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This Fog Can Be Seen Through

OBERVE how quickly a wild tiger committed to a zoo becomes docile. Down through history most people, once enslaved, have readily adjusted to their altered situations; their lot becomes the new "normalcy," and any break with it is upsetting and prompts resistance. This process of accommodating ourselves to stifling environmental forces, once they weave themselves into the social fabric, is nicely phrased in the playwright's line, "Oh, Caesar, I never knew freedom until I became your slave!"

Like it or not, this is the way of the flesh, as characteristic of Americans today as of any other people at any other time.

A brief review confirms the point. When a social security program was first proposed in the United States, even Washington officialdom thought the socialistic notion too preposterous for serious attention.¹ But today it's as American as the Declaration of Independence — if not more so! Indicative of the general sentiment is the remark of a leading corporate executive, "Why, those folks at FEE don't even believe in social security!" This was in a disparaging vein, meant to show how "far out" FEE really is.

Medicare, urban renewal, Federal aid to education, the governmentally endorsed and unrestrained coercive powers of labor unions, paying people to be nonproductive — these are but a few among literally thousands of steps toward the all-out state. And each of these was once regarded as too nonsensical, too much at odds with our way of life, to be taken seriously.

¹ More than thirty years of operation only confirm the fact that it should never have been taken seriously. See "Social Security Re-examined" by Paul Poirot, *The Freeman*, November, 1965. Copy on request. Use order form.

Yet, today, all are "American"; the popular accommodation to them is such that any expressed thought of repeal is regarded as undemocratic, unpatriotic, un-American, opposed to the public interest, and "extreme."

But more is on the way. The official 1967-68 debate topic for American colleges is, "Resolved: That the Federal government should guarantee a minimum annual cash income to all citizens."² To any person having the slightest leanings toward free market, willing exchange, private ownership principles, this must seem as preposterous as though the topic were, "Resolved: That the earth is flat."

WHEN our institutions of higher learning dignify such socialistic legerdemain by deigning to debate it, the guaranteed annual wage cannot be taken lightly. It is as likely of adoption as was social security or medicare, and for precisely the same reasons. The guaranteed income proposal, in principle, no more defies the fundamentals of freedom than did any of the other socialistic programs that are now Americanized. The only difference is that this one still seems debatable.

My point, however, is this: Once adopt this measure and any talk of its repeal will be just as "extreme" as are suggestions that we do away with the TVA, the moon program, and the other deficit-engendering socialisms that must lead to an uncontrollable inflation and the destruction of our economy.

This rapidly engulfing socialism is analogous to a dense fog settling over us. I call it a fog

² For an explanation of the harmful consequences of a guaranteed annual wage, see "Income Without Work" by Henry Hazlitt, *The Freeman*, July, 1966. Copy on request.