

who claim that the needy are deserving of our support. How so? To be deserving implies the right to some form of reward. Suffering, pain, poverty, no matter how distressing, do not entitle people to the fruits of other citizens' labors. It should, therefore, be obvious that the suffering of others does not obligate the more capable individuals to provide any sort of aid to those in distress. They may wish to help, but they are not obligated.

If we allow that the more fortunate are obligated to help the less fortunate, we are, in essence, saying that the less fortunate have a blank check on the resources of those who are better off. Under such a moral code the only person with a clear conscience is the one who has nothing — mental, physical, or material. He can feel secure, secure in the knowledge that there is no one less fortunate than he to be obligated to. This is evil of the most debased kind. What is even more evil is that it robs man of his capacity to be charitable. How can one express his concern for unfortunates by offering material and inspirational gifts if the "haves" are obligated either by law or custom to give to the "have nots" who, of course, deserve these gifts?

We must be willing to pay the price of responsible individual

freedom. And a nation is not free if its citizens are not free — free to choose whether or not they want to spend their money on a cause that others feel is good. Only when the individual is free can he exist as a truly moral being. If moral choices are not his to make, they cease to be moral for him. As he gradually surrenders the responsibility of making moral and ethical decisions, these decisions are then assumed by the state. Man as a superior being ceases to be. He is reduced to a lower level of life, a lesser being of conditioned reflexes and programmed responses. He has adapted to an environment which he is no longer capable of shaping in even the slightest measure. All this in the name of social equality.

Progress — or Mediocrity?

Now to the point of our argument. We suggested earlier that *inequality* is a blessing. That it is! Society could not have been more blessed than to have each of its members diversely endowed, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The individual differences among us have been responsible not only for man's ills, but for his great scientific, social, philosophic, artistic, and economic progress. Progress in these areas has been fantastic in countries which have

a great deal of personal freedom; infinitesimal in primitive, totalitarian, and collectivist societies. Where individual liberty prevails, man is free to satisfy his ambitions, limited only by his own capacities. He is free to create and produce. Where this happens, everyone benefits.

In the United States, where individual freedom has resulted in the highest productivity in the history of the world, even the poorest among us would attract envious looks from the majority of the population in such countries as India, China, Bolivia, and too many others to mention here. Our poor are, with few exceptions, poor only in relation to our own national abundance. So long as enterprising and creative Ameri-

cans are allowed freedom to practice their *unequal* talents we will all benefit. Bring the exceptional down to a median level in an effort to raise the living standards of the below average and we all suffer. Where would we be if we had brought Edison down a peg — to a level of mediocrity; if we had hamstrung the Wright brothers, Henry Ford, and thousands of others who possessed talents superior in some respect to those of the average American?

Reduce American incentive to an average or *equal* level and you will have an average or mediocre America — all of us *equally* mediocre. Our inequality has made us what we are, and conversely, imposed equality can break our spirit, and our nation. ♦

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Possessed

We do not take possession of our ideas
But are possessed by them.
They master us and force us into the arena
Where, like gladiators, we must fight for them.

HEINRICH HEINE (1797-1856)