

OCCUPY!

Volume 1, Number 3

19:13

December 1979

©1979, Institute for Christian Economics

The Idea of Central Planning and America's Fuel Crisis, Part II

Archie

Machiavelli Modernized: Scientific Experimentation

Implicit in Machiavelli is the possibility of an idea which has become one of the pillars of modern central social and economic planning. Contemporary humanistic scientism, as R. J. Rushdoony has pointed out, is founded on the idea of scientific experimentation. When applied to socio-economic and religious matters, he notes, this idea is diametrically opposed to the permission of any individual freedom. Why? Because the scientific desideratum is to control all factors, all "variables," relevant to the experiment. Truth is naively believed to be found through experimentation. The planner seeks to impose his subjective desires on other men. He seeks to be as God. He is not troubled by evidence of his lack of omniscience. The more deep-rooted his faith in planning the less likely he will be to be swayed by massive empirical evidence of incredible and costly governmental blunders. Even if these blunders involve the loss of life.

The planner has his vision. What he seeks is the means of realizing it. Experimentation, he believes, is the way to discover the means of realizing his dream. Present ignorance, no matter how blundering and costly, will be overcome, sooner or later, by scientific experimentation. If at first you don't succeed, and so forth. But all this experimentation means that no freedom to escape the manipulative "controls" of the experimenter can be allowed. Even if the freedom of individuals ensues in better consequences than the plans of the planner! The planner seeks to impose his will. He seeks to be as God. And God does not allow us to have any other gods before Him. To follow another way than the planner's way is to follow another god than the planner. This is why humanistic statisticians so zealously oppose so-called "black markets" (which are nothing other than free markets operating in response to economic laws, laws which planners seek to repeal) and Christian schools. The results of "black markets" and Christian schools are either not the results that the planner wants or they are results obtained by the "wrong" means. The planner wants it his way, not God's way. He desires to realize his dream through his predestination, planning and control, not through other means.

We have noted that the idea of central planning, whether applied to economic life or social life or both, presupposes omniscience, omnipotence and personal determination and control of history. These, of course, are attributes of God. We should not be surprised that men who presuppose that they embody these attributes of God will attempt to establish institutions and procedures which establish, in apostate approxima-

tion, relationships between planners and planees which are analogous to those between God and men. Thus, we who are short of gasoline make our supplications and entreaties to federal bureaucrats, in the hope that the D.O. E. will answer our prayers. And we are all-too-often thankful to the pseudo-providence of the government when our prayers seem answered!

Planning and Deceit

Neither the idea of scientific planning nor any other variation of the humanistic idea of central planning can withstand intellectual analysis. Not only because it claims that which it cannot hope to acquire — omniscience. Not because it is a logical impossibility. Nor, in addition, because its denial of God and His law opens the way to relativism, a relativism which its pseudo-scientific nihilistic denial of objective moral principles ensures will create lawless disobedience — thereby making totalitarian planning even more difficult, no matter what the power of the government. (This is indicated by the tremendous crime problem in the Soviet Union: lawlessness follows from the basic Marxist denial of the existence of objective morals.) All of these things are reasons why scientific planning must fail. But in the final analysis central planning must fail to realize the dreams of the planners because planning is based on deceit.

An examination of the philosophy, propaganda and history of the various central planning ideologies clearly indicates that all have used deceit to acquire power and to perpetuate themselves in power. Deceit as to their true nature. Deceit as to their goals. Deceit as to the means to their ends. Deceit for the masses or for the intellectual fellow-travellers, or for both, but there are differences in the degree of deceit utilized by any given planning ideology which permit us to distinguish between different kinds of planning ideologies.

Roland Huntford, in his important book, *The New Totalitarians*, makes such a distinction. The old totalitarianism, as exemplified by communism, was one of terrorism and force. It has been successful in gaining power, but not, despite its totalitarian force, in eliminating traditional cultures or Christianity. Parenthetically, we must note that the failure of terroristic totalitarianism in this regard is not due, as humanistic conservatives would have it, to the "indomitable human spirit," but rather to the constancy of human nature, the continuance of the impression of God's law written on the heart of man, and, in the case of Christianity, to the indomitable Holy Spirit.

Huntford's point, however, is that the "new totalitarianism," exemplified in the pragmatic, gradualistic, less violent central

planning of Sweden and other democratic socialist states, is the more successful wave of the future, in central planning. Rather than naked force, the new totalitarianism relies on slow, gradually expanding controls and planning. Rather than force, it utilizes statist education and deceit. The new totalitarianism has been more successful in eliminating biblical Christianity and in transforming the ways of its subject people precisely because it has utilized deceit.

