NOTES from FEE

January 24, 1958

THE FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC EDUCATION, INC.
IRVINGTON-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK

WHEN THE CUP OVERFLOWETH

THERE ARE THOUSANDS of earnest, skillful persons at work in the libertarian vineyard. There would be tens of thousands – perhaps a million or two – were it not for the destructive influence of discouragement.

Some, having delivered themselves of a speech or an essay or a slice from their bank balance, "fold their tents" if the millennium they seek doesn't appear immediately. There are others of a tougher breed who labor and spend for years before exclaiming, "Oh, what's the use!" These no-longer working, discouraged believers are encountered everywhere, at all levels of society, and constitute liberty's vast inactive army of might-have-beens.

There is an antidote to discouragement; it is to realize the delayed-action nature of ideas. The impact of an idea, even where it penetrates deepest, is seldom noticeable. The work of an idea is done in a dimension the naked eye does not see. Ideas which will eventually remove political plunder and other forms of authoritarianism must first undergo an invisible social diffusion and ripening; they have to mature in numberless minds; and no observable manifestation is possible until they reach some unpredictable pressure—until they achieve a bursting point. Who can see an idea maturing in the mind of an unknown person? Even in the mind of a friend? Even in one's own mind? Ideas do much of their work in quiet privacy.

Imagine an opaque cup held empty at eye level so added contents could not be seen. Add drops of water, one at a time. The first drop has no visible effect, nor the 100th, nor the 1,000th, nor even the 4,800th drop. But drop number 4,801 will cause the cup to overflow. Now, most of us have faith that drops of water would eventually bring a cup to overflowing even though we might not see the water level rising. This same principle of simple addition applies to ideas. But, more, there is another force at work. Ideas do not just accumulate; they also grow by some kind of a vitality of their own. Thus, we have reasonable grounds for our faith that persistency in idea propagation will eventually cause a reversal of the present drift into government interventionism, and that this process is at work even during those long stretches of time when little if any outward effect can be observed.

Why, That's What I Believe!

If each individual within your circle of acquaintance – your friends and working associates – were to read Dean Russell's *Who is a Libertarian?* I am certain an encouraging percentage of them would remark, "Why, that's what I believe!" Yet, how many can point out the fallacies of socialism or explain attractively and persuasively *why* they believe as they do?

Why not offer these friends a copy of *Who is a Libertarian?* Such thoughtful consideration on your part will start some of them on a program of serious contemplation and study, the prelude to extension of libertarian leadership. Prices are quoted on the enclosed business reply card.