Clipping of Note NUMBER 36

A Lesson in Socialism

As a teacher in the public schools, I find that the socialist-communist idea of taking "from each according to his ability," and giving "to each according to his need" is now generally accepted without question by most of our pupils. In an effort to explain the fallacy in this theory, I sometimes try this approach with my pupils:

When one of the brighter or harder-working pupils makes a grade of 95 on a test, I suggest that I take away 20 points and give them to a student who has made only 55 points on his test. Thus each would contribute according to his ability and—since both would have a passing mark—each would receive according to his need. After I have juggled the grades of all the other pupils in this fashion, the result is usually a "common ownership" grade of between 75 and 80—the minimum needed for passing, or for survival. Then I speculate with the pupils as to the probable results if I actually used the socialistic theory for grading papers.

First, the highly productive pupils—and they are always a minority in school as well as in life—would soon lose all incentive for producing. Why strive to make a high grade if part of it is taken from you by "authority" and given to someone else?

Second, the less productive pupils—a majority in school as elsewhere—would, for a time, be relieved of the necessity to study or to produce. This socialist-communist system would continue until the high producers had sunk—or had been driven down—to the level of the low producers. At that point, in order for anyone to survive, the "authority" would have no alternative but to begin a system of compulsory labor and punishments against even the low producers. They, of course, would then complain bitterly, but without understanding.

Finally I return the discussion to the ideas of freedom and enterprise—the market economy—where each person has freedom of choice, and is responsible for his own decisions and welfare.

Gratifyingly enough, most of my pupils then understand what I mean when I explain that socialism—even in a democracy—will eventually result in a living-death for all except the "authorities" and a few of their favorite lackeys.

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