

# Government by Intimidation

By ENOCH POWELL

(in a recent speech)

WE ARE at the beginning of a period in which a massive transfer of decision from the citizen to the government is projected by the majority party in the state. The transfer will be accompanied inevitably by a vast accretion of power, and powers, to the central government. It will also, and equally inevitably, be accompanied by an erosion of the rule of law and of the liberty and independence of the individual.

If this process is to be halted before it has become irreversible, it will be necessary to draw attention to these facts long before they are noticed by the mass of individual citizens in their own lives, and therefore at a time when the warning may still appear to some to be alarmist or premature . . . But foresight and critical disposition are of no use without the courage to speak out, if necessary, when in a minority, and against the trend of fashion or the weight of the currently respectable and the pompous . . .

There is an essential and ineradicable conflict between socialism itself and the freedom of the individual under the law—and for a reason at once simple and profound. The socialist state claims to determine the economic life of the community, which is the sum or resultant of the economic acts of its members, and to supersede the pattern which would otherwise result from the individual decisions. This is a purpose which cannot be accomplished under the rule of law; for the essence of law is that it is general, constant, certain and foreknown, whereas the essence of economic decisions is the reverse: they are particular, changing and speculative, that is, dependent on unprovable assumptions about the future. Therefore if the government is to control the economy in the sense of bringing about a certain pattern of economic activity, it must do so outside the scope and rule of law, by methods which are arbitrary, and, from the citizen's point of view, capricious.

It is no accident that we have witnessed in the last eighteen months a whole series of policies which were to be implemented not by use of the lawful powers of government but by various forms of lawless pressure. For example, in pursuit of his prices and incomes policy (whatever it may be—for he has never yet defined it in any intelligible fashion) we have seen Mr. Brown publicly bullying one group of producers after another, and one individual after another, into desisting from behaviour which was perfectly lawful, and behaving instead in a manner which that group or individual considered not to be in his own best interest . . .

It cannot be too often or too strongly stressed that in a free society the wishes or the hopes of ministers do

not have the effect of law, and that therefore the expression by government of the "wish" or "hope" that individuals should behave in a particular way is either futile if it is ignored, or sinister if it is thought necessary or advisable to comply with it. Justinian's maxim that "what pleases the prince has the force of law" is the very quintessence and prescription of despotism. It is government by intimidation.

The Budget Speech itself contained a significant and peculiarly insidious example. The Chancellor sought to reduce the flow of investment capital from this country to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Eire by what he called "voluntary co-operation." Firms were "invited" to see if they could defer such investment or meet it from overseas sources, and they were further "invited," if they decided to proceed, to consult the Bank of England and comply with the Bank's advice on whether to do so or not. This species of "government by invitation" is, as *The Times* at once pointed out, "voluntary" only in the strictly army sense. Those who do not act "voluntarily" in a particular way are made to understand that it will be the worse for them—the old evil system, which we thought we said good-bye to with the Stuarts, of "voluntary" compliance with the wish of government for fear of indirect consequences. Thus the citizen is coerced without either the law being changed, or Parliament even consulted, or the possibility of recourse to the courts of law, or the public knowledge of what is happening.

This is essentially an arbitrary and lawless use of power, and neither the small number of those directly involved nor the assumed desirability of the object in view, ought to blind or silence us.

## BAILLIE JOHN PETER

HIS MANY FRIENDS will be saddened to learn of the death on May 24 of John Peter. He was 75.

A native of Bo'ness, West Lothian, he spent the greater part of his adult life in nearby Falkirk. There, as school-teacher, councillor and Baillie, he gave sterling service to his adopted town.

As a young man he read the works of Henry George and became imbued with their teachings. From then on he never lost an opportunity of pointing out the validity of Georgeist economic principles. Until a few years ago he kept up a crusade in the correspondence columns of the Scottish newspapers.

From experience he had learned that opposition was aroused at the mention of the name of Henry George. With skilful presentation of his case he was able to influence others without antagonising them.

"Never ram it down their throats, lad," he used to say in his gruff Lowland Scots. "They'll convince themselves—in time."

Like George, he believed that, ultimately, truth will out.

JAMES BELL