

AN EDITOR IS A HIRED MAN. HIS BOSS IS THE READER, who does not hesitate to exercise the right to fire him, by the simple act of withdrawing his patronage, if he finds the editor inadequate. The publisher, the fellow who gives the editor a desk and some pencils and paper, is only the go-between; his function in most publications, aside from paying the bills, is to ascertain the will of the readers and to act accordingly.¹ The reader is top man.

So, as I sit behind the imposing editorial desk in the office of the FREEMAN, I know that I am on trial. It is you, dear reader, who will decide whether I shall stay here. To help you form a preliminary judgment, I think I should begin by telling you about the turn of my mind, for it is obvious that the character of the publication will be so determined. This is particularly true in the case of the FREEMAN, which is, by design, a journal of opinion. It is unavoidable that the articles I select for publication, to say nothing of the editorials I write, will reflect the values I hold most high, the body of thought which shapes a man's thinking and which he calls his philosophy.

Therefore, my application to you, the reader, for this editorship consists of an outline of my philosophy. It goes by the name of Individualism, or Libertarianism, whichever you prefer. I like Individualism, but those who are opposed to that frame of thought have managed by innuendo and distortion to attach to it a derogatory connotation that, in some instances, disturbs understanding. Libertarianism is substantially the same thing, and because the word has as yet escaped defilement, it ought to be used. You may, if you wish, but because I have a strong leaning toward the loves of my youth, I shall use Individualism.

Individualism is a body of thought—which, in turn, affects behavior—that can for convenience be subdivided into three categories: economic, political, and philosophical. We shall begin with the last, because the philosophical postulates are basic in a man's thinking along other lines.

Individualism holds that the social world in which

1. The FREEMAN'S publisher is unique in that he puts principle above both profit and circulation. And that is to my advantage.

man lives is the product of the individuals who live. That is, man's environment is of his own making. I am sure, God has provided man with the tools with which to shape his environment, tools which consist of certain immutable laws of nature, and it is the business of man to discover these laws so that he may the better shape his destiny. If he learns how nature applies means to ends and makes use of this learning to solve his problems, he will get along; if he defies the lesson of nature he will come to grief. Nevertheless, it is man who makes his environment, and not the other way around.

That being so, in the business of getting along in this world, so as to better enjoy his temporary tenure, man's constant preoccupation must be to look to nature for guidance. He will not find it in his own artifacts, such as political institutions and the compulsions that ensue from them. These, like medicines, may help him overcome some temporary disabilities, or they may make him sicker. In any rate, they are not a substitute for nature's law.

In the nature of things, man finds that he is in need of companionship when he associates with his fellowman. His need for companionship compels him to it, in the first place, and then there is the economic profit that comes from cooperation; a hundred men, working together can produce more than a hundred times the output of each man simply because they can subdivide their labors. But specialization makes necessary a means of distributing abundance that each specialist produces, and so there comes into being the complicated exchange mechanism known as the market place. The market place is the index of Society, which is but a word signifying a group of men working together for their mutual benefit. Without men there cannot be a Society, and without a market place Society disintegrates into a number of isolated and ineffective individuals.

The essential device of the market place is the price system. This records the desires of the individuals who compose the Society and thus directs their productive efforts. People will produce what other people put a high value on, simply because they themselves have the desires which need satisfaction. It is by the free expression of their respective values, as recorded in price, that

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F. C.

he wheels of production turn. Obviously, the faster these wheels turn the more is produced and there is more for everybody. Thus, Society flourishes in proportion to the volume and fluidity of exchanges in the market place.

The market place is a peculiarly human institution—no other animal has hit upon the idea—stemming from man's urge to satisfy his desires with the least possible effort. Without the market place he would have to do everything for himself, would have to be a jack of all trades, and he would have a rather meager fare to get along on. And, without the market place he would never think of the wonderful labor-saving devices that make specialization and abundance possible. All in all, this law of parsimony—getting along with the least possible effort—has served the human quite well in his quest of a better living and a wider horizon.

However, this trait sometimes leads to behavior that is not so admirable. In his anxiety to get as much as possible for as little as possible, the human sometimes hits on the idea of getting things at no output of labor at all. That is, he thinks of stealing what the other fellow has produced.

At this point in the philosophy of Individualism we come to the doctrine of rights. It holds that a man has a right to life, and therefore a right to the things he produces; for, without the latter right the former has no meaning. One cannot live without property—one's own or somebody else's; and if one lives by another man's property, forcibly taken, one denies the other man's right to life. The Individualist holds, therefore, that the basic rights of life and property inhere in the individual, merely by virtue of existence—and therefore authored by God—and that respect for these rights is necessary to the proper functioning of Society. Which is another way of saying that violation of these rights by any member of Society, or by the whole group, retards the operation of the market place and everybody is the worse off.

In an attempt to prevent such violations—which spring from the aforesaid quirk in the human structure—Society invents a device known as Government. It is a

body of men entrusted with the monopoly of coercion, to be used to prevent the indiscriminate exercise of coercion on one another. Government has no other function, and is by origin and construction incompetent to do anything beyond maintaining order; which means the protection of each member of Society in the enjoyment of his rights.

