

Economic Education

In March of 1946, another such group was formed. It was called the Foundation for Economic Education because its founders then believed that the problem was simply a lack of understanding and appreciation of the infinite possibilities for peace and prosperity to be found in voluntary exchange in the market place. That's why the solution was thought to be in economic education. But to many persons, the word *economic* is too narrowly concerned with material considerations to cover the gamut of human actions and reactions involved in the study of freedom.

The founder and president of the Foundation for Economic Education, Leonard E. Read, now believes that a more accurate and descriptive name for this organization would be the Foundation for the Study of Freedom. The purpose of the Foundation — the study of freedom — involves every contact of man with his fellow men. It demands inquiry into the nature and function of government and religion, and other factors which influence not only the economic behavior but also the whole life of man. Freedom is indivisible, and any effort to fragmentize it may be misleading, if not disastrous.

A key idea in the concept of this Foundation is that the "mass education and mass opinion," about which there is so much concern, must follow the understanding which grows out of deeper study in the form of clear and simplified explanations. This basic research and a resulting literature are precisely what have been lacking. In one sense, it is something like the automobile; its mass ownership and use was attained only after the careful work of inventors and engineers and manufacturers made it possible. Almost anyone can now own and operate a machine about which he knows very little — except how to enjoy its use.

An All-Important Problem

Mr. Read and his associates do not in any sense claim that their studies and writings have revealed all the answers. They are well aware that in their lifetimes they can at best only scratch the surface of this perplexing and all-important subject. They propose only to continue an uncompromising search for truth and to make the results available in printed form to whoever wants them.

Since they are persuaded by their study and research that right and wrong cannot be determined by a show of hands, they

do not and will not advocate basing such decisions upon the vote of the majority.

Since government ownership of the means of production is wrong in their judgment, they do not and will not advocate some "proper percentage" of government ownership.

Since they believe that a man's religious faith, or the earning of his livelihood, or the management of his business, is his own personal responsibility, they do not and will not try to be "practical" or "politically expedient" by urging some measure of governmental aid or intervention in these matters.

Consistent Means

They will always attempt to suggest means which are consistent with, rather than in contradiction of, those objectives which seem to them proper. They deal only in principles which, if correct, are eternal and timeless and independent of the particular stage of advancement of any given society. They leave compromise for those who believe that there may be a long-term advantage in a temporary deviation from what one believes to be right.

Many sincere friends of the Foundation have suggested that FEE's work would be more effective if it accepted and worked

with political action as it exists in practice. They have suggested, for example, that FEE should endorse the "moderate" or "limited number" approach to the issue of government housing rather than to continue FEE's "extreme and politically inexpedient" position of no government housing.

Under no circumstances will the Foundation for Economic Education ever adopt or endorse such a puerile philosophy of "compromise." Does anyone suggest, for example, that German moralists should have concentrated their efforts on "the politically attainable goal" of influencing Hitler to use a more "humane and Christian method of exterminating Jews" rather than concentrating their efforts on "the politically inexpedient" idea that Jews should not be exterminated at all?

Grounds for Repudiation

If FEE ever compromises in this area of principle — whether it concerns housing, wheat, electricity, or human life — its present and future potentialities for good will be ended. If the Foundation ever begins to operate on the low level of political expediency, it should be — and doubtless will be — repudiated by all persons of good will.

The Foundation for Economic