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Socialism And History

IT SEEMS PECULIAR that many Americans fail to recognize the resemblance between a Socialist regime and a welfare state. After all, America's early colonists began with a Socialist code comparable to that of present communes in China.

Glenn E. Hoover, professor emeritus at Mills College, called this to our attention in a recent address. During their first two years in America, the Founding Fathers in Massachusetts produced collectively. Their crops were placed in a common storehouse and rationed by need. Results were so ineffective that the colonists complained they were too weak to work. Although deeply religious, they began to steal from each other.

The situation spurred Gov. Bradford to write: "At length (1623) after much debate of things, the governor gave way that they (the colonists) should set come every man for his owne particuler, and in that regard trust to themselves. . . . And so assigned to every family a parcell of land. . . .

"This had very good success; for it made all hands very industrious, so much as more corne was planted than otherwaise would have bene by any means the governor or any other could use, and saved him a great deall of trouble, and gave far better contente."

As Prof. Hoover pointed out, this experience by the "Old Frontier" shows the essential weakness of a system in which free men depend upon government rather than themselves.

Members of the Kennedy Administration who are welfare-state minded would do well to delve into more detailed accounts of socialism's early failure in this country.