



Decisions and Progress

ALEXANDER EVANOFF

THE PHILOSOPHY of individualism has these suppositions on the educability of man. It believes that no one can teach anyone anything, that no one can tell anyone anything which the individual does not already know, or is prepared inwardly to accept. This is true of individual preachments as well as governmental proclamations of truth and justice. The individual learns through his own abilities, limitations, and experiences. Therefore, the broader the scope for individual action, the broader and the greater the number of experiences, the better. The less imposition or interference from above, the better.

Learning is a matter of inward readiness, a matter of something

inward feeling a recognition and a correspondence with something outside the individual. If the inward readiness and preparedness based on thought and experience does not exist, the outward manifestation of thing or idea is not recognized.

Education, growth, development are a matter of inward ripeness. The more decisions an individual makes, the more rapidly he progresses. It is actually dangerous to withdraw possibilities for decision-making from the individual. Paternal action on the part of a presumably wiser entity, or government bureau, to save the individual entity trouble, requires the utmost probity and nicety of discrimination so as not to hinder more than help: because the blessed privilege of blundering may be more rewarding in devel-

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opmental growth and creative function than to be deprived of the right to blunder by a ready-made and imposed decision.

Individual development, properly conceived, hinges upon decision. Even a mistaken decision may result in considerable advancement. The individual moves by making mistaken decisions or happy choices, as the case may be. Whenever a person's decision is made for him, he is deprived of a certain opportunity and, therefore, in a sense, of a certain property. Whoever may have made the decision has robbed him, even with the best intentions in the world. A person may gain certain easements unearned, when a decision is made for him, but at the same time he has been forced to forego a chance for certain self-building which the process of earning would have accomplished for him. Decision is the vital principle of individual progress, and cannot be taken out of the individual's hands without far-reaching harm. Whoever or whatever makes a decision for someone else, either through the operation of force, prestige, faith, or prerogative, in a very real sense steals from the person for whom the decision was made.

We are in a world with just so many opportunities of choice, of

right choice or wrong choice, just so many opportunities for learning from the results of our choices. Presumably, we are placed in this world to determine what is worth the choosing and what is not worth the choosing. Each time we permit someone else to determine for us what is within our own choice, we have allowed someone else to dip into our pocket and to take from us a bit of property that cannot be replaced.

We could not think kindly of a friend who took property from us more precious than gold. An individualist could not thank anybody who took away from him a legitimate and never-repeatable opportunity for progress. It will not come again. If the moment is taken away from the individual, he is that much the poorer for eternity. A man's purse may be stolen and restitution made. But if a man's opportunity for making a decision is stolen, that which can never be returned to him has been taken from him.

Each decision made is a step in the individual's development. Once passed, it is gone forever. The individualist cannot thank anyone — parent, priest, or government official — who deprives him of the opportunity to grow through the making of decisions.



MARTIN ANDERSON

THE FEDERAL BULLDOZER

• *The Federal Bulldozer* has seen a lot of mileage since Dr. Martin Anderson's critical analysis of urban renewal was first published by M.I.T. Press in 1964. Now the book is available in a 1967 McGraw-Hill Paperback edition at \$2.45, and also may be purchased from The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., Irvington-on-Hudson, New York.

The following article is reprinted by permission from the author's new introduction to the paperbacked edition, pertaining to developments in the urban renewal field and his experiences since first publication of *The Federal Bulldozer*.

Martin Anderson is now Associate Professor of Business in Columbia University Graduate School of Business.

SINCE *The Federal Bulldozer* was published by the M.I.T. Press I have traveled throughout the country, speaking at universities, public gatherings, conventions of professional groups, and public policy forums. I have appeared on a number of television and radio shows, testified at Congressional hearings, received hundreds of letters and phone calls, and answered thousands of questions. One question I have often been asked is this: Now that you have had a chance to re-evaluate your

study and conclusions, are you still satisfied with them?

The answer is yes. To my knowledge, the extensive searching critiques of my study have not turned up a single significant error in the analysis, and the experience of the last two years has strengthened, not attenuated, the conclusions I drew from my original findings. At this moment, thousands and thousands of people are being forced to leave their homes, the private property of some people is being seized with the inten-