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THE DEMOCRACY WHICH THEY PREFERRED

By RALPH COOPER HUTCHISON

PRESIDENT, LAFAYETTE COLLEGE

President Hutchison spoke Nov. 3, 1945, without manuscript.

The following is, therefore, not his address but notes from which he drew his remarks.

I.

There are two phases in the history of the Schwenkfeldian Exiles which are peculiarly interesting to me. In the first place, there was that remarkable growth and strength which was demonstrated by this movement during the time of their persecution and the fact that when the persecution was ended, their numbers dwindled and their strength abated. This speaks of the strength of the people and their faith but speaks volumes on the philosophy of persecution and suffering.

But more interesting was the second phase when those who were in America were invited to return, when Frederick the Great not only invited them but offered them farms and reparations and every possible inducement to go back to their own country and among their own families and friends. They refused. It would be profitable for us to inquire into their motives. They were choosing the danger and uncertainty of a developing democracy to the security of despotism. There must have been a reason for that choice. We ought to discover what it was because we in these days are inclined to seek the security of totalitarianism in preference to the risks and dangers of democracy. The whole socialistic movement of this day is a move toward the security of a planned economy and way from the free danger of democracy. It might be well if we could be taught by the Schwenkfeldians who thought another way.

It is of this democracy that we should think tonight and see why it becomes weakened these days. We think democracy is safe here because of our peculiar sense of isolation and of superiority. We believe

something which we were taught in school, namely that this United States is bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean and on the west by the Pacific. Indeed, this was once true, but that was long ago. Those oceans were there and it took months to cross them. But they have shrunk, first to little ponds and now they are not there at all. Now we hear the voices of men speaking before the English Parliament or before the German crowds. Now we hear the bombs drop in London and the whirl of motors in the air. Now thought, ideas, alarms, threats, cross and recross the former ocean thirty-two times in a second. Now we step into a conveyance and a few hours later step out on the other side. The oceans are gone and we are living in both Europe and Asia. We have outdone the magic carpet of Arabian Nights. It had to go places. We don't have to. We are already there.

WE CAN LEARN FROM OTHER NATIONS

Furthermore we are not isolated psychologically by any innate or acquired superiority. We are made of the same stuff as are the peoples of other nations. Educationally we are superior to some and inferior to others. Twenty some nations excel us in literacy. Nearly all of them excel us in governmental experience. They may have their racial strains with certain points of superiority to other races. We have no such racial purity. We are German, English, Italian, Negro, Spanish, Jewish, Japanese, everything. We have all of their weaknesses, all of their strength, but we are not superior to the peoples of whom we are constituted.

The point of this is that we are in no sense isolated or protected from the ideas and the forces which have destroyed democracy elsewhere. We are subject to the same fears, the same hungers and the same tendencies. The axiom is that any tide of thought which rises elsewhere will rise here. Any disease which rages elsewhere will rage here. No epidemic can continue abroad and not spread here. When the world suffers from Spanish influenza we will suffer here. The last time we, in our splendid isolation, lost fifty thousand people from a disease that

was reputed to have appeared first in Spain. Unless social and political epidemics as well are stopped wherever they appear in the world they will spread here. This applies to the epidemic now destroying democracy. It has raged through one country after another. Perhaps twenty-five nations have seen democracy sicken and die and unless this movement be stopped it will sicken and die here.

DEMOCRACY IS OFTEN SHORT-LIVED

In the second place we need to readjust our conception of democracy itself. We think of it as a very solid and substantial human institution of government which in its sturdy strength cannot easily be uprooted. It is the contrary of this. Historically democracy is only an occasional short-lived experiment in government. The great proportion of human government has been autocratic. Here and there have appeared experiments in democracy, but they have been so few and for such short periods that they must be looked upon as tentative experiments in which the human race has had little experience. In our own thinking we are not democratic. We believe in organization from the top down. Our philanthropies, our educational institutions, our industries are autocratic in government and rightly so. The principles applied in democratic government, election of officials, initiative of legislation with the mob, recall of officials—these with few exceptions are not used in any effective organizations of our social order.

