

Legality of Theft

Thus, theft has become legalized. In the confusion of that situation, the hangers-on and victims together have turned to their government, to the chief of the thieves, asking that he extend and better organize his foraging, and hoping to catch more crumbs from more stolen property. But always there are more and more victims dependent on fewer and fewer crumbs. Only the head robber and a few of his hirelings can be expected to continue their ill-gotten gains under such a state of affairs — and inevitably at the expense of those seeking crumbs.

This vicious system of concentration of power feeds upon itself, each step creating a new crisis which seems to justify the next step. It can feed upon the security of individuals in proportion to their lack of understanding of the value of individual freedom. Government can provide "security" at the minimum level of a society of crumb eaters, but such "security" permits death by starvation, as experienced in Russia under such a scheme.

So it is that men who have been stalwart defenders of the rights of individuals, of the freedom of enterprise, now find themselves reduced to indigence by a power they fail to comprehend. Since their "school days," they have thought of government only as an agency for their protection. They continue to look to government for protection — even after that government has committed the crime of robbing them of the security they once had.

Those who contend in this day that the government of the United States owes a living to any citizen, or group of citizens, are forfeiting their own liberty and that of their fellowmen to a grasping government which can and will make beggars of men otherwise able to care for themselves and naturally

inclined to be charitable toward others. Much of the apparent need for governmental aid today is strictly a product of too much government, not the other way around. When government forcibly deprives productive men of a fourth to a third of their earnings, as it does now in this country, it has seriously reduced their opportunity to care for either the aged or the youthful unproductive members of their own families.² The cure for this situation lies in less government — not more; in greater individual opportunity — not less.

If all fathers and mothers were shot or herded into a concentration camp, their children would stand little chance of survival to maturity. If productive men are taxed by government of their charitable means and of further incentive to produce, then unproductive persons can no longer hope for charitable "security."

The "right" of any person to "freedom from want" exists only to the extent that some productive person enjoys liberty to be charitable with what he is able to produce and save. *History records no instance where governmental intervention has solved a problem of starvation among free men. And further, that problem will never occur where individuals are free to produce, save, and help the needy.*

Signs of Greed

Among those most anxious to "share the wealth," the false notion prevails that private saving is a sign of greed. To have produced beyond one's needs is, in their minds, a mark of selfishness to be corrected by government. On the contrary, the selfish person is the one who claims a right to what another person has produced — through forthright robbery, or

² For more detailed discussion of the extent of lost liberty, see Chapter 13, *Liberty: A Path To Its Recovery*, by F. A. Harper (Irvington, New York: The Foundation for Economic Education, 1949).