

The Government Monopoly

IN OTHER WORDS, the government—which so concerns itself with the maintenance of “fair” competition in the world of business and trade—conducts its own operations in a monopolistic fashion. It does not compete for a man’s services or for his savings; it levies a tax and allows no alternative. The government is not guided by the market method of price determination; it sets prices or exchange rates quite arbitrarily. The government is not subject to the profit and loss method of measuring success or failure; if it operates at a deficit, the taxpayer is held responsible and must pay for the government’s failure. As long as those who want new homes are in the majority over those who realize that they will be forced to pay for them, the government probably will carry on its socialized housing operations. And the dollars-and-cents costs of such interference with the freedom of individuals can never be measured precisely. The market would provide the only means of such measurement, but the government does not allow the market to function.

Out of the market place the government draws the materials and services which go into the construction of such things as public housing projects. But unlike the private builder of homes, the government does not put back into the market enough to entice anyone to make

the trade voluntarily. Anyone who really believes that it might be profitable or useful or desirable to replace the “slums” with new dwellings need not be forced by the government to undertake the task. Nor should the risk of failure be saddled upon those who honestly doubt the wisdom of such an undertaking. To do so is compulsory socialization at the expense of every individual who might otherwise claim an inalienable right to his own life and to his own private property.

Social Gains

DESPITE the long record of facts exposing the economic waste involved in public housing, there are those who still insist that it must be done in order to clear the “slums.” It is said that the children of the “slums” are dirty, undernourished, diseased, untutored, disrespectful of law, and generally unfit for the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. But even if this be true, it does not justify the conclusion that society would necessarily be improved if those children and their parents were transferred into subsidized and supervised housing projects.

A “free” house isn’t going to stop some parents from bringing into this world more children than they can possibly rear to maturity in as genteel and ample a manner as other parents