

THE INDIAN LIBERTARIAN

AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Founded by: R. B. LOTWALA

Editor: D. M. KULKARNI

Vol. XXIV, No. 12

December, 1980

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Editorial

Politician 'Know Thyself'

Indira Congress Congregation recently held at Delhi has again begun thinking of perpetuating its authoritarian rule over the country by declaring a state of Emergency in the country and depriving the people of their civil rights and freedoms. The party has obviously failed to give a good and efficient Government to the people as promised during the general elections. The regional problems as in North-Eastern region and in Kashmir have so far defied any solution, thus giving rise to a state of almost anarchy and disorder in those states. Communal flare-ups particularly in United provinces, the home state of the Prime-Minister herself, are ominously frequent despite the Central and State Government's dubious attempts to please and humour Muslim Communalism by giving recognition to Urdu as the official medium in Governmental Offices and Courts, a concession denied to the Muslim Community over the last thirty years of independence in view of the Partition of India which the Muslims had sought just to protect their political linguistic and cultural interests. The partitioning of India does not seem to have satisfied these separatist appetites of the Muslims who are still left behind in India that is Bharat, but on the other hand it has whetted them all the more once again proving that unprincipled compromises arrived

at out of needs of power-politics make confusion worse confounded. If the violent agitations in North-Eastern regions tend to encourage regional and racial secessionism the demands of Indian Muslims for administrative autonomy of the Aligarh University and linguistic separatism, may in course of time, lead to the demand for political autonomy being granted to them in certain tracts in a region where the Muslim population is concentrated. These fears and misgivings have been expressed openly by certain sections of public opinion in the United Provinces after the arson, loot and bloodshed that occurred simultaneously in certain towns and localities where Muslim population was concentrated. It is therefore a pity that the Government for petty political gains, should go out of its way to encourage communal separatist tendencies which were in evidence in India before partition and which ultimately resulted in the vi section of the country. Gandhiji and Rajendraprasad and a host of nationalist leaders have been proved right in holding that partition would not solve the communal problem but only aggravate it. In the absence of direct evidence to support any participation of RSS or any political party in these communal riots, it will be only fair to ascribe a sudden spate of communal riots to the tendency of the present Government to

pamper to the questionable demands of communalists and secessionists.

THE DETERIORATING ECONOMY

Economically, the people are in no way better off under the present Government. The farmers of the rural areas, long suffering quietly in their poverty and destitution are becoming restive and desperate and are rising in revolt against the Government. The revolt of the rural population in the agricultural sector which began in Maharashtra is rapidly spreading to other states like Gujrath, Karnatak and Madhya Pradesh. The Maharashtra Government has quickly yielded to the farmers in certain of their demands but the farmers are still carrying on their agitation.

It is remarkable that this revolt is led not by party Politicians but independent leaders of farmers. The opposition political parties have been almost ignored by these farmers. The Government's contention that these spontaneous agitations are also instigated by politicians cannot carry conviction to any one. On the industrial front, the situation is no better. The city of Bombay, once humming with vigorous industrial activity, is a scene of hundreds of Industrial units being closed down due to labour strikes and at times to the violence perpetrated by labour on the life of Managing Staff of industrial concerns. Here also political opportunism of the ruling party comes in the way of maintaining law and order. Labour laws disqualifying a labour Union from functioning and also penalising the Management for unfair practices are not at all enforced, but adhoc solutions are attempted by the Government in respect of payment of Bonus, penalisation of workmen for the dereliction of their duties which in the end, only lay down bad precedents for future occasions. In this context it may be pointed out that the index figures for cost of living prepared by the Government are expected by the workers to show from month to month a rising trend in the cost of living. If by chance the index goes down a hue and cry is raised by the labour unions which perhaps wish that even these figures should be manipulated in favour of workers, whatever might be their effect on the profitability of the concern or factory where they

work. If the Government should pamper to such impossible demands of workers in these days of political opportunism one could imagine how industries could thrive and prosper under such circumstances.

The Consumers are in a worse light today than they were before the present Government came to power. During the previous regime, there was no scarcity of wheat and other necessities of life which were freely available in an open and free market. With all the controls now introduced, the poor sections have not been benefitted. The situations in procuring essential commodities is worsening, with the price-hike and their scarcity. The Indira Congress Gathering at Delhi has called upon its party cadres to give full publicity to what the Government has achieved on the economic front. One wonders, if there is no achievement to the credit of the Government. What could the party workers do except to make the opposition political parties the target of their attack for the miserable failure of the Government to bring out any tangible good to the people in controlling the rise in prices, increasing production and ensuring a fair distribution of it among the consumers.

