

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM IN A DEMOCRACY

#### THE "HAVES" AND THE "HAVE NOTS"

Surely the term democracy takes the connotation of the term freedom. Even in a political democracy, no one ever thought, until this administration put in an appearance, that legitimate commercial and financial activities should be controlled and restricted at the will of politicians and trade unionists. It is true there is always in a democracy, no matter how well ordered politically it might be, a wide division between the "Haves" and the "Have Nots." Still, there has always been, in the past, a well-defined notion that these two groups depend on each other for the necessities of existence. They are only divided in degree. The principle concerning essential production was always present, and it has been my experience, at a time of strike and bad trade, to find men conscious of the rightness of this principle, no matter how low wage fell, and how widely privation was felt. At such a time the workers were just as keen as the employers themselves to greet the turn of the trade tide and set to work again. But all is changed. There seems to be scarcely any evidence in the past few years of a bond uniting employers and men. The experience of the great depression, so far as the men are concerned, goes for naught. Inflammatory speeches by agitators, most of them having no business

experience at all, not even as workers in factories, create a world of prejudice and rancor.

A democracy without some sense of freedom for all its people is nothing more than a political masquerade. When such a democracy is organized deliberately, by an administration, for the purpose of denying the elements of freedom to those who have incomes large enough to supply the politicians with the money they require to bribe their adherents, it is high time for the term "democracy" to be sent to limbo, and the masks torn off the pretenders. Under such a system, every pretense that is put forward in the name of democracy indicates a consciousness, on the part of the rulers, of the woeful lack of political knowledge of their supporters.

#### PROPAGANDA

Political democracy is at last what its severest critics said it would become in this country. It is the preserve of the unscrupulous politician. Every avenue of freedom is closed to those who have sufficient to bear the heavy penalties of tax. The services of the departments of the State are utilized for the purposes of the propaganda of the administration. Charity itself, in the way of relief, is prostituted for the purpose of purchasing votes. The scandals of the grants to the impecunious South are an abuse which reveals utter contempt for the principle which lies at the heart of the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act. Mr. Frank R. Kent says:

"Under this administration propaganda has been carried to an extent utterly without precedent and already beyond reason. A tremendous lot of public money is spent on press agents, publicity directors, public relations counsels, liter-

ature, reports, radio, posters, pamphlets, films and magazines.

"The total cost would be staggering if the total cost could be obtained, but the expenditures are made by so many different agencies and are spread among so many divisions and departments, boards, bureaus and commissions that an accurate total cannot be had."

What the propaganda of the government has cost the taxpayer may be imagined from the figures recently revealed by the House Appropriations Committee. The expense of the Government Printing Office has been doubled and, from 1932 to 1936, the estimated increase in the cost of franking communications by the departments rose from nine millions to thirty-four millions. This scandalous misappropriation of the taxpayers' money is so widespread that Senator Bennett C. Clark was urged to read to his colleagues from section 201 of the Criminal Code, which makes it a misdemeanor, punishable by five hundred dollars fine and imprisonment for one year, for any officer or employee of the United States to use any part of any appropriation made by Congress, directly, or indirectly, "to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device intended or designed to influence in any manner a member of Congress to favor or oppose by vote or otherwise any legislation or appropriation." Senator Clark said, "In view of some of the propaganda which already has taken place on the part of high officials of the government, that section should be brought to their attention. The language is plainly all-inclusive."

To cover up the shocking state of affairs, other senators are raising the question of the propaganda of private individuals, and are denouncing it as subversive

and extremely dangerous. Senator Robinson drew this red herring across the Senate floor, hoping the high odor of it would draw the scent from what his colleagues were doing. Such is the shameful business of diverting appropriations for personal and party use that Mr. Frank R. Kent says:

“The degree to which this administration uses the taxpayers’ money to glorify itself and promote its policies is a shocking and indefensible thing. It is not only morally wrong but of doubtful legality.”

And these are the great purists who came on the crest of the electoral wave in 1932 to clean the Augean stables in Wall Street. These are the people arrayed in spotless white who, with cross and censor, denounced the “stuffed shirts” of high finance, and the “economic royalists” who ground the faces of the poor. For downright cant and hypocrisy, there never was such an exhibition displayed by politicians, even in this country.

