

advanced by the Russian advocates of common ownership in defense of their river valley programs. For example, the facts and figures issued by the Russians to prove the success of their Dneiper River hydroelectric project are of the same general nature as those issued by the Tennessee Valley Authority and other government power projects. The political managers in both countries issue reports that are designed to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that government ownership and operation of the means of producing electricity is superior to private ownership. These reports in both countries are designed to show that "unselfish government managers" are more interested in national progress and prosperity than are "selfish private operators who are governed entirely by the profit motive."

And the point has now been reached where a person has almost as much difficulty challenging the figures issued by these United States government "authorities" as he has challenging the figures issued by the common ownership managers in similar electric projects in Russia. In either case, the objector will be called a propagandist, a reactionary, an enemy of the people, a lobbyist, a hireling of Wall Street, a purveyor of half-truths and slanted figures, and the other time-worn and customary epithets that are hurled at those persons who dare challenge the concept of common ownership of the means of production. Yet this concept of government ownership in America must be challenged if freedom is to be revived.

A CARDINAL PRINCIPLE

THE SUPPORTERS of these various hydroelectric projects often advance the argument that they would never be built unless government built them; that the various river valleys would remain "undeveloped" unless government developed them; that all this water would continue to be "wasted" unless government utilized it. Perhaps so. It is also true that a free people have never voluntarily undertaken to transport to the tropics all the ice that is "going to waste" around the North Pole. And the reason is simple: A free people do not knowingly support uneconomic expenditures of effort and capital. They will not voluntarily invest their savings in a project where they anticipate that the cost will be greater than the return; where there is no apparent economic demand for the product. That economic concept is the cardinal principle of private ownership. For example, the former owners of private electric companies in Tennessee generally chose to build steam plants instead of hydroelectric dams. Why? Again the reason is simple: In their opinions, it represented the most economic expenditure of capital. If the hydroelectric dam had seemed to be the better choice — as it was in some instances — the private owners would have built them. If this is not true, then the conclusion necessarily follows that the private owners deliberately chose a lesser profit. And no advocate of government ownership can afford to make that statement,