

of political action makes it an unfit means for productive tasks. He would rely instead on the release of the creative energies of men and women working cooperatively and competitively, with government acting only to curb predation such as murder and fraud.

It is important to note that the collectivist or welfare-stater, while he tests the *objectives* by moral principles, does not apply moral judgments to his *means*. Actually, his ends are prefigured in the means he adopts. When pressed, he usually admits the covert violence implicit in political action; but he justifies his use of it by claiming that the people he hopes to help now are the innocent victims of political action of a previous era.

ROBBER BARONS

WHEN it is pointed out that two wrongs don't add up to a right, the collectivist cites the post Civil War period as a horrible example of a few freebooters and pirates preying upon the nation. He has a finely developed conscience over the wickedness of the "robber barons." When his attention is called to the fact that the plundering of that era was done with the help of political intervention and was perfectly legal, he replies: "Maybe so, but it was immoral." Now call his attention to the fact that the principle

of plunder of that era — that is, using political action to give some people an advantage at the expense of others — is the principle of the welfare state and all other forms of modern collectivism. Point out to him that, by his own characterization, his principle is immoral. When he finally understands his untenable moral position, he will reply: "Yes, but it's legal."

Pressed still further, the welfare-stater takes refuge in the notion that political plunder is today spread more evenly to more people, which gives it a moral advantage over the political intervention of the post Civil War period. Thus the collectivist position comes perilously close to making morality a function of time and numbers; what was wrong three quarters of a century ago is right now, and what was wrong for a few then is right now for many.

A NECESSARY CHOICE

NOW it is possible to argue that there is no such thing as morality; that there is only custom, habit, legislation, and mores. But if there is such a thing as morality, it is the idea that some things are right and ought to be pursued though the heavens fall, and that these things are independent of time and numbers.

The collectivist cannot have it both ways.