

The American Idea

IT MIGHT be easier to accept the Covenant on Human Rights as an honest effort toward human freedom and progress if Section 3 of Article 19 had been written in this form:

"The States Parties to the Covenant shall make no law nor provision that will prevent any human being from making full personal effort to obtain the food, clothing, and shelter essential to his livelihood and well-being, to keep what he thus produces, to strive for an adequate standard of living and continuous improvement of his material and spiritual condition, and voluntarily to help others."

That would be a proposal in full keeping with the spirit and words of the American concept of human rights as set forth both in our Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights. Those documents are based on the concept that each human being is endowed with the right to seek his own development to the fullest extent of his ability and ambition, within the limited natural resources of the environment in which he happens to be. This concept of freedom stems from a source above and beyond any man-made government under which a person happens to be born. It is a religious concept which categorically denies to the state any characteristics of God.

Will the communist and socialist nations accept that idea of human rights? Can the American representatives, or the American Congress, accept anything less than that?

Not Fantasy

BEFORE we are tempted to say that all of the proposals suggested in these articles of the Covenant appear to be entirely in the realm of fantasy — comparable to the one which declares that governments should insure a continuous improvement of the spiritual condition of men — let us remember that such a program of life has been formulated and attempted in practice in varying degrees in the welfare states of the world. Social contracts have been enacted into law in those countries which state that each individual in the community is entitled to the privilege of receiving a share of all the social and economic benefits which the state can assemble through its coercive powers of taxation and confiscation.

Let us examine in more detail these so-called rights of the United Nations Covenant.

Article 20 states that the governments must recognize the right to work, which it defines as the fundamental right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely accepts. There is obviously