and expense to take into account the ecology with due regard for the needs of all of us for petroleum.

Everytime a nuclear plant is proposed, these do-gooders line up with the usual dreary recital of the dangers of atomic radiation. The benefits of these tributes to man's genius are being denied or only partially used because of these so-called intellectuals. Some nations such as Iran ignore such nonsense, but then Iran is a dictatorship bent on becoming a world power instantly.

It was because of these do-gooders that the Environmental Protection Administration was set up. It does not protect the environment--it just is a big stumbling block in the way of people wishing to do something. Actually it is worse as evidenced by the catalytic converters which it forced the automobile companies to put on the 1975 cars. These converters were supposed to eliminate hydrocarbon and carbon monoxide emissions. Two years ago the EPA was warned that these converters substituted a emission of sulphuric acid which was worse than the carbon deposits. It is worse for people particularly with allergies. Did that stop the EPA? It did not. It was not until billions had been spent

that it admitted it made a mistake. The oil industry had to convert to non-leaded gas, which apparently is now not necessary, and of course the auto industry had to manufacture these converters and build plants to make them.

What we are witnessing is a sophisticated revival of the Luddities of the 19th Century. The Luddities were English workmen who went around destroying machines which they said were putting the cottage industries out of business. The modern day Luddite is a professional do-gooder who goes to Washington or Trenton and gets do-good legislation passed on presumably good reasons as a good environment but which amounts to preventing us from utilizing the developments which men of genius have produced.

Today's Luddities are worse than the 19th Century ones. Those men violated the law and so were restrained by the government. Today's Luddites get the government to pass legislation restraining production. So, whereas the 19th Century Luddites were reviled and denounced the 20th century ones are revered.

What we are witnessing is a confrontation between two types of intellectual endeavor--the one devoted to studying nature in order to arrive at scientific principles which will permit man to produce more things better and easier; the other group devoted to studying man.

There is no real conflict between the two. The study of both is necessary and there would be no reason to criticize either group if all they did whatever knowledge they discovered was to put it at man's disposal to use freely if he so chose. But what is wrong is when either group goes to government to bring the power of its force favoring something in which the group might be interested. Technologists have used government for example to give them monopolies on things they discovered.

Today, however, the worst offender are the humanists--the do-gooders. They are pressuring government to prevent doers from doing. It's all in the name of some good purpose but men can never really know the ultimate results of their actions. To clean up the environment by instituting some device may cause more problems than it solves as in the case of the catalytic converters. The bureaucracies set up tend to perpetuate themselves in power so even in the unlikely event they solved a problem they would not go out of business but continually interfere on one pretext or another.

The technologists must take time off to fight the humanists as long as the humanists look to the government to put their ideas into effect. Once it is recognized that all of these problems belong in the domain of public discussion and not in governmental strictures the engineers can devote all their time to their work. The people thru social action will accept or reject the views of the humanists as the people see fit.