GUNS FOR BREAD

Having failed to ensure national integration among the different communities and regions in the country and to enforce Discipline, Law and Order on the Industrial front so as to increase production and ensure its equitable distribution among the consumers, the Government has hit upon the device of using its military and police force to put down spontaneous peaceful revolts of the people against it. This sheer nonperformance of the Government is sought to be bypassed by dining into the ears of the people the probable danger facing the country from invasion by China and Pakistan and the need of the country to equip itself with guns and war ammunitions at this crucial hour rather than bread and butter.

The whole trend of the steps Government and the party in power are taking to explain away the nonperformance of the Government in governing the country seems to be create a

political climate favourable for the declaration of Emergency in the country and to muzzle and suppress the expression of discontent and dissatisfaction of the people against Governmental incompetence. The authoritarian regimes always point to guns when people ask for bread. That Indira Congress and Indira Government are moving in this direction is evidenced by the exhortation on the part of Congress (I) leaders at their recent meeting at Delhi to the Government to declare Emergency if need be, even at the cost of democratic freedom, on the plea that there is danger to the safety and security to India from within and without.

AUTHORITARIAN CONSTITUTION-MAKING

It makes one sad to note that the Prime Minister who had grown up in the traditions of democratic freedom under her illustrious Father Jawaharlal Nehru, should encourage such authoritarian trends among her own party members who would never summon up the courage to suggest a declaration of emergency, if they were not sure of her tacit or open support. The democratic world lauded her announcement of holding General elections in 1977 and expected her to uphold freedom in future. During the elections, she promised that she would never think of emergency again.

But after her electoral victory when she find herself in a tight corner in face of certain difficult problems she and her colleagues appear to be obsessed with the idea that democracy is not suited to India and are toying with the idea of Presidential system of Government, limited Democracy or full fledged dictatorship to be in posed in an ascending-order of centralisation of power in the hands of one person or party elite as in dictatorial countries, Socialist and otherwise. The root of the problem lies in crisis of character among politicians. It is the politicians who spend most of their time in filling their pocket and those of their relations. This corruption spreads among the officials and then among industrial magnates, Sugar-barons and Smugglers. It has been reported that some leading politicians are connected with the police in Bihar who blinded some prisoners an act which has

stunned the country and brought the whole nation into disrepute. Some of those criminals who were blinded by the police are said to be in close contact with politicians who take their help in capturing polling booths. Mrs. Indira Gandhi rightly condemned these horrible deeds and expressed her concern in the Parliament as to where the country was going to.

The time has therefore come for our leaders to investigate into the question about how far the political leaders are responsible for the breakdown of law and order and erosion of moral values in public life. Our ordinary laws are more than enough to put down corruption and crime provided the Government and the officials set the tone by themselves being above such unconscionable practices. It was Mahatma Gandhi who said that India has to learn from the west two virtues, Public sani-

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THE INDIAN LIBERTARIAN

Independent Journal of Free Economy and
Public Affairs

Edited by : D. M. Kulkarni

Published on 15th of Each Month

Single Copy 50 Paise

Subscription Rates :

Annual Rs. 6/- 3\$ (U.S.A.) 12\$ (U.K.)

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Full Page 200/- Half Page 100/-

Quarter Page Rs. 50/-

Back Cover Rs. 250/-

Inside Cover Rs. 200/-

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* Publication of articles does not mean editorial endorsement since the Journal is also a Free-Forum.

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In Defense of Freedom

JUNE 1948 found Paris in turmoil as revolutionary mobs marched through the streets chanting an ominous. "We won't be sent away! . . ." The French National Assembly had just abolished the National Workshops—the socialistic plan to "guarantee work for every citizen. "The workshops had proven to be a social, political, and economic failure—just one of many idealistic schemes advocated by socialist demagogues. Now, armed members of the disbanded National Workshops were building barricades and preparing to fight for their lost "rights."

The June Revolution of 1848 was thwarted, but a year later France still faced the threat of socialism. The National Assembly echoed with impassioned speeches for the salvation of the French people. One of the Deputies to the Assembly who consistently and intelligently opposed the demagoguery of the social theoreticians was Frederic Bastiat—a modest, quiet-spoken Frenchman who was courageous in his defence of individual liberty.

Leaving the quiet life of a country gentleman for the feverish life of a legislator, Bastiat took with him an indomitable belief that individuals would work harmoniously together for the benefit of all so long as government intervention did not destroy free choice and voluntary exchange. With great clarity of thought he defined the rightful purpose of government authority (the law):

"What, then, is law? It is the collective organization of the individual right to lawful defense.

