



THE FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC EDUCATION, INC.
IRVINGTON-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK 10533

REFINEMENT

THERE ARE MORE than enough of us who say we favor freedom. Our numbers, based on say-so, are in the millions. "Free enterprisers" outnumber avowed socialists a hundred to one, and then some!

The trouble is that most "free enterprisers" aren't what they purport to be. There is an enormous discrepancy between the tenets they proclaim and the deeds they practice. This is why self-styled capitalists, free enterprisers, and conservatives have been far more responsible for our blundering into socialism than those who admit to being socialists. To employ an analogy: when those ordained as high priests sanction evil, disintegration is spawned more by them than by all the thieves and crooks in Christendom.

Our plight is aggravated by the fact that many self-styled freedomites think their sole obligation is to announce that they favor economic freedom and oppose federal intervention in the market place. This is as shallow as saluting a flag because of its colors, without knowledge of the principles and traditions it symbolizes. What this amounts to is choosing sides because of a preference for a good label — freedom — rather than for a bad label — socialism. The enormous lip service paid to freedom in America today is, for the most part, nothing more than ideological affectation and, like a wolf in sheep's clothing, is both deceptive and dangerous.

Consider a now-and-then letter received at FEE: "Your stuff is repetitious; I've got the point."

The point I wish to make is that these "free enterprisers" have missed the point entirely.

Implicit in such self-assessment is their "graduation." No question about it, they feel that the difference between what they now know and what's left to know is deserving of no more effort on their part. They've made the grade!

The facts? Probably many of these self-graded "free enterprisers" know as much, or possibly more, than any of us — except for one thing: they don't yet know how little they know.

True, many of us have grasped the kindergarten point that socialism, communism, the planned economy, the welfare state, or other variants of collectivism are not consonant with the way of life we have in mind. Creative accomplishment by government edict is suspect; leave creative activities to the free market. All well and good, but such minor awareness must be likened to a child's first step; it takes a lot of doing — growth, development, refinement — before the mile can be run in four minutes flat!

WE AT FEE took our stand on the side of the private property, free market, limited government philosophy long ago, and have spent the last two decades writing its rationale. That we have some grasp of its a-b-c's is borne out by the fact that rarely are we obliged to return to earlier assertions and "eat crow," as the saying goes. The broad general outline, if soundly based, may be used over and over again, year in and year out; but it is the framework only. When it comes to apprehending the tenets and principles within the framework and learning how to explain them in