The result is that we are neither historically or psychologically committed to democracy. Therefore wherever a people under a democratic government become frightened or alarmed or their passions are aroused, they turn away from democracy as a child does from something strange and unknown. We flee back to the autocracy which has been the historic experience of the race—we flee as the terrified child turns to its mother.

Our democracy therefore is in danger, can disappear and will disappear unless the present tendency is averted and the human tide toward autocracy somehow stopped and caused to ebb, not only here but throughout the world.

II.

We are considering this evening what public opinion is doing to democracy with particular reference to pressure groups, groups which in the name of freedom exploit democracy and finally do it to death. For a text, I would like to take you back to ancient Greece. Plato in his "Republic" presents this conversation with Socrates from which I take a sentence here and there.

Socrates—"Let us imagine democracy divided as indeed it is, into three classes; for in the first place freedom creates rather more drones in the democracies than there were in the oligarchical state . . . in the oligarchical state they are disqualified and driven from office, and therefore they cannot train or gather strength; whereas in a democracy they are almost the entire ruling power . . . hence, in democracies almost everything is managed by the drones . . . This when assembled is the largest and most powerful class in a democracy. . ."

"True; but then the multitude is seldom willing to congregate unless they get a little honey."

It is this wise and significant reply of Socrates' interlocutor that I call particularly to your attention. The people who control the democratic state, the people for whom it exists are not willing to congregate, to use the force of their influence excepting where they are to get something out of it—"unless they get a little honey."

This has been the history of democracies. Given freedom, the citizens are lethargic excepting where they have an opportunity to raid the democracy for their own profit. They should be interested in the state as the bulwark of their freedoms. As long as this is their interest the democracy is safe. Then there comes a transition. Instead of being interested in it as a wall protecting their freedom for the independent working out of their economic problems, they begin to look to the wall as an economic gold mine. They tear down their protecting walls in order to get the stones. This is well phrased by William E. Rappard in his article on "Switzerland and Democracy" where he says,

“Not content to maintain the state as the guarantor of their security, they sought to make of it the instrument of their economic well-being.”

FINANCIAL GAIN FROM GOVERNMENT IS FATAL

In every democracy which has fallen this has been the story. Various groups are organized to make financial gain out of the government. They used every kind of pressure until the government was driven into insolvency. For instance in France, according to a French writer Cahen-Salvador,

“Some 15,000 pressure groups formed in France every year. The most extensive of these, on the employers’ side . . . has over thirty national associations in its fold, representing most fields of commerce and industry.”

He then mentions some of the other groups,

“Comite des Forges dominating the metallurgical industry . . . French agriculture . . . the grape growers lobby . . . The Confederation generale du Travail, leftist, verging on the Communist . . . the users and subscribers of utility services, holders of state pensions, ordinary tax payers and even heads of large families have organized to bring pressure on the government for legal action for their own interests . . . two-thirds of the million employees of central and local governments belong to professional associations and labor syndicates which are federated into three national organizations . . . Intellectual workers outside the government and industry form another economic interest group . . .”

Many writers describe the destruction of France by pressure groups, but the words of André Tardieu in “L’heure de la décision” sum it up best.

“Thus 275 deputies are grouped together to defend the motor car industry; 230 to defend the interests of the wine growers, 200 to look after the peasants, 175 to champion aeronautics,

160 to serve the cattle-breeders, 100 for defense of the lumber interests; 55 for the protection of French materials . . . There are 370 members pledged to support the road makers; 320 to look after the artisans; 310 to take care of tubercular persons; 220 to protect the rights of commercial travellers; 200 for ex-service men who have special privileges; . . . 180 to protect the rights of rural democracy; 185 to watch over old men not in receipt of pension, etc. etc.”

“When a deputy has ‘defended’ so many interests, how much time and freedom will he have to watch over the general interests of France? Here there are similar groups to aid state employees and to draw from the public purse. Result: a continual increase in public expenses. The budget in 1914 was 6 billion francs; in 1933, 50 billions. Even with devaluation accounted for, this is an increase of 40 per cent.”

III.