"Each of us has a natural right—from God—to defend his person, his liberty, and his property. These are the three basic requirements of life, and the preservation of any one of them is completely dependent upon the preservation of the other two. For what are our faculties but the extension of our individuality? And what is property but an extension of our faculties?

"If every person has the right to defend—even by force—his person, his liberty, and his property, then it follows that a group of men have the right to organize and support a common force to protect these rights constantly. Thus the principle of collective right—its reason for existing, its lawfulness—is based on individual right. And the common force that protects this collective right cannot logically have any other purpose or any other mission than that for which it acts as a substitute. Thus, since an individual, cannot lawfully use force against the person, liberty, or property of another individual, then the common force—for the same reason—cannot lawfully be used to destroy the person, liberty, or property of individuals or groups."

Bastiat continually emphasized the proper relationship between individuals rights and government authority:

"Individuals cannot possess any right collectively that does not pre-exist in every person as an individual. If then the use of force by an individual is justified only in self-defense, the fact that government action is always based on the use of force should lead us to conclude that the proper functions of government are necessarily limited to the preservation of order, security, and justice. All actions of government beyond this limit are by usurpation."

Government Usurpation

Bastiat comprehended why governments were allowed to usurp their powers. He was well-read in politics, history, philosophy, and religion—subjects which gave him profound insight into human nature. Human nature was the root of government usurpation. He saw how individuals have a tendency to reject personal responsibility and to look elsewhere for the necessities of life:

"Man recoils from effort, from suffering. Yet, he is condemned by nature to the suffering of privation if he does make the effort to

work. He has only a choice then, between these two: privation, and work. How can he manage to avoid both? He always has and always will find, only one means: to enjoy the labor of others: to arrange it so that the effort and the satisfaction do not fall upon each in their nature proportion, but that some would bear all the effort while all the satisfaction would go to others.."

As Bastiat continues, he speaks to current attitudes in America:

"Today, as in the past, nearly everyone would like to profit by the labor of others. No one dares admit such a feeling; he even hides it from himself. So what does he do? He imagines an intermediary; he appeals to The State, and every class in its turn comes and says to it: "You who can do so justifiably and honestly, take from the public, and we will partake of the proceeds."

In other words: "The state is the great fictitious entity by which everyone seeks to live at the expense of everyone else."

When individuals refuse to accept accountability and responsibility for their own welfare, they allow the State (the government) to corrupt the real purpose of the law:

"Under the pretense of organization, regulation, protection, or encouragement, the law takes property from one person and gives it to another: the law takes the wealth of all and gives it to a few—whether farmers, manufacturers, shipowners, artists, or comedians. Under these circumstances, the certainly every class will aspire to grasp the law and logically so."

Human Nature

While we suffer the consequences of government regulations and interference in our daily lives, Bastiat would ask us again to grasp the reality of human nature:

"Thus do all of us, by various claims and under one pretext or another, appeals to The State: "I am dissatisfied with the ratio between my labor and my pleasures. In order to esta-

lish the desired balance, I should like to take part of the possessions of others. But that is a dangerous thing. Couldn't you facilitate it for me? Couldn't you give me a good post? Or, restrain my competitors business? Or perhaps lend me some interest-free capital, which you will have taken from its rightful owners? Or bring up my children at the taxpayers' expense? Or grant me a subsidy? Or assure me a pension when I reach my fifties year? By this means I shall achieve my goal with an easy conscience, for the law will have acted for me. Thus I shall have all the advantages of plunder, without the risk or the disgrace!"

"All of us are petitioning The State in this manner, yet it has been proven that The State has no means of granting privileges to some without adding to the labor of others."

The process of "plunder" by the State is easily seen in current events. Bastiat asks us a question and provides us with a clear, precise answer:

"But how is this legal plunder to be identified? Quite simply. See if the law take from some persons what belongs to them, and gives it to other persons to whom it does not belong. See if the law benefits one citizen at the expense of another by doing what the citizen himself cannot do without committing a crime."

And, we are advised that "legal plunder can be committed in an infinite number of ways. Thus we have an infinite number of plans for organizing it: tariffs, protection, benefits, subsidies, encouragements, progressive taxation, public schools, guaranteed jobs, guaranteed profits, minimum wages, a right to relief, a right to the tools of labor, free credit, and so on, and so on. All these plans as a whole—with their common aim of legal plunder—constitute socialism."

While Bastiat was a Deputy in the National Assembly, he spoke forcefully against socialism and communism. Weakened by tuberculosis, he had to use his pen rather than his voice to carry on the fight for freedom. Using a style that was direct, vivid, and entertaining, he advocated sound monetary policies, limited govern-

ment, a balanced budget, individual freedom, and free trade.

