

Over My Dead Body!

ROBERT MILLER

THERE APPEARS to be an open conspiracy among some of our politicians—of various political persuasions—to regard the rest of us, not as individual human beings with personal and private feelings, desires, hopes and aspirations, but as masses of statistically activated fodder existing merely for the purpose of furthering some sacred social ideology. The end product in the mind's eye of those who find themselves, by the grace of God and a questionably fickle electoral system, invested with the awful responsibilities of government, is not the happiness and fulfilment of our lives, but the unhindered working of a system. They will argue, without any moral justification, that for the ultimate good of all, the cherished principles of a few must surrender to its will.

This idea of the state exercising supreme control over those who comprise it is by no means new, but that is no excuse for ignoring the present drift merely because we do not as yet experience any noticeable physical effects, nor for taking no action to halt it.

In politics the end rarely, if ever, justifies the means. There should be no end. It should be the natural desire and purpose of each individual, with mutual respect for human rights, to secure his end. It is not the business or purpose of the state to do it for him. If individuals are to be graded, controlled and disposed of like vegetables—and moreover if they allow themselves to be graded, controlled and disposed of—theirs is an immoral government; and what is far worse, they have lost, or are losing, that which distinguishes them from vegetables.

A recent example of this disregard of people as individuals was Mr. Douglas Houghton's pronouncement that "large families will shortly be regarded as a form of social delinquency . . . Procreation is not a purely private matter." The fact that he has since been censured by his own party for over-reaching himself in his desire to dictate how we shall live our lives does not render his words less offensive.

Before uttering such pronouncements, Mr. Houghton and others should reconsider the premises upon which they are allegedly founded. The "problem of large families" can be approached from several different angles. Large families, in fact, are rarely anything but a source of never-failing joy to parents who can afford them; while more frequently, couples having but one or two children, or none at all, find it increasingly difficult to make both ends meet. Mr. Houghton does not tell us how many is "large." What he is really concerned about I suspect, is not large families at all, but people not being able to provide for their children, regardless of the number they have.

If a minority of parents sponge on their fellows by

abusing the benefits of the welfare state, let Mr. Houghton use his influence to tighten up the rules to discourage such abuse. Let him also look closer into the possible causes of such poverty—for when so many, in addition to the spongers, still find it necessary to call upon financial aid from the state while in reasonably sound health, poverty there certainly is, not only in pocket but in self-respect.

Another example of attempted legislation based upon an immoral premise was Sir Gerald Nabarro's Renal Transplantation Bill, Clause 2 of which read: "It shall be lawful to remove from the body of a human person, duly certified as dead, any kidney or kidneys required for medical purposes unless there is reason to believe that the deceased during his life had instructed otherwise."

There is a not so obvious vitally important innuendo in the one word "unless," for by this the Bill sought to establish once and for all the ownership by the state of the kidneys of every person as soon as dead. Mr. Kenneth Robinson, Minister of Health, in rejecting the Bill, expressed the concern of many people when he said: "Accident victims are usually in the prime of life and seldom have had occasion to make wills. We must prepare for cases where there might be objections and those objections are now known. Medical science should not go beyond this and thereby lose the sympathy of public opinion."

The large number of criticisms that could be levelled at the Bill are in inverse proportion to its uncommon brevity (consider in passing the ambiguity of the words "during his lifetime!"). There is the lack of an acceptable definition of death; the vagueness of the term "medical purposes"; the obvious impossibility of tracing and obtaining a rational decision from a tragically bereaved next-of-kin within one hour of the death of the "donor," and so on.

But all these objections, although possessing moral force and validity, are of far less importance than the



fact that there has been an attempt to deny and overrule the most vital principle of human liberty. Mr. Eric Ogden has already described it as the Nationalisation of

the Dead Bill. If it had been allowed to become law there could then be no logical argument against subsequent amendments to include the heart, liver, lungs, eyes, brain—even arms and legs. When phrased in this way the idea sounds revolting, and it is meant to be. Just where would it stop?

To argue that none of these things really matters, especially after death, and that objection on this fine point really has no more significance than an interesting philosophical exercise, and that such a Bill does not seek to deny personal freedom since anyone may contract out of it, is tantamount to maintaining that it should be legally and morally right that all persons apprehended for alleged offences shall be presumed guilty unless they can show evidence to prove their innocence, simply because they thereby have the right to plead not guilty.

Enough ink has already been spilt to expound human rights and enough blood shed to defend them. These are the things in life worth more than life itself. In life and in death man has a right to himself, so that his body shall be decently disposed of without mutilation. The onus is upon him to waive this right and to express his wish to donate his body or any part of it for medical purposes if he so chooses. The state has absolutely no claim of right to any part of any human being, dead or alive. Let that be clearly understood by all, especially those in authority. There is no "unless" about it.

Medical science must be allowed to progress in the conquering of disease and the relief of suffering, and human lives must be saved whenever possible, but not at the cost of human dignity. If we maintain that the occasional saving of a life is justified at the cost of a vital principle of liberty, we endanger the very *raison d'être* of life itself. We need no further proof of this; history runs red with it.

Polling in Australia for Site - Value Rating



CROYDON SHIRE

In Croydon shire recently there was a proposal to revert from the rating of site-value only and return to the rating of the composite value of land and buildings. The proposal was initiated by interests concerned with land speculation just as soon as the three year's trial period expired following the poll at which site-value rating was adopted.

In the campaign in the adjoining shire of Lilydale, last year, an argument effectively used by landed interests to defeat the move for change to site value rating, was that the ratepayers of Croydon were dissatisfied with site-value rating and were only waiting until the three year trial

was over before returning to rating of improvements.

When, however, the proposal was submitted to a poll of ratepayers, they re-affirmed their satisfaction with site-value rating by an overwhelming margin:

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| For rating site-value... .. | 15,040 |
| For rating improvements | 9,550 |
| | <hr/> |
| Margin for site value... .. | 5,490 |

This margin is all the more significant since the multiple voting franchise used at a reversion poll gives extra voting strength to vacant land holders and reduces voting strength of householders as compared with an adoption poll. It therefore weights the balance to make reversion easier. But general experience is that once they have experienced site-value rating, ratepayers are unwilling to return to taxes on improvements.

A major factor in the magnitude of this Croydon victory was the succession of letters from Lieut. Col. L. Jones to the Press over several months during which he methodically shot down the arguments of the land speculators. He proved himself a most well-informed and capable advocate of site-value rating.

PORTLAND TOWN

The proposal here was to change to rating of site value and exclude improvements. The Town had previously used this system but its council two years ago reverted by council resolution without taking a poll of ratepayers. A poll was demanded and resulted in defeat of the proposal for site-value by only 150 votes. Results being:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| For rating site value... .. | 3,444 |
| For rating improvements | 3,594 |

In the narrow loss here two important new factors operated. The area of the town had been extended to take in a large part of the surrounding shire including considerable areas of vacant land whose owners would oppose the change.

Further, a majority of councillors favoured rating improvements and used council funds to distribute to ratepayers a statement opposed to change. This may be legal but is certainly an unethical use of ratepayers' funds.

That most locally residing ratepayers thought so was evident since all three site-value rating candidates were elected to the council. It appears that vacant land holders voted against the rating change but were not interested to vote on the council election itself.

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