#### THE MANDATE OF THE BRIBED

When the Executive comes forward and tells the people that he has a mandate from the electorate to carry out the legislative proposals formulated by his entourage, he is in the way of making a harlequinade of democracy. The mandate of the bribed in the past has always been viewed by the courts as having no standing in parliamentary institutions, and usually the candidate who has been guilty of having been elected by the bribed, has not been permitted to take a seat.

Yet, the Executive seems to have a convenient memory so far as mandates are concerned, for every mandate he received in 1932, with the exception of that

concerning prohibition, was speedily forgotten when he took office. Suddenly all the mandates, from the gold standard to retrenchment, were dispensed with, and the mandate of an "emergency" was put forward, because the "emergency" conveniently afforded the Executive the opportunity of enacting legislation he never mentioned during his candidature. If, when he was a candidate, he thought of the legislation that he enacted in his first administration, then he deliberately deceived the people.

Furthermore, if the bank troubles of February 1933 were considered by him to be a national emergency, it is one of the strangest things imaginable how he in his campaign speeches ignored the far greater banking emergency that took place at the time he was nominated. Of course, nobody now believes for a moment that the "emergency" which came when he took office in 1933, amounted to anything more than a peculiarly shallow pretext for building up a bureaucracy of enormous strength, and gathering about him an army of yes-men.

#### OTHER DEMOCRATS

Still, there have been political Democrats in the White House who have held totally different conceptions of democracy. If anyone will take the trouble to read the *Life of Grover Cleveland*, he will have an excellent chance to contrast what a Democrat thought and said in the 'eighties, with what the present occupant of the White House has said about it. We do not know what he thinks, but we do know what he says, and if there is one thing to be gained, in examining the pages in the *Life of Grover Cleveland*, it is that Cleveland as a politician said what he thought and, in some respects, it was so with Woodrow Wilson. Indeed, the latter is

so far removed, in thought and in speech, from the present Executive of the country, that a so-called Democrat of today in reading the little work called *The New Freedom*, by Woodrow Wilson, would imagine that the expressions and ideas in it were those of a hide-bound Conservative. So, political democracy is a wobbly thing, and depends entirely upon the individual for the meaning that is given to it, and not upon the principles that are inherent in the idea. As it stands, you pay your money and you take their choice. It is very much like the manipulator of the three-card trick who asks you, in shuffling the pack, to find the Queen. The adept in the art has the Queen up his sleeve, but you do not see it produced while your eyes are fixed upon the card you turn, which may be the deuce of knaves or the trey of clubs. It is all done in the twinkling of an eye, an eye that has been in practice for many years—in practice upon people who pay their money in the way of a bet and, when they select a card, watch it, and not the manipulator.

#### LIBERTY IN A DEMOCRACY

A conception of liberty that is not based on equality of opportunity is of little value to a people, and history undoubtedly shows that mere political and emotional notions of liberty do not work out in practice. The idea that the franchise badge denotes a freeman has long since been discarded. The emotional notion that all Americans, by national "right," enjoy liberty wherever they go, and in whatever they do, is not even used for Fourth of July speeches. Nor is the once popular conception that liberty means that a man may act as he likes, think as he likes, and speak as he likes, so long as he does not infringe the equal right of any other

man, of the slightest use to the citizens under our government. Owing to the changes which have taken place in recent years with regard to all notions of liberty, it will soon be necessary to forget, for celebration speeches, all the Founding Fathers. We may be drawing near to the time when children in the schools will be told they must not mention the names of Washington, Jefferson, and Jackson.

#### POLITICAL TENDENCIES

It is difficult to say in what direction the government is heading. There are as many opinions about the tendencies as there are about the causes which set the administration to work. Some people think that we are committed to a Socialistic policy, increment by increment; others imagine that the advisors of the White House cabal believe it is possible to hedge us all in an iron-bound Communist State within a few years. There are, however, quite a number of people who think that, when the administration's policy is complete, the United States, as the only Fascist State of the Western Hemisphere, will be ready to make treaties with Germany and Italy. Then there are a few people who think the government is democratic, and a few others who think it is high time that steps should be taken to make it a democracy not only in name, but in deed. Whatever the tendencies be, and by whatever path we drift toward some unknown goal, there can be no difference of opinion about what has happened to the Founding Fathers. They have all been packed into the Executive's "horse and buggy" and, in all probability, are driving furiously in the direction of the Court of St. James, as it was organized in the year

1774. No doubt, Hamilton holds the reins, and Washington cracks the whip.

It is worth while thinking about the change that has taken place. It was foreseen by many people. Lecky in *Democracy and Liberty* says:

“The American Constitution, indeed, was framed by men who had for the most part the strongest sense of the dangers of democracy. The school of American thought which was represented in a great degree by Washington and John Adams, and still more emphatically by Gouverneur Morris and Alexander Hamilton; which inspired the Federalist and was embodied in the Federalist party, was utterly opposed to the schools of Rousseau, of Paine, and even of Jefferson, and it has largely guided American policy to the present hour. It did not prevent America from becoming a democracy, but it framed a form of government under which the power of the democracy was broken and divided, restricted to a much smaller sphere, and attended with far less disastrous results than in most European countries. Hamilton, who was probably the greatest political thinker America has produced, was, in the essentials of his political thought, quite as conservative as Burke, and he never concealed his preference for monarchical institutions. Democratic government, he believed, must end in despotism, and be in the meantime destructive to public morality and to the security of private property.”

#### JEFFERSONIAN DEMOCRACY

Still, I doubt whether Lecky went deeply into the matter of Jefferson's efforts to limit the power of the three branches of the government. Jefferson realized that it was not difficult to set up despotic government



in a democracy, and in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, written in 1782, there is to be found a whole series of fears which perplexed him, regarding the future of democracy. He says:

“The public money and public liberty, intended to have been deposited with three branches of magistracy, but found inadvertently to be in the hands of one only, will soon be discovered to be sources of wealth and dominion to those who hold them; distinguished, too, by this tempting circumstance, that they are the instrument, as well as the object, of acquisition. With money we will get men, said Caesar, and with men we will get money. Nor should our assembly be deluded by the integrity of their own purposes, and conclude that these unlimited powers will never be abused, because themselves are not disposed to abuse them. They should look forward to a time, and that not a distant one, when a corruption in this, as in the country from which we derive our origin, will have seized the heads of government, and be spread by them through the body of the people; when they will purchase the voices of the people, and make them pay the price. Human nature is the same on every side of the Atlantic, and will be alike influenced by the same causes. The time to guard against corruption and tyranny, is before they shall have gotten hold of us. It is better to keep the wolf out of the fold, than to trust to drawing his teeth and talons after he shall have entered.”

So there was something more in Jefferson's idea than the mere matter of presenting the electoral badge to men. He realized that the franchise was of little use if it were possible for the holders of office to legislate in their own interest. In his First Inaugural Address (1801) he said:

"Still one thing more, fellow-citizens—a wise and frugal Government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government, and this is necessary to close the circle of our felicities."

I doubt whether Gouverneur Morris or Alexander Hamilton saw what might happen in the future as clearly and distinctly as Thomas Jefferson did. Every important defect that Jefferson foresaw in the operation of the administrative branches of the government is now practiced with impunity.

#### DEMOCRATIC TRADITION

But it is not necessary, if one is interested in the democratic tradition, to go back so far as Jefferson to find men who feared despotism in the form which now exists. In all probability, the young, intelligent voter of today would, in reading Grover Cleveland's messages and speeches, have considerable difficulty in understanding that Cleveland was a Democrat. But what would the young Democrat, just of age and voting for the first time, say if his father quoted some of Woodrow Wilson's speeches to him? With his ears filled with radio addresses, a relief check in his pocket, and the Executive's notion of his own brand of democracy in the young Democrat's mind, he could not but think of Wilson as a traitor to the cause. What would he say to the following:

"I do not want to live under a philanthropy. I do not want to be taken care of by the government, either directly, or by any instruments through which the government is acting. I want

only to have right and justice prevail, so far as I am concerned. Give me right and justice and I will undertake to take care of myself. . . .”

Wilson said many things which might give grave offense even to the Executive and Congress. The day may come when they will resent the following:

“I will not live under trustees if I can help it. . . . I have never heard of any group of men in whose hands I am willing to lodge the liberties of America in trust.”

These quotations are set down just for the purpose of giving an idea of how far we have travelled since 1911.

#### BROKEN TRADITIONS

What numbers of men in Congress, who echoed the sentiments of Wilson twenty-five years ago, think of our despotic trustees can be guessed. Not a day passes now but Washington press-men, in their reports, say quite bluntly that many of the old “warriors” do not like the way things are done at the White House. But most of them make little or no protest, and submit to the servility of voting according to the dictates of the party managers.