Throughout his comprehensive writings, he returned to the theme of law and liberty. "It is not true," he said, "that the function of law is to regulate our consciences, our ideas, our wills, our education, our opinions, our work, our trade, our talents, or our pleasures. The function of law is to protect the free exercise of these rights, and to prevent any person from interfering with the free exercise of these same rights by any other person."

Individual Choice

As to the matter of individual liberty, Bastiat believed that individuals had both the ability and responsibility to plan their own lives as they best saw fit without government interference. He believed individuals were capable of making sound judgments and acting upon those judgments. At a time when the economy and consumerism occupy so much of our news commentary, Bastiat's view on individual choice, the free market, personal judgment, and the "public interest" should be well received.

"It is necessary to treat economics from the viewpoint of the consumer. All economic phenomena, whether their effects be good or bad, must be judged by the advantages and disadvantages they bring to consumers."

Bastiat always had individuals (consumers) in mind when he wrote about monetary policy, banking, transportation, exports and imports, profits, labor, and wages. Whenever he approached these matters, he upheld individual liberty and opposed oppressive government interference. Above all, he kept one basic truth before him:

"In the economic sphere an act, a habit, an institution a law produces not only one effect, but a series of effects, the first alone is immediate; it appears simultaneously with its cause, it is seen. The other effects emerge only subsequently; they are not seen; we are fortunate if we foresee them."

"There is only one difference between a bad economist and a good one: the bad economist

confines himself to the visible effect; the good economist takes into account both the effect that can be seen and those effects that must be foreseen.

"Yet this difference is tremendous; for it almost happens that when the immediate consequence is favourable, that later consequences are disastrous, and vice versa. Whence it follows that the bad economist pursues a small present good that will be followed by a great evil to come, while the good economist pursues a great good to come, at the risk of a small present evil."

Bastiat's insight into what is seen and not seen contrasts sharply with much of the stodgy, ponderous writing on economics of his day. He had the ability to present serious economic principles in a way that was easily read and understood by the average citizen. Although he possessed a keen intellect and sense of concentration, he expressed himself in simple, frank language. Often, he combined his vigorous logic with humor, satire, irony, and wit.

Although he was an optimistic defender of liberty, he was fully aware of where his native France was heading—just as he knew where any nation was headed when politicians were allowed to create a centralized, all-powerful government to achieve social objectives. Witnessing the political demagoguery in the National Assembly, he was prompted to write:

"This must be said: There are too many 'great' men in the world—legislators, organizers, do-gooders, leaders of the people, fathers of nations, and so on, and so on. Too many persons place themselves above mankind; they make a career of organizing it, patronizing it, and ruling it."

Ideological Warfare

Today, we have the same breed of legislators and leaders—individuals who are the cause of the political struggle that confronts all free people. Bastiat focuses our attention upon this ideological warfare urging us to place liberty in perspective.

"Actually, what is the political struggle that we witness? It is the instinctive struggle of all people toward liberty. And what is this liberty, whose very name makes the heart beat faster and shakes the world? Is it not the union of all liberties—liberty of conscience, of education, of association, of the press, of travel, of labor, of trade? In short, is not liberty the freedom of every person to make full use of his faculties, so long as he does not harm other persons while doing so? Is not liberty the destruction of all despotism—including, of course, legal despotism? Finally, is not liberty the restricting of the law only to its rational sphere of organizing the right of the individual to lawful self-defence; of punishing injustice?"

Yes, that is the true meaning of liberty, but now we are experiencing the perversion of the law—law which is supposed to defend individual freedom, not destroy it. Government—the law—has assumed an illusionary omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience in socio-economic matters.

"How," asks Bastiat, "did politicians ever come to believe this weird idea that the law could be made to produce what it does not contain—the wealth, science, and religion that, in a positive sense, constitute prosperity? Is it due to the influence of our modern writers on public affairs?"

"Present-day writers—especially those of the socialist school of thought—base their various theories upon one common hypothesis: They divide mankind into two parts. People in general—with the exception of the writer himself—from the first group. The writer, all alone, forms the second and most important group. Surely this is the weirdest and most conceited notion that ever entered a human brain!"

"In fact, these writers on public affairs begin by supposing that people have within themselves no means of discernment; no motivation to action. The writers assume that people are inert matter, passive particles, motionless atoms, at best a kind of vegetation indifferent to its own manner of existence.

They assume that people are susceptible to being shaped—by the will and hand of another person—into an infinite variety of forms, more or less symmetrical, artistic, and perfected.

