they are in on the take). The money that went to these municipal employees was badly needed for rebuilding roads, subways, and bridges; no less than $30 billion, it is estimated, is needed in the next decade simply to keep New York's transport in adequate repair, which cannot be done because the money has gone to overpaid city employees and retirees. One would think that this would be an occasion for moral indignation; but no such indignation is forthcoming on this subject from the academic establishment.

Egalitarianism

The avenue through which most academicians succeed with their students in attacking the free market is not as often a direct frontal attack ("The market is evil") as a defense of something that is incompatible with it, economic *egalitarianism*. Indeed, the vast majority of writers on ethics appear to be egalitarians. They usually make some allowances for "special cases," such as increased benefits to the sick and handicapped, and even an increase of income to some "to provide incentives" (one wonders how they know who is going to be creative or industrious), but for the rest they believe that every person (or every family) should have an *equal income*. Some are aware, though others are not, of the totalitarian implications of such a system: that the government would have to keep tabs on everyone's income and force everyone who earned more than X dollars per year to surrender everything earned in excess of that amount to the government, and to pay to those who have less (minus the government's own quite considerable "handling fee," which in some cases exceeds 50 per cent).

One of the most distinguished ethical thinkers, R.M. Hare of Oxford University, admits that "removal of incentives to effort may diminish the total stock of goods to be divided up"[2] and thus recommends that those who start new productive enterprises should receive a bit more from the common pot. But the main assumption, that there *is* a common pot from which government officials may take from some to give to others, is never questioned—apparently it has never occurred to the author. Yet it is this economic collectivism which passes without criticism by one writer after another.

"It is morally obscene," wrote Ayn Rand, "to regard wealth as an anonymous tribal product and to talk about 'redistributing' it. The view that wealth is the result of some undifferentiated collective process—that we all did something and it's impossible to tell who did what, therefore some sort of equalitarian 'distribution' is necessary—might have been appropriate in a primordial jungle with a savage horde moving boulders by physical labor (though even there someone had to initiate and organize the moving). To hold that view in an industrial society—where individual achievements are a matter of public record—is so crass an evasion that even to give it the benefit of the doubt is an obscenity. Anyone who has ever been an employer or an employee or has observed men working, or has done an honest day's work himself knows the crucial role of ability, of intelligence, of a focused, competent mind—in any and all lines of work, from the lowest to the highest. He knows that ability or lack of it . . . makes a difference of life or death in any productive process. The evidence is so overwhelming . . .—in the events of history and in anyone's own daily grind—that no one can claim ignorance of it. Mistakes of this size are not made innocently. When great industrialists made fortunes on a *free* market (i.e. without the use of force, without government assistance or interference) they *created* new wealth; they did not take it from those who had *not* created it. If you doubt it, take a look at the 'total social product'—and the standard of living—of those countries where such men are not permitted to exist."[3]

Variations on Egalitarianism

One of the most influential American writers on ethics, Professor Richard Brandt, believes that everyone's real income after taxes "should be equal, except for (a) supplements to meet special needs, (b) supplements recompensing services to the extent needed to provide desirable incentive and allocative resources efficiently, and (c) variations to achieve other socially desirable ends such as population control."[4] The amount required to provide "incentives" turns out not to be very much, however; apparently producers of products and services are expected to keep on taking risks, expending hours of effort, and producing whether or not they stand to gain anything by doing so. Again there is the collectivistic assumption that it is not the individual who earned the money who has the right to keep it, but the government, which did not produce it, which has the right to take it from him and distribute it at its pleasure.

The catastrophic effect of this policy on production is not so much as hinted at. The only thing that apparently worries the author is that his utilitarian theory has as its goal a life of equal *happiness* for everyone, not necessarily of *money* (two people with the same income won't necessarily be equally happy). But, he says, we don't know how to allocate equal happiness to everyone; the best we can do is allocate money: "Money is something we can easily hand out in equal amounts. . . . More important, however, is the fact that we are apt to maximize happiness if