But since Government consists of men, it has a tendency to use its monopoly of coercion not for the intended purpose, but for its own aggrandizement. Government can and does become a predatory instrument, a creator of disorder, a dispenser of injustice. To accomplish this end, it frequently enters into partnership with members of Society—pressure groups—granting them special privileges (to the disadvantage of the rest of Society) in exchange for their support of its own purposes. It is this practice of trespassing on the rights of the citizenry by Government (and its chosen beneficiaries) that Individualism holds to be the greatest menace to Society, and therefore insists on calling Government to account whenever it goes beyond its appointed bounds.

These are the broad outlines of the philosophy that shall characterize my editorship. We shall, of course, concentrate on current events and trends, because that is what you are interested in. But, whether we write about domestic or foreign affairs, cultural matters or economics, education or politics, we cannot help but stress the Individualistic point of view. That is inevitable; because your editor is inherently or by training incapable of seeing things otherwise.

I'm hoping—after you read a few issues—that you will decide to keep me on.

Frank Chodorov

About me...



FRANK CHODOROV

Editor

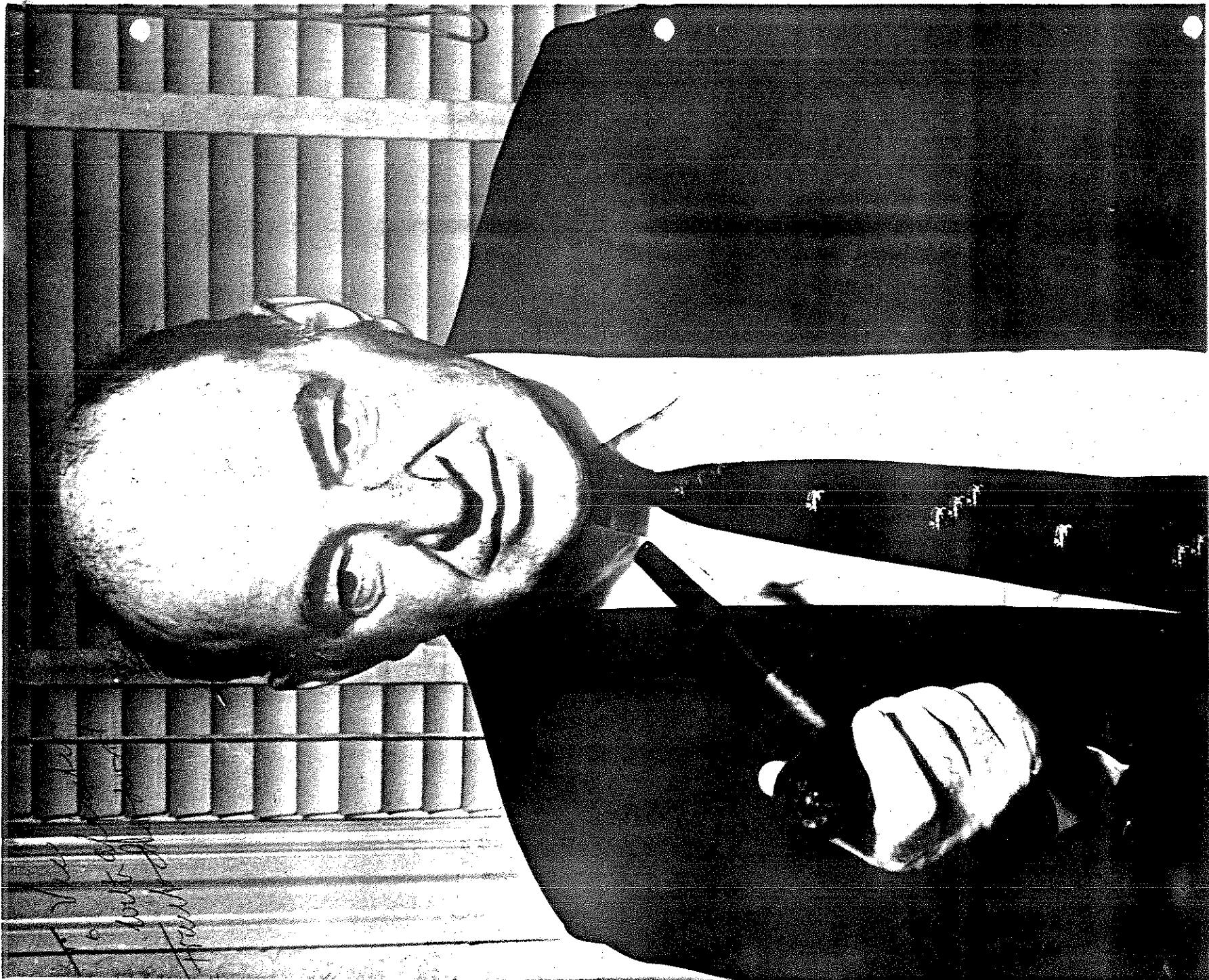
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Charles H. Hamilton
420 Riverside Drive
New York, New York 10025

Mark,

Here is the photo & a smaller
copy. Please be sure to get them
back.

Chuck

1/18/84

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As Always, Mark

COUNCIL OF GEORGIST ORGANIZATIONS
5 East 44th Street, New York 10017

