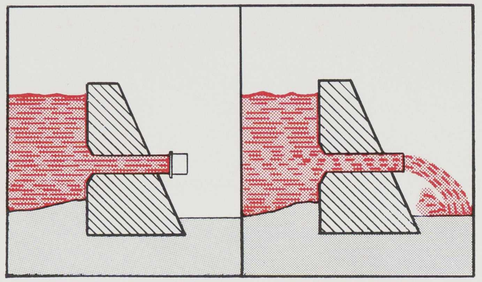
have to offer, and this readying or ripening process takes its own, not our, time.

Another reason for keeping our views to ourselves until they are sought is that no matter how much we may hope for the improvement of others, we have no means of bringing it about except as we have something in store to offer. As we cannot aid others materially without goods and services of our own to give or exchange, so is intellectual, moral, and spiritual aid impossible except as we ourselves have light to shed.

THERE is still another and even more important reason. Keep in mind the perfecting of self as life's major objective, and it must be seen that all careless or unnecessary words are self-destructive. All words aimed at making over or reforming others fall in this category. In bygone days, in ignorance of this fact, I was often an intruder with my gratuitous counsel, speaking to ears deaf to my ministrations, a careless, wasteful, idle spending of my time and energy, as well as theirs. Long after I had learned of this error the hard way, I discovered that this truth had been known for centuries: "Every idle word that man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." But when counsel is sought – when inviting ears and eyes are in evidence – then the giving of counsel is not idle but has value and thus is self-constructive.[2] The reason for this comes clear as we observe how energy works.

Analogies are always superficial, but this one helped me: Visualize a dam behind which is a large reservoir that maintains itself at a constant high level. From the dry side penetrate the dam with a pipe so as to tap the water. Cap the pipe. No water will flow from the pipe; none will enter. Now, remove the cap. Immediately, the potential energy of the reservoir will turn to kinetic, moving, power-giving energy; water will flow into one end of the pipe as it flows *out* the other.

Intellectual and spiritual energy works in much the same fashion. The observation, "It is



more blessed to give than to receive," strongly suggests that giving is a precondition to receiving. Giving counsel to those who seek it, will result in one's own upgrading; it is self-constructive. In other words, the way to learn is to teach, and vice versa – keeping in mind that true education is a give-and-take process. It is impossible to learn how better to explain an idea without, at the same time, enriching one's own understanding.

The thought of keeping the libertarian philosophy a secret, unless others ask, is, I confess, only an important safeguard against aggressive or obtrusive behavior. For there is a paradox here; secrets are rarely kept, and ideas whose time has come can never be contained. "It isn't that *I* can't keep a secret; it's the people I tell it to." Most of us are like children in this respect: "Grandma, we are having a surprise party for you. But don't tell anyone; it's a secret!" To quote a famous biologist:

> It is an observed form of human behavior that research workers in general must communicate or burst, once they have made any kind of exciting discovery . . . the natural state of man is to see all, hear all, and tell all.[3]

WHAT we are discussing here is the question of method, the importance of ridding ourselves of tactics which offend. Time and again, when we have insisted that sound method rests on self-improvement, many devotees of the libertarian philosophy have retorted, "You would have us behave like Trappist monks," or "Would you have us hide our light under a bushel?"

Light, in the sense of wisdom or understanding, cannot long be hid "under a bushel." Ideas radiate in a most mysterious manner, disregarding space or time or such insulating devices as "a bushel" or even a thick lead dome. History is replete with experiences of coincidental insights occurring to persons unknown to each other and poles apart geographically, linguistically, and in many other respects. The late Carl Jung referred to this phenomenon as "synchronicity." A book publisher, observing that numerous authors, unknown to each other, write on the same subject at the same time, called it "coincidental thinking."

A recent Seminar, by far the most satisfactory of all that FEE has conducted, caused my two associates and me to inquire, "How come, our performances being no better than on previous occasions?" The answer came clear: the fifty participants were further along in their libertarian understanding than had been true of earlier groups. The very ideas which, in their mysterious radiation, had influenced our determination to master the rationale of freedom had also made their way into the consciousness of these encouraging folks. While they came only to learn more and to seek counsel from us, we found that they also had much to give in exchange. All three of us came away from that weekend of intensive discussion with a renewed energy; the experience was self-constructive.

WHEN we concede that ideas radiate in a mysterious manner, we merely mean that we do not understand their workings. And, not understanding, we run the risk of having no faith that *the personal possession of good ideas, in itself, has a bearing on the upgrading of others*, even if – yes, especially if – we avoid all proselytizing programs. But how can an individual have faith in something he does not understand? Well, here is another seeming paradox, but faith is possible, nonetheless. For instance, do we not exhibit implicit faith in our own healthy bodies and minds, mysterious as the operation of these partners are? Consider, also, our power of recall: No one knows what memory is; it is a mystery. Yet, we have faith in it. Try an experiment. See how easily you can recall a scene, a person, an event to the mind's eye. Time and space are no barriers; the visualization is instantaneous! Something that happened fifty years ago, half way around the earth, can be recalled as easily as pressing a light switch; the where and when are transcended. In any event, ideas radiate in somewhat the same manner, and we have as much warrant for faith in their power of extrasensory transmittal as we have for trusting our own memory.

Since this is the case, we can begin to see why it is more harmful than helpful to become "eager-beaver" about spreading ideas. Why not everlastingly concentrate on getting the ideas, *making them available to those who seek*, and let it go at that? For this we know: ideas have a built-in communication system of their own, which works very well unless short-circuited by offensive methods of propagandizing for them.

HISTORY reveals that all movements have been led by only a few; the mass of people have never been more than followers in any instance. Yet, we have in the U.S.A. today more potential leaders – individuals who understand, can explain, and believe in the libertarian philosophy – than most successful movements have ever had. But as there can be no Chiefs without Indians, so there can be no leaders without followers. Thus, we are confronted with the probability that *our method is at fault*. Too many of us are afflicted with that type of overzealousness which gives offense; we harry and torment rather than enlighten and, by so doing, fail to gain a following; we cut off the natural and effective radiation which we can confidently entrust to the ideas we succeed in making our own.

Ideas on liberty cannot be kept secret; we'll tell about them or burst. But we can hold in reserve the ideas we possess until other minds invite them in, invitations that are certain to come if the ideas be worthy. For the most part, this is a matter of substituting attractive for obtrusive behavior – a switch easy enough for anyone who can will his own actions.

Leonard E. Read

PRESIDENT

[2] Value in the market place is determined by whatever others will willingly exchange for a good or service. And, ideologically, it is the receiver or consumer who sets the value of an idea to himself.

[3] N. J. Berrill, *Man's Emerging Mind* (New York: Fawcett Publications, 1955), p. 207.