

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 vested in the government in order that it may bring about an ideal social

and economic order; others say that the government must have a monopoly of coercion in order to prevent individuals from using coercion on one another. In short, the essential characteristic of government is power. If, then, we say that our rights stem from government, on a loan basis, we admit that whoever gets control of the power vested in government is the author of rights. And simply because he has the power to enforce his will. Thus, *the basic axiom of socialism, in all its forms, is that might is right.*

And that means that power is all there is to morality. If I am bigger and stronger than you and you have no way of defending yourself, then it is right if I thrash you; the fact that I did thrash you is proof that I had the right to do so. On the other hand, if you can intimidate me with a gun, then right returns to your side. All of which comes to mere nonsense. And a social order based on the socialistic axiom—which makes the government the final judge of all morality—is a nonsensical society. It is a society in which the highest value is the acquisition of power—as exemplified in a Hitler or a Stalin—and the fate of those who cannot acquire it is subservience as a condition of existence.

The senselessness of the socialistic axiom