Why this paradox? One answer may be that today's conservatives are endorsing many ideas that yesterday were thought to be radical. Unemployment compensation, for example. But a better explanation is that collectivists do a better job of selling their social merchandise than free enterprisers.

The classic way to sell anything is to define the customer's need, then show him how the means proposed by the supplier will satisfy that need better than the offerings of competing suppliers. Or in other words: "Do you, Mr. Customer (or Mr. Citizen) have a problem? Here is the way to solve it."

To date, the advocates of government intervention have done the best job of selling the problem-solving features of their programs:

There are not enough houses; there are slums. Our plan for government action attacks this problem. Buy this plan, and you will have more housing.

There are not enough schoolrooms to seat our youngsters. Let the federal government supply the money. Buy our plan, and we will build the needed schools.

The small businessman has difficulty competing with big companies. Uncle Sam has the solutions: cut his taxes, loan him money, fix prices to protect his profit margins.

Be "Yes" Men

This focus on the good ends is the secret of the statists' merchandising success. They declare strongly for good ends, give their merchandise labels packed with "hard sell," such as "social security," "full employment" and "the guaranteed annual wage." The public desires the good ends so strongly that it fails to exercise its critical judgment on whether the collectivist merchandise will live up to the claims made for it.

Free market people are the prize "no" men. They are the negativists, occupying a good share of their time saying "no" to extravagant union demands, and deflating the schemes of reformers who go to Washington demanding Utopia day before yesterday. Negativism is the albatross around the neck of free market leadership. No salesman worth his salt tells his customers why they can't do things; he tells them how they can satisfy their needs and realize their ambitions.

Proponents of more statism assert that they alone have real concern for the social and economic problems of our society, and that they alone offer remedies that will work. Is this claim supported by the facts?

Is it true that the average American family will realize its dream of a ranch house in suburbia by means of a housing project set in the middle of a slum area? Or is the dream being realized through the enterprise of venture capital? Since World War Two some 10,000,000 new dwellings have been constructed by the building industry.

Is the best answer to job security a bigger dole for the idle, via unemployment compensation and guaranteed annual wage? Or is the answer the vigorous expansion of the economy to provide enough real jobs for our growing population? Between 1949 and 1954 jobs in industry increased by two million.

Do small businessmen need subsidies and props to survive? Can't they learn new methods, improve their performance, stand on their own feet? To judge from the record, opportunity is far from dead. There are now 4,000,000 small concerns open for business, an increase of 1,000,000 compared with ten years ago.

The material side of the story is the least important part of it. The real significance of the free market concept is that it allows men to determine their destiny through free choice. When we interview people in their homes and ask why living in the United States is better than in other countries, they talk very little about bathtubs, autos and television sets. They say in essence, "Here in America you are free":

You are free to choose your own job, or go into business for yourself;

You can live anywhere you please;

You are free to speak your mind, to worship according to your own conviction;

And if you don't like how our top men run the country you can go to the polls and vote them out.

The irony is that a free market system not only preserves freedom for the individual against the regimentation of the superstate, but at the same time turns in a superior performance in solving the problems people want solved—housing, medical care, education, jobs.

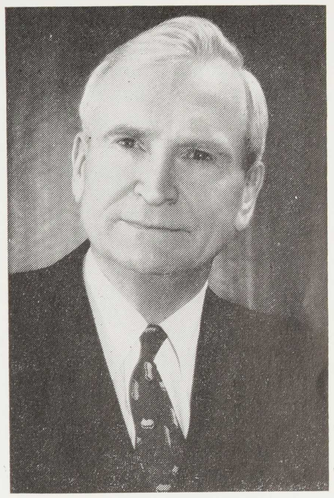
The libertarian cause needs philosophers who can spin a rationale for a free market society; but let us hope it can also find some good down-to-earth salesmen who can interpret the system in the simple terms of people's daily experience.

Sensible Mule

A mule ran headlong into the barn. A neighbor observed that the mule must be blind. "No," said the farmer, "he just doesn't give a damn." Maybe that also explains deficit financing.

The Independent Mr. Mullendore

By LEONARD E. READ



William C. Mullendore

How wonderful it would be if everyone could meet Bill Mullendore as I did!

There's a bit of background to this tale that has to be told. It begins in 1929 when I became Assistant Manager of the Western Division of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, headquarters in Seattle. In the area of economic and political philosophy, I didn't know up from down. To me, anything that issued from the National Chamber as policy was straight from the horse's mouth and no questions warranted. My role in life was faithfully to parrot that policy.

Nearly four years later, I was moved to San Francisco as Manager of the Division. At the time, the Chamber had a President who would qualify as a Republican New Dealer and who, as much as any one person, was author of the NRA of blue eagle fame. By reason of this circumstance, the Chamber, including myself, was head over heels in NRA affairs—approvingly!

Soon after I took over my new duties, word came that an important business leader in Southern California was making disparaging references about U. S. Chamber policy. It seemed incumbent on me to straighten out the poor benighted soul; so off I hied to Los Angeles and called on the person in question, one W. C. Mullendore. He received me most courteously and let me talk. For half an hour I dwelt on the virtues of our policy. Mr. Mullendore then took over. For the next hour he lectured me on the limited role of law, the scope that should be allowed the individual, the principles the authors of the Constitution had in mind; and he pointed to the perfidy of NRA and other alphabetical hatchings of the New Deal. Never before or since have I listened to such skilled exposition. Anyway, to settle on who set whom straight, I closed the interview by saying, "Mr. Mullendore, I have never thought of any of these matters in this way before. I believe you are right." At that moment, the whole course of my life was altered.

But this is about his life, not mine. What manner of man is Mullendore? What of his background? What makes him tick as he does?

William C. Mullendore was born on a farm near Howard, Kansas, in 1892, the thirteenth child of John and Mary Mullendore, who had migrated from Indiana some twelve years earlier. Caught in the depression of the 90's, the family lost their farm and livestock and were reduced to the status of "renters."

Bill was six years old when his mother died, and fifteen when his father, after years of suffering, followed her. From then on he was largely on his own.

After graduation from the Howard High School he went to Arizona and worked for one year as a stenographer in a mining company to "build up a stake" for his further education. With some loans from his brothers and by working part time, he financed himself at the University of Michigan to his A.B. degree in 1914 and his J.D. from the Law School in 1916.

Assisted Mr. Hoover

Following a year's law practice back in Kansas, he joined the U. S. Food Administration as assistant counsel (Robert A. Taft was another). He resigned this first war job to enlist as a private in the U. S. Air Force, returning after the armistice to act as Liquidator of the Food Administration. Then in 1920 Herbert Hoover sent him to Europe in his American Relief Administration as special representative operating in London and Berlin. After a year in his Kansas law office, he again joined Mr. Hoover as his assistant in 1922-23 when Mr. Hoover was Secretary of Commerce.

In 1923, Bill and his Kansas bride established their home in Los Angeles, California. After two years in the general practice of law, the Southern California Edison Company employed him as special counsel, and later appointed him general attorney in 1929. He was elected vice president in 1930, then executive vice president, and in 1945, president of the company—one of the world's finest