

EDITOR'S NOTE

Frank Chodorov, associate editor of *Human Events*, is the author of several books, including *One Is a Crowd* and *The Income Tax* from which this selection is extracted. Both were published by Devin-Adair, New York.

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Source of Rights

THE AXIOM of what is often called "individualism" is that every person has certain inalienable rights. For example, "individualism" holds that property *as such* obviously has no rights; there is only the inherent right of a person to his honestly acquired property . . .

The axiom of socialism is that the individual has no inherent rights. The privileges and prerogatives that the individual enjoys are grants from society, acting through its management committee, the government. That is the condition the individual must accept for the benefit of being a member of society. Hence, the socialists (including many who do not so name themselves) reject the statement of rights in the Declaration of Independence, calling it a fiction of the eighteenth century.

In support of his denial of natural rights, the socialist points out that there is no positive proof in favor of that doctrine. Where is the documentary evidence? Did God hand man a signed statement endowing him with the rights he claims for himself, but denies to the birds and beasts who also inhabit the earth? If in answer to these questions you bring in the soul idea, you are right back to where you were in the beginning: How can you prove that man has a soul?

Those who accept the axiom of natural rights are backed against the wall by that kind of reasoning, until they examine the opposite axiom, that all rights are grants or loans from government. *Where did government get the rights which it dispenses?* If it is said that its fund of rights is collected from individuals, as the condition for their membership in society, the question arises, where did the individual get the rights which he gave up? He cannot give up what he never had in the first place, which is what the socialist maintains.

What Is Government?

What is this thing called government, which can grant and take away rights? There are all sorts of answers to that question, but all the answers will agree on one point, that government is a social instrument enjoying a monopoly of coercion. The socialist says that the monopoly of coercion is