

will be subjected to harassment, to threatened prosecution under the antitrust laws, to close examination of their income tax returns, to loss of government contracts, and to new regulations more onerous than the ones now applicable. Labor union leaders are beginning to feel the hook subject to threats that they either do voluntarily what government wants or be forced to do it. Any resistance by the medical profession is likely to be interpreted as an excuse for tightening control. Businessmen who read the handwriting on the wall may know that if they do not "voluntarily" accept government guidelines for prices they will be subject to government-fixed prices.

Of course, there are aspects of the government's extension of favors and force to which the analogy of the fisherman with his bait and hook is not appropriate. The fisherman provides his own bait and tackle as well as his boat. The government, by contrast, provides its favors from money taken from the taxpayer by force or the threat of force. That is, our goods are first taken from us by government which then uses them to entice us into its orbit of control. Some do, of course, receive favors who paid no taxes; others receive more than they paid in. But the redistribution features do not al-

ter the nature of what is being done. We are getting hooked when we reach for the bait that was taken from us in the first place.

The Gradual Approach to Full-Blown Tyranny

The above tactics are the American version of Fabian socialism. They are the means by which Americans are drawn step by step into what would be billed as socialism if we were being semantically honest. More precisely, it is the gradual development of statism. Each time some sucker reaches for the bait and is hooked, the power of government is increased. Each extension of government power by regulation, control, restriction, and so on is at the expense of the control by individuals of their own lives. This power is usually vested in the assorted members of an expanded and expanding bureaucracy, in independent commissions, in bureaus headed by cabinet members, in experts, in that numerous clan who make their living by deciding what prices others shall charge for their services, how many acres farmers can plant to what crop, whether train services shall be continued, what union shall be recognized by what company, the proper length for commercials on television, and so on *ad nauseum*.

These bureaucrats are tyrants,

but, oh, such petty tyrants! Men might fight a Genghis Khan, but it is difficult to know what weapons to use against men whose tyranny consists of arbitrary decisions about whether a railroad shall be permitted to discontinue a freight station in a hamlet of 200 people or not, whether each bathroom in a house must be vented or whether one vent can serve all of them, whether a new product shall be subjected to another round of testing or not, and so on. Prudent men hesitate to rush to arms to make war on mosquitos. Yet, when all the bits of petty tyranny are added, the total is a monumental tyranny which filters into every area of life.

According to the lore of fishermen — not always the most reliable — some fish become unusually canny. There are stories, at least, of very large fish who survive in a limited area the attempts of

fishermen to catch them. At most, they only nibble at the bait; they cannot be snared by the hook. Whether or not there are such fish, I do not know, but the stories offer a valuable lesson for men. The best way — the only sure way — to avoid the hook is to refuse the bait. No sensible man today has any reason to doubt that Federal control will follow Federal aid, that government subsidies will be followed by government restrictions, that behind the attractive bait there are the ugly barbs of political power. Even the nibbler can be caught by the crafty fisherman, for such a fisherman tugs gently at the line to get the fish to jump at the bait and get himself hung on the hook. Men who seek dominion over other men in our day have become crafty fishermen. Only those fish are safe who refuse the bait. Only those people remain free who renounce governmental favors. ♦

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

A Consequence of Compulsion

WHEN THE LAW, by means of its necessary agent, force, imposes upon men a regulation of labor, a method or a subject of education, a religious faith or creed — then the law is no longer negative; it acts positively upon people. It substitutes the will of the legislator for their own wills; the initiative of the legislator for their own initiatives. When this happens, the people no longer need to discuss, to compare, to plan ahead; the law does all this for them. Intelligence becomes a useless prop for the people; they cease to be men; they lose their personality, their liberty, their property.

FREDERIC BASTIAT, *The Law* 1850