

resources in behalf of the poor. Beyond that, however, if such persons then feel prepared to take upon themselves the role of the Creator — which must be the presumption of anyone advocating government direction of peaceful human affairs — they also should be well aware that never yet, in the long history of mankind, has there been a single case where such intervention has resulted in the alleviation of poverty. Joseph's and the Pharaoh's ever-normal granary in ancient Egypt lured a nation into bondage; the share-and-share-alike-from-a-common-storehouse plan of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock had to be abandoned lest everyone perish; and the agrarian reformers in modern Red China still face the same old consequences of massive coercion: mass starvation.

Not Necessarily So

We may acknowledge that in the comparatively free market economies, even in the United States today, there is no equality of material possessions. Some persons have a great deal more than the minimum requirements to sustain life, while others face poverty; and perhaps there may be some few who actually go to bed hungry at night. But to observe that the free market has not totally eliminated poverty does not

justify the conclusion that poverty, therefore, will automatically be overcome if the market is abandoned and the government placed in control of distribution.

To observe that a man cannot walk very well with a broken leg does not necessarily mean that he will be able to walk better if we equalize matters by breaking his other leg, too! If a person has only the ability and the incentive to earn two square meals a day, it does not necessarily serve him right to relieve him of the incentive — the necessity — to earn those two meals. If the government subsidizes poverty, it does not necessarily mean that poverty will thereby be diminished; on the contrary, it necessarily means that poverty will tend to be popularized as a way of life.

The free market rewards those who are most productive, those who serve consumers most efficiently, whereas government intervention on behalf of consumers rewards those who produce the least and operate most inefficiently. These opposed methods of reward have different effects on the production process; the market method encourages production, whereas the coercive government method takes away the incentive to produce. Which method will be most likely to alleviate poverty ought to be perfectly clear. ♦

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

DEAN RUSSELL

TO THE BEST of my knowledge, freedom of the press (the printed word) is complete in the United States today. That is, anyone can still write whatever he pleases and (subject to our reasonable libel laws) the police will protect both him and his manuscript. But all too many of us confuse "freedom to write" with "what is printed." Both my liberal and conservative friends are equally guilty of this disservice to freedom. If they disagree with what is printed in the newspapers, they are often prone to complain that freedom of the press doesn't exist. That attitude demonstrates a total misunderstanding of the meaning of freedom of the press.

For example, it so happens that I am in general disagreement with the editorial viewpoints expressed by more than 90 per cent of the

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large daily newspapers in our country. But that fact has nothing whatever to do with the existence of freedom of the press. The only issue of consequence is whether or not the owners and editors of the newspapers are printing what *they themselves* choose to print — and for any good or bad reason that pleases them. If any publisher is ever compelled to print viewpoints that do not appeal to him personally, freedom of the press will be finished.

There is, of course, only one source from which that compulsion could come — government. Yet I have heard many of my teaching colleagues seriously propose the idea that newspapers should be compelled to print all viewpoints or, worse yet, that the government should establish "opposition newspapers" as a "public service." Both proposals are, of course, the reverse of freedom of the press.

The only valid test of freedom of the press is this: Can you write anything you please, pay to have it printed, and send it through the mails at your own expense without police interference? If so, freedom of the press is complete. If not, there is no freedom of the press. The fact that you may not have the large amount of capital that is today required to establish a daily newspaper is in no way related to this issue. ♦