

tion that economic theory is a luxury which only the most advanced students can afford.

Then, one evening years later, while members of my family were sitting at dinner discussing something, a five-year old boy asked, out of the clear and without any apparent connection with the discussion that had been going on: "Why do we have to pay for things?"

WELL, there you have it. We are losing the game to economic ignorance year after year, while being lulled into complacency by watching false scoreboards and basking in false economic glories. Yet youngsters are itching to go out for economic spring practice, so to speak. What are we going to tell them? Are we going to say: "Wait fifteen or twenty years, Bud, and if you become an outstanding student, you may be ready to find out why we have to pay for things"? Or shall we train them in sound eco-

nomic practices from the day they are born?

It is later than we think, I fear, in this economic game. Fifteen or twenty years could bring economic and moral disaster beyond our worst fears. The records of history attest to this threat. My final admonition is that every aspiring leader review the records of history, especially as interpreted by such authorities as Liddell Hart on learning from history,⁷ Lord Acton on the history of freedom,⁸ Draper on the background for European culture,⁹ Weaver on some high spots of history,¹⁰ Mees on the helix of history,¹¹ Burckhardt on the ancient Grecian civilization and later comparisons,¹² and Hayek on more contemporary debacles from economic ignorance.¹³ From these and other excellent sources one can come to see clearly what lies at the end of the road of economic ignorance on which we have been traveling here in the United States.

In Defense Of The Individual

Edmund A. Opitz

THE AUTHOR, for nine years a parish minister, formerly directed the conference program for Spiritual Mobilization, and in that capacity held a number of two-day seminars for clergymen and laymen designed to promote a better understanding of the libertarian philosophy. Similar questions recurred at many of these conferences, and experience suggested ways of clearing up certain persistent misunderstandings. The following dialogue is a reconstruction of many conversations. Mr. Opitz is now a member of the staff of the Foundation for Economic Education.

A: From what I have heard of your philosophy, it represents a position of extreme individualism. I disagree with that position; I doubt that the individual has any right to ignore society or other people. I take my stand with the injunction of the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, "We are members one of another."

B: I will try to tell you something of our position, and then you can decide whether it represents what you would label "extreme individualism." A word like individualism is not easy to define. It is, in fact, another of those turncoat words whose meaning has become completely inverted. You seem to speak of individualism as a doctrine which presses a man to ignore society. Is that your understanding?

A: That is approximately correct. An individualist is one who insists upon living his own life in his own way; he feels no obligation to help another person, and he tells the rest of the world to go hang.

B: You have laid several ideas on the table as descriptive of the individualist or individualism. I am not sure that they are consistent with one another. Taking them in order, you mentioned first the right to ignore society or other people.

A: Isn't that part of the creed of individualism?

B: It is part of the creed of all free men! It is conceivable, but certainly most uncommon, for a man to want to withdraw from human-

¹Rauschning, Hermann. *The Voice of Destruction*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940. pp. 192-93.

²Williams, Roger J. *Free and Unequal*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1953.

³Exodus 20.

⁴Harper, F. A. *Liberty: A Path to Its Recovery*. Irvington-on-Hudson, N. Y.: Foundation for Economic Education, 1949. p. 110.

⁵*Essays on Liberty*, Volumes I and II. Irvington-on-Hudson, N. Y.: Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1952 & 1954. "The Communist Idea," Vol. I, pp. 96-99; "To Communism via Majority Vote" by Ben Moreell, Vol. II, pp. 218-248.

⁶Translated by Professor Casper J. Kraemer, Jr. from Lactantius' "On the Death of the Persecutors."

⁷Liddell Hart, B. H. *Why Don't We Learn from History?* London: G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1944.

⁸Acton, J. E. E. D. *The History of Freedom and Other Essays*. London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1907.

⁹Draper, John William. *A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*. New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1904.

¹⁰Weaver, Henry Grady. *Mainspring*. Irvington-on-Hudson, N. Y.: Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1953.

¹¹Mees, C. E. K. *The Path of Science*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1946.

¹²Burckhardt, Jakob Christoph. *Force and Freedom*. New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1943.

¹³Hayek, Friedrich August. *Road to Serfdom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944.