What is not understood is that we have become quite another people. We are scarcely affiliated in any way with the times of our fathers. Every tradition has been broken. Every bond, which united us to the men who threw off the shackles of George III and North, is severed. There are substantial reasons for this: one is that the stock which held to the tradition, and was all for tightening the bonds of our union, is in the minority. And the reasons why the northern stocks have suffered

numerically is to be attributed to indiscriminate immigration. The result is that there have been raised, in the past fifty years, stocks which can never become American in the way that northern stocks became American and, therefore, these peoples are without a tradition of almost any kind, and fail utterly to appreciate the origin of the United States, and the causes which set the American Revolution in motion. There are other reasons—such as the peculiar organization of the political forces, together with corruption, graft, and intimidation—which are rarely brought to the courts, and very seldom punished when misdemeanants are caught.

#### SINCERITY

One of the most unfortunate things the protester has to contend with in politics is the soft-soaping business of discountenancing any desire to question the sincerity of blunderers and double-dealers. No matter what be the sins of commission and omission on the part of a politician, he is sure to find numbers of friends who will tell you that he is such a kind, sincere man, and that his motives are above question, that no one's heart beats so sympathetically for the poor and needy. There may not be the slightest evidence of the person, however, contributing a dollar's worth of coppers to a respectable charity. No matter, his heart is in the right place, even if his mind never moves from the seat he occupies in the Senate or the House. It is time now that all this bunkum should be dropped, and a little plain-speaking become the order of the day. Too long, far too long, have we permitted our delegates to collaborate on the book of etiquette which they desire us to use in connection with their actions.

## FREEDOM OF DEBATE

The besetting evil of our parliamentary system is that there is no such thing as all-around freedom of debate. Our Executive is no Rupert because, according to the rather royalist-like rules which have been adopted, he never enters the conflict. He has not to undergo the daily questioning to which the Prime Minister in England has to submit. His co-opted Cabinet, usually of non-elected nobodies, have not faced the debate of the hustings. Eatonswill is unknown to the majority of them. Therefore, one of the chief features of debate in a free assembly is missing under our system. Instead, we have the dramas enacted by the supernumeraries of the Congressional system, while the Hamlets remain in the seclusion of their palatial quarters in the department buildings. This is what is called a democratic system. Imagine, if it is at all possible, what would happen to the Executive and his Cabinet if they had to submit to an hour of questions each day! Then Congress would be worth visiting. Imagine, if you can, the Secretary of Labor having a dozen supplementary questions shot at her from different parts of the House, as happens almost every day to a minister, at question hour, in the House of Commons. Now this system of exclusiveness, so far as Cabinet ministers are concerned, and the Executive also, is responsible largely for the lack of information from which we suffer. Out of this condition there arises an atmosphere of duplicity and make-believe. The system leads to the abominable practice of squaring things, suppressing the attacks of the opposition, of making nefarious compromises, of holding out threats of the withdrawal of patronage. All the dirty business of party strategy is rampant under

such a system! And this goes by the fair name of compromise and give-and-take.

#### MORAL PRINCIPLES

There is, however, such a thing as sincerity of purpose; there is such a thing as abiding by strict rules and following the laws of the system, and I take it that a man who has any principle that is worth preserving, will act conscientiously in public dealings, and in these affairs be guided by the moral attitude which he deems essential in his private life. What is to be gained by protesting that a man, who has not acted according to the rules of the game, must be excused because he is kind and sincere? Surely, if a member of Congress will use for his personal electoral advantage the appropriations of the taxpayer, it would not be wise to trust him in any private matter. And when such a person holds the law in defiance, because he is a member of the majority party, his action surely indicates that he considers himself above the law. He thinks he is immune because, as one said, "They all do it, and you cannot run a political party as if it were a parlor game." This disgusting state of affairs is what defenders of it would hide by finding excuses, not for the discreditable acts which are perpetrated, but for good intentions gone astray. Therefore, one must not denounce the wrong that has been done, but praise the sincerity and kind-heartedness of the culprit. It is the same with the silly notion that one must never question the motives of politicians. Their motives are political, and all political matters should be questioned, because they concern the community. It is the only way that wrong-doing can be checked, and the atmosphere, in which the game is played, kept clear and fresh.