"Moreover, not one of these writers on governmental affairs, hesitates to imagine that he himself—under the title of organizer, discoverer, legislator, or founder—is this will and hand, this universal motivating force, this creative power whose sublime mission is to mold these scattered materials—persons—into a society."

The Law Perverted

Bastiat understood the motivation and mentality of social architects who corrupt the law. Although he did not question the good intentions held by many legislators, he stressed what happens to individuals when the law is perverted.

"It substitutes the will of the legislator for their own will; 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."

Human degradation and misery will be tragic result when self-appointed caretakers of society begin to regulate... inspect... tax... coerce... bridle... control... organise ...

"The claim of these organizers of humanity," said Bastiat, "raise another question which I have often asked them and which, so far as I know, they have never answered: If the natural tendencies of mankind are so bad that it is not safe to permit people to be free, how is it that the tendencies of these organizers are always good? Do not the legislators and their appointed agents also belong to the human race? Or do they believe that they themselves are made of a finer clay than the rest of mankind?"

We should be asking these same questions of our own politicians, government officials,

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tation and drill. We may add, our leaders have also to learn from the West Public Morality during election times, as also when they are in power. Any minister or official must be quite his post as in the West, if there be the slightest ground for believing that he is corrupt or his public behaviour does not conform to the accepted norms. Then only the police, the smugglers the blackmarketers will take a fright of the Government being stern in dealing with them. Even in regard to rape of women it must be said that this crime is the result of our having the least regard for the person of a Women. Many instances of public officers misbehaving with lady employees serving under them have been reported in the press. Rape is only an extreme form of this general disrespect shown to women even among higher circles in the society and Government.

As one thoughtful political leader observed, that all the problems, political regional, communal and economic problems could be solved within the framework of Democratic freedom, provided we overcome the crises of national character and purify public life of its dross in the form of bribery and corruption and indiscipline. The criminals and anti-social elements are having now a heady, because their services are requested by politicians to quickly enrich and maintain themselves in political power.

The Bihar criminals, violent agitators and communal fanatics could be easily brought to book, if the politicians refused to have any thing to do with them. So instead of blaming opposition, let the ruling party know itself and reform itself. Then it will find that it is no longer necessary to think in terms of emergency to solve the toughest problems that face the country.

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members of the media, and educators—whoever would use government to further their particular beliefs for organizing our health, education, and daily welfare. To the extent

that we depend upon government to direct our lives, we will see the deteriorations of freedom.

"Away, then," says Bastiat. "with quacks and organizers! Away their rings, chains, hooks, and pincers! Away with their artificial system! Away with the whims of governmental administrators, their socialized projects, their centralization, their tariffs, their government schools, their state religions, their free credit, their bank monopolies, their regulations, their restrictions, their equalization by taxation, and their pious moralization!"

A Continuing Problem

Bastiat's exhortation comes at a time when freedom is on the defense. Government continues to expand and become more oppressive. Legislative and Administrative commissions, boards, committees, departments, and agencies abuse their power—drawing us further into socialism.

In 1848, Bastiat had no illusions about the socialistic road France was taking. Although many of the politicians of his day honestly denied they were socialists, their beliefs and actions were, nevertheless, undermining freedom. Ideological and political labels, aside, many of our own public officials and "opinion molders" are working against freedom, not realizing that their actions are basically socialistic. We need to stand firm for freedom as Bastiat did—exposing socialism and making certain that our individual lives are guided by personal responsibility, accountability, voluntary cooperation and individual initiative.

As we accept the responsibilities of freedom, we can share Bastiat's hope for the present and future:

"And now that the legislators and do-gooders have so futilely inflicted so many systems upon society, may they finally end where they should have begun. May they reject all systems, and try liberty, for liberty is an acknowledgment of faith in God and His

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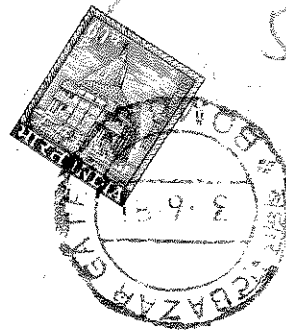
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F/9,
The Librarian
Henry George News
50, East 69th St.
NEW YORK (U.S.A.).



Edited by D. M. Kulkarni for the Libertarian Publishers P. Ltd., Printed by Miss K. R. Lotwala.
at Mahalaxmi Printing Works, Unit 13 & 14, 1st Floor, Tantia Industrial Estate, N. M. Joshi Marg,
Bombay-400 11. and Published by her at office of the First Floor, S. V P. Road, Bombay-400 004.