

Thomas Newcomen in 1705, required an operator to open and close the valves. One boy set at this task found that by an ingenious system of cords he could get the walking beam to open and close the valves for him, leaving him free to play. But, as with the economy, if one sabotaged the workings of natural forces — cut, tangled, or snarled the strings — he would be compelled to go back to running the machine by hand, if it ran at all.

No Stopping Place

Those who believe they can establish their social order permanently at any point on a continuum between slavery and freedom that suits their fancy, are deluded. Artificial restrictions breed more regulations: witness the "black markets" of every managed economy. As the confusion and chaos inherent in trying to serve two masters deepen, men in their despair almost inevitably are only too glad to turn the problem over to some loud-mouthed demagogue who gives them the security of a prison. The problem of so-called democratic socialism is that artificial controls which are politically acceptable don't control, and the brutal kind which gets things done doesn't appeal to the voters: hence the need for the so-called dictatorship of the prole-

tariat. No country can long remain "half slave and half free," and we won't either.

If our economy caved in tomorrow, millions of people would cry that the free enterprise system had failed; and our intellectuals, preachers and all, would lead the stampede to totalitarianism of one sort or another. Huey Long once said, "It would be easy to sell Americans fascism. Just call it democracy." He should have known.

It is true we have lived for more than a generation in a sort of uneasy no-man's land where every group is permitted to combine to loot the rest of us, artificially limit output, and make prices what they please. If every trade and profession restrict entry into their field, obviously their services will be overpriced, and millions of men will not be absorbed but will be left out in the cold world of bread lines or dole. Politicians can't say "no" to any pressure group which can drum up a few votes, so the resulting patchwork of policy — a sort of economic crazy quilt — increases in complexity until the whole structure falls of its own weight. The right of powerful pressure groups to plunder the rest of us apparently can't be challenged, but let's not call it democracy — unless freedom is the liberty to restrict. • • •

FREE WILL AND THE MARKET PLACE

FRANK CHODOROV

FREE WILL is the starting point of all ethical thinking and it plays an equally important part in the business of making a living. If man were not endowed with this capacity for making choices, he could not be held accountable for his behavior, any more than could a fish or a fowl — an amoral being, a thing without a sense of morals. So, if man were devoid of this capacity, his economics would be confined to grubbing along on whatever he found in nature. It is because man is capable of taking thought, of making evaluations and decisions in favor of this or that course, that we have a discipline called economics.

In making his ethical choices, man is guided by a code believed to have the sanction of God; and experience has shown that the good life to which his instinct impels him can be achieved only

if he makes his decisions accordingly. The Ten Commandments have been called the Word of God; they can also be described as natural law, and natural law has been described as nature's way of applying means to ends. Thus, we say that nature in her inscrutable ways has determined that water shall always run down hill, never up; that is a natural law, we say, because it is without exception, inevitable, and self-enforcing. Therefore, when we decide to build ourselves a house, we set it at the bottom of the hill so as to avail ourselves of a supply of water. If we put the house at the top of the hill, nature will not cooperate in our obstinacy and we shall not have any water in the house; unless, of course, we discover and make use of some other natural law to overcome the force of gravity.

That is to say, nature is boss and we had better heed her teaching when we make decisions or we shall not achieve the ends we de-

Mr. Chodorov is well known as both a writer and speaker in behalf of individualism. This article is adapted from an address before the American Farm Bureau's "Farm Family and Christian Resources" conference at Madison, Wisconsin, October 30, 1958.