## ECONOMIC FREEDOM

In the speech the Executive delivered March 4th, 1937, at a victory dinner in Washington, he made eleven direct references to democracy and the Democratic Party. No doubt there were men present, listening to the Executive's remarks, who must have been puzzled as to whether he was referring to the Democratic Party of the "horse and buggy" days, or to some new party which had stolen the old one's label. It was to be expected that the Executive would on such an occasion make at least eight direct references to the poor and needy, for the new party has monopolized for its own purposes those who subsist upon relief. These little heart-to-heart talks, which never read as well as they sound, are useful in the way of supplying more evidence that neither the Executive nor his advisors are wasting any time over deep thinking. Speech after speech can be taken for the purpose of testing its true worth. For example, the speech of March 4th supplies several instances of how well the use of words can serve to hide deficiencies of thought. Take as a specimen the following: "But economic freedom for the wage-earner and the farmer and small business man will not wait like emancipation for forty years." What was his economic freedom? Is there one person, in all the oddly assorted retinue he has gathered about the White House, who knows what he means when he uses this phrase? It is patent the Executive does not know, for there is not one measure that he has fathered onto the Statute Book that pretends for a moment to grant one iota of economic freedom to its beneficiaries. There is not one measure enacted by this administration, which pretends to change the system in a fundamental economic manner.

There can be no economic freedom so long as there is a system of taxation of wealth, for all taxes on wealth are paid ultimately by the consumers. There can be no economic freedom so long as restriction, discouragement, and regimentation are the orders of the day. Economic freedom depends on voluntary cooperation, not on compulsory cooperation. Economic freedom depends on equality of opportunity, which can be initiated only by taking those values created by the community for the use of the community. If the Executive had thought for a moment of what economic freedom means, he would have known that the chief cause of the conditions he refers to is to be attributed to the total absence of economic freedom! Economic freedom surely means freedom to use land, and the corollary is, man himself must use it, without the assistance of government. Give man economic freedom and he needs no politician to subsidize him, no matter how dominating his personality may be to a certain type of elector.

Economic freedom means government of the community, by the community, and not bureaucratic government and the spoils system. When there is only one source of revenue, government will be reduced to a minimum, and politicians will have to work as producers, or as persons who will render a positive service in science and arts to the community, when required.

#### THE POOR AND NEEDY

If the object of the Executive's reform program is to relieve the material distresses of the poor and needy, it might be asked what benefit will come to the poor from the legislative projects which have been dealt with by Congress. Is there one measure which has been



enacted that touches the need of the poor? Is there a projected reform which will enable the poor to help themselves? There is not one. Indeed, if there be one thing sure about helping the poor in a positive way, it is that the Executive and his advisors dare not introduce legislation that will put people to work, and give them a chance to enjoy the wage they earn. The poor are to be dependent for party purposes. And that they are to remain dependent must be obvious from the nature of the reforms that have been put into operation. For the situation, so far as industry is concerned is, at the beginning of this depression, far graver than it was in the middle of the last depression. Then, it was possible for industry, because of its surpluses which had been gathered, to keep many of the laborers working when the companies were not earning profits. That day is gone for the poor and needy.

What will the regulation of the stock exchange, if it can be perfected, do for the poor and needy? The poor and needy, for several years before the crash of 1929, were doing far better than they are now. Then the "wicked" stock exchange was booming in all its wickedness. He would be a rash reformer who would say that the N. R. A. assisted the poor and needy. And what have all the farm bills, with their provisions for curtailing crops and raising the prices of agricultural products, done for the poor and needy in the towns? They have only made life harder for them, because the poor have been obliged to pay more for the products the farmers raise. The poor and needy might be able to thrive on cheap fodder, but how can they thrive when the government itself makes a privileged class of the farmers, and enables that class to rob the poor and needy, day in and day out?

Suppose anti-monopoly legislation were enacted, which would cheer the hearts of Senator Borah and the Attorney General. What on earth would it do for the poor and needy? Surely the abolition of holding companies will not be the means of leading the poor and needy into an Elysium where cornucopias are hanging from the branches of every tree! The fact is, nothing is to be done for the poor and needy, but the matter of granting sufficient relief to keep them voting for more relief; that is, to secure tenure of office for the relief dispensers. "Keep them poor enough to need relief, and our jobs are secure," seems to be the real slogan that actuates the Executive and his supporters. If all the machinery of this government, all the energies of the Federal State with its three branches, all the bureaucrats scattered over the country, are to be set in motion merely to give the poor and needy man a meal, or an occasional day's work, then it's "God help the impoverished!"