

by Jess Raley

# E C O N O M I C P U Z Z L E

This article graphically illustrates the state of public bewilderment, a consequence of the unsound social, economic and ethical practices which now confuse the nation. The doctrine of "something-for-nothing" has become so fixed in the public mind that even victims who give something-for-nothing (at the command of government) seem no longer to question the right of government so to command. Freedom is no less *freedom from dependence on others* than it is *freedom from involuntary support of others*.

WHAT is progress and what is regression in our government-manipulated economy of today? Try to lay aside all personal prejudice, as I have tried and evaluate the old and new. Try, as I have tried, to remain detached and unbiased, as you seek the answer.

Here is a slight, elderly man, wizened of face, keen of mind, hands knotted and scarred by many years' association with snips and sheet metal, who has reared a family of four, and has seen them become educated, married, self-supporting citizens. Once he was a proud, contented man; now he is dejected and confused. His life savings from a small sheet metal shop are invested in cheap but liveable rental property. In the economic system he had been taught to cherish, this was reasonable assurance of an income through the few gol-

den years of which a man dreams; years in which a man might do the things for his grandchildren he would have liked to do for his children.

Now there is no income. The houses stand vacant, almost worthless. The people who lived in them now live across town in the new housing project, where they can rent for a much smaller amount than an individual can afford to charge and still maintain his property.

The old metalsmith believes that the money he has paid the government in taxes was used to wipe out his investment. Can there be any wonder why he is confused and dejected?

Within the project all is new and clean. Among the tenants there may be some perpetual drunks, loafers, and ne'er-do-wells, but in one apartment lives a widow with five chil-

dren, ages four to 15. The project is a godsend to her. She is the widow of a mill worker with a piteously small income. She was in the highest priority bracket. For a very small sum she and her family are able to enjoy the comfort and convenience of a modern apartment, thus allowing more money for food and clothing. The general well-being of this and other worthy families afford undeniable evidence in favor of the housing project.

**L**ISTEN in while a man and his 18-year-old son discuss the boy's future. The lad is exceptionally bright. Only a small degree of his energy and mental faculties have been needed for acquiring his high school education. Since very little time was devoted to home study, this boy has had ample time for outside activities, such as odd jobs afternoons and Saturdays, paper routes and other juvenile business enterprises during vacation. He has been a scout, later an explorer, advancing to the rank of eagle, then junior scoutmaster for two years. Few would deny that in him were the "makings" of a successful man, perhaps a near-great one.

The father, a run-of-the-mill man with little education, is justly proud of his son. He had visualized a career in engineering for him, perhaps in electrical design, for it is in this direction that the boy's talent appears to lie. But the boy has no desire to attend college and the

father is keenly disappointed. The boy explains to his father that even though more money can be earned by a college man, a boy can take a job at an hourly wage in one of the large industries and, within three years, can earn \$150 a week as a top-rate electrician. As an electrician he will have a 40-hour week, paid vacation, reasonably easy work, a union to protect him from discharge or discrimination, enough money for a family, home, car, all the necessities and some luxuries of life. He may have group insurance to provide income in case of sickness, hospitalization, or death. He is guaranteed an annual wage in case of lay-off, federal old age and survivor's benefit to provide for his old age, or to provide for his wife and children, should he meet an untimely end. Why should he spend four years of his life preparing for a better position than that? Especially when the better position is less secure, requires much more effort, longer hours, and the difference in compensation is greatly reduced by taxes? He admits there is a need for men of higher learning to advance the several sciences, but, from his standpoint, the possible advantage is not worth the effort.

Observe a group of farmers. No longer do they wear patched overalls and worn-out shirts. Never before has their recompense for labor been less of a gamble. There is no other group whose reasonable

prosperity is guarded so jealously. If their looks and fortunes have changed, so has their thinking. Once the most fiercely free and independent of a free and independent people, they have bartered this for a measure of "security." A noticeable portion of vitality is gone from their conversation as they discuss the various government checks they expect, the 'disaster' money that will be distributed. In some cases, this once-independent group may now be considered little more than wards of the state. But look back to 1930: see a group struggling desperately; only the most progressive had a decent living. They had no money, little to wear, no assurance of prices, no insurance in case of crop failure, bare survival—even for the fittest.

Does the protected farmer of today have a clearer perspective than his predecessors? Where can be heard the demand for independence above all else? Is the love of uninhibited freedom less strong than the desire for monetary security?

What is progress and what is regression? Can it be fair to penalize a man who has labored diligently to make his own way, stand on his own feet, strive with hands and mind to make his declining years a pleasure to himself—a burden to no one? Who can say it is unfair for a government to make it possible for widows and orphans to have a decent place to live? Unfortunately, it appears there will always

be drunks and people who are lazy; they deserve no special attention, but what of their children?

How can a government remain a leader in science and in international affairs with a system obviously designed to curtail individual incentive; a system that makes the economic outlook so unattractive that potential leadership refuses to devote the time and energy necessary to fit itself for the task.

Is there justice in a system which limits the amount a man may produce on his *own* land—tells a free man what acreage he may plant of each crop and limits the price he may receive? But can it be called unjust when a government protects a group by setting a minimum price on their products, buys the surplus and distributes it among the needy when it is made necessary by floods, drouth, or pestilence?

Who would return to the "root-hog-or-die-poor" system of yesteryear? Yet who can observe the several trends of today without grave apprehension for the future?

Is it possible that somewhere between these extremes lies the middle course—not too high for the low, and yet not too low for the high? Having taken—or been forced into—its present position, is there any problem facing the United States government today of greater magnitude than that of assisting the inadequate without penalizing the self-sufficient?

***Is there a "new morality" displacing the old in America?***

# **DELIVER US FROM EVIL**

*by Gene Birkeland*

**W**HEN I looked from my window at the rooftops, yards, and streets of the community below, the town had the quality of a painting. No human movement disturbs the scene. It seems unnatural but life *does* exist down there—exists behind locked doors and shuttered windows.

One day this week, evil walked those streets and left fear behind. Teen-aged evil reached out and murdered a two-year-old child not for revenge, safety, or self-protection, but in the amoral self-gratification of a momentary impulse—"to see what it was like."

The questions which torment my mind as I gaze at the community below are repeated in the minds of mothers in every one of those homes. Will the day come when my daughter will be the victim? Is my son a potential Mr. Hyde? Why was there no saving voice of conscience in this child-strangler?

Another question perhaps un-

asked by other fear-harried mothers comes to my mind. What influences in this boy's life were powerful enough to overcome the traditional teachings of home and church?

Was this boy—and the thousands of others like him—the victim of a "new morality"? What is this new code of conduct which apparently governs the lives of so many American youths today? What force is so insidious that its ideas can be adopted by the young without the knowledge of parents? Is there really a revolutionary movement creating a new morality?

According to one eminent sociologist there is, but—"the revolution is hardly well begun." John Seeley was speaking of the mental health movement which he described in these words: "A revolution in social values is what gives birth to the movement, and it is a revolutionary doctrine that the movement is moved by and expresses. . . ." (March, 1953, *Annals, American Academy of*