I am from Kansas. There we raise wheat and the people of Kansas and the neighboring wheat states are as loyal and as patriotic as we are here in Pennsylvania. Nevertheless we have an agricultural lobby and bloc which demands that the government spend unlimited funds to help the wheat growers and to sustain artificially the price of wheat. When that question comes up we forget the welfare of the democracy or any other part of the nation. When war threatens and a miracle occurs—the President announces economies on internal expenses for the sake of rearmament—our Senator, Arthur Capper, appears at the White House and announces that there must be no diminution of this huge outlay for the wheat farmers.

The Southerners raise cotton. Their representative appears on the same day at the White House and demands that whatever may happen to the nation, regardless of the state of our treasury, the cotton policy must be maintained. Our Navy, suffering until very recently from small

appropriations, had an opportunity to buy Argentine beef at half what they must pay here for an inferior quality. But the beef lobby appears and announces by implication that national defense means nothing to them. Public funds must be so expended, that the beef men make money. So we buy our beef at double price and reduce correspondingly our defense program. Beyond the beef men are the silver men. In order that they personally shall make money out of the democracy they impose upon the government a so-called silver policy whereby for their sakes silver is sustained at the false price of \$1.29 an ounce. We now hold three billion ounces, most of the world's supply. It has cost us \$1,165,500,000 and it is useless. We have paid that much out of money we didn't have in the treasury. Of this we have paid the greater part to finance Germany and Japan in their war and to support the government in Mexico. To these groups we have paid \$941,100,000 of this or 80 per cent in order that our silver people might get the balance \$225,400,000. We could have bribed our silver producers with \$200,000,000 and saved for our government almost a billion dollars.

The American Legion under the lead of professional lobbyists presented in the last Congress a pension bill which is the first in a series which will cost this government ultimately something like thirty-five billion dollars. The last bonus was \$3,732,000,000. The C.I.O., the A.F. of L., the Townsendites all make their raids on public funds. And so we go, every man a member of one or two or three pressure groups—each group out to get all they can get from the government. Each group good. Each group containing our best citizens. Each one existing for only the noblest purposes and each one out to raid the treasury.

MARSHAL VOTES FOR INCOME

Furthermore the methods of these groups are predatory and destructive. They do not reason with the legislators. They do not merely plead their rights. Few of them take time for this. If they did so they would be all right. But what they do is to marshal votes with mercenary appeals. They then black-jack the government into doing their will. They threaten each legislator, as the Townsend movement is now doing, with

defeat at the polls until he obeys their commands and votes as they order. He doesn't need to read the particular bill. He is given its number. He is told how many votes will turn against him unless he obeys and he votes for that number, or else. The methods of many of our pressure groups, the admitted and boasted methods are similar in the political field to those of the racketeers in metropolitan life.

The result of such groups and their methods has always been one and the same. The demands are excessive and impossible. The democracy pays. This results in a sequence which has been repeated again and again. First is excess expenditures, next the elimination of comptrollership, next the introduction of deceptive bookkeeping, next the presentation of fantastic financial theories by which the over-expenditure is rationalized, next the inflation of credit, then the deflation of money. Finally comes the appropriation of wealth of some group either in the country or by invasion of another country or both as in the case of Germany. Then comes the appropriation of all wealth and all business and all property which is "managed economy" of either Communism or Fascism. We have in this democracy travelled much of this way and we are in danger of going the rest of the way.

IV.

Democracy then is like a great masonry wall which is builded around a city in order that the citizens may be free within that wall to work, to earn, to think, to worship, to achieve. Within that wall they are to build their houses. But after a time they become greedy of the masonry wall itself. They want to draw their materials from the wall. So rather than quarry their stone they tear down the wall. They pilfer from its strength. They surrender their freedom and their protection in order to gain profit from the wall and it ceases to protect them.

The danger is that in our greedy desire to gain profit from our democracy that we lose the protection which it gives us in our freedoms. Security and slavery have always gone together and always must. Freedom and danger are companions. We cannot have one without the other.

It would be well if we in this day might catch the spirit of the Schwenkfeldian Exiles who chose the insecurity, the economic impoverishment of freedom rather than the security of despotism. They could teach us something today and we would do well to heed their warning.

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