

education, medical service, housing, minimum diets, employment, sustenance in old age — then to the extent of their dependence they have lost the opportunity of being charitable.

Government cannot charitably diminish need, because government is non-productive. Individuals produce. But a "welfare" government can and does destroy the incentive of productive individuals. If a people seem to be losing the instinct of charity, that loss may well be traced to the power of government to regulate their lives. If the people themselves have given that power to government, even in the name of democracy, they deserve little sympathy. That the rights of individuals may have been surrendered through their lack of understanding, alters neither the fact nor the consequence.

The modern dreaming of pensions is but a phase of man's never-ending search for "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

The Dividend of Freedom

Government in the United States was designed as the defender, with equality and justice, of the life and property of every individual. Under such a government, the people of the United States became highly productive and were thrifty in the accumulation of tools to aid them in production. One dividend of individual initiative and enterprise, springing from this guarantee of the right of a person to the product of his own labor, was a high level of material well-being for all citizens. It cannot be proved that this development has brought complete satisfaction at all times to all people; no system of government and economic way of life can claim that degree of perfection. But the American system has been widely recognized as the best in the world in this respect.

Liberties Surrendered

This fruitful system has been undergoing a change. In the United States during much of the Twentieth Century, the savings of individuals have been increasingly subject to systematic plunder. Savings have been stripped of their purchasing power. The dollar of 1950 has about a third of the purchasing power of the dollar of 1900.¹ And the theft has been accomplished under governmental management.

One after another, the traditional storehouses of the wealth — the property — of individuals have been pried open by government. Savings have been dissipated. And in their stead have been substituted promises of future replacement by taxing future production. The result has been progressive inflation, a process which sends the aged in search of the security which has been taken from them. When each passing year of life further depletes what a man thought he had laid aside, then men of foresight become panicky for protection in their declining years. In panic, men seize upon strange cures. Without understanding, new meanings are accepted for old words such as "freedom" and "liberty."

When the government resorts to the tactics of a Robin Hood or a Sicilian Giuliano, it has ceased to be a protector of property rights or a guarantor of security. Instead, it becomes the weapon by which one citizen, or a special-interest group, may rob other persons, upon the excuse that these others had produced and saved more than their "fair share." Government cannot create security in this fashion, by taking one man's earned security and giving it to others, in accordance with politically determined need; it only destroys security.

¹ The National Industrial Conference Board index of consumers' prices, taking January, 1939 = 100, was 160 in early 1950, compared with 53.6 in 1899 and 55.6 in 1900.