This point is easy to prove from history and Scripture. It was not the militantly secularist planning ideal of Ward, Dewey and the nineteenth and twentieth century Positivists and Pragmatists which paved the way for the practice of totalitarian planning by our central government, but rather the dissemination of the socialist planning ideal through the churches, in the form of the Social Gospel, Theological Liberalism and "Neo-Orthodoxy." And it was not the open rejection of biblical faith by Modernism which misled so many churchmen so much as the subtle redefinition of biblical terms by "Neo-Orthodox" preachers of humanism. Satan did not use force to tempt Adam and Eve, but deceit. It is precisely for this reason that we are to "try (assay or prove) the spirits, whether they are of God." (John 4:1)

But even the new totalitarianism, terrible though it is in its subtle deceptiveness, cannot ultimately succeed in its ungodly project. The generally milder totalitarianism of gradualistic central planning is surely based on the deceit of the would-be planners' voters and subjects. But it is just as surely based on the would-be planners' self-deceit. No matter what human power the planners may accumulate, they can never truly be omnipotent. They may confiscate our property, close our private, Christian schools, propagandize our peers and even transcend our current level of taxes. They may control our energy production, but they will not increase it. They may even succeed — if we do not successfully resist their ungodly laws — in eviscerating our churches and in wresting our precious children from our care and nurture. But they are not God and so they cannot succeed in fulfilling their promised plans. To paraphrase a popular book's title, they promise us a bowl of cherries, but produce life in the pits.

The idea of central planning is a religious idea, based on religious presuppositions. It is a manifestation of crusading humanistic religion. But it is an idea which is in deep philosophical and practical trouble, even while it threatens us more pervasively, in the growth of statist government, and immediately, in the so-called "energy crisis."

Philosophically, the science ideal is being undermined by the very flaws from which it is fabricated. Leading philosophers of humanistic mathematics and science are having to admit that their irrationalistic assumptions about the nature of the universe, — which derive from their very denial of God — lead, theoretically, to the impossibility of objective mathematics and science. Not only are they having to admit that they cannot prove anything through humanistic empirical science, but they are being driven to the realization that they cannot disprove anything through their pseudo-science.

Practically, even intellectuals are now grudgingly having to admit — if they are even remotely open to examination of the results of their "planning" — that the violent brand of central planning has failed to produce its heaven on earth. But also that the less violent, newer brand of totalitarianism, embodied in our socialist "welfare" states, has failed to produce their promised utopias. In every area the evidence mounts that the programs of the planners have not only not produced the promised results, but have indeed been counterproductive, yielding unintended harmful consequences. As recent headlines suggest, even voters are beginning to realize that our "saviour," the planning state, is a fraud. In economics, as in political science, liberalism is shaking:

some interventionist economists now fear that they will within the next decade be reduced to the obscurity which the free market economists suffered at the end of World War II.

Central planning must ultimately fail because it is an exercise in self-deceit. Though they seek to produce a visible, secular "paradise," planners have only produced in reality various approximations of hell. Both the theoretical and the practical consequences of the planning idea are becoming increasingly manifest. The emptiness of the planners' desire to be as God is becoming evident even to those who lack the fundamental theological discernment of Bible-believing Christians.

These are promising signs. But the faith of humanistic intellectuals runs deep, and though it is shaken it is not uprooted. Mere empirical evidence cannot remove such a religious faith. Faith, remember, is the substance of things hoped for and the proof of things unseen (Heb. 11:1). Central planning is not only an impossible dream, but also a dream, based on the desire to be as God. The fact that it must fail does not deter all of its adherents from pursuing it.

Deceit and Planning: Jimmy's Faith and America's

Nor can we count on popular discontent with the consequences of statist welfarism and planning. Not when so many remain easy marks for demagogues in the media, the White House and the Congress, who create non-governmental scapegoats to bear the blame for the sins of government planners. Not when so many seek a human Leader to "save" us, via governmental controls and planning, of course, from the crisis into which government planning and controls have plunged us.

Jimmy Carter is a case in point. In his remarkable Sunday night energy speech, he rhetorically asked why we cannot "get together", as a nation, to solve our energy problem. Now, as St. Augustine reminded us, and as any student of either philosophy or Scripture (and certainly any Bible-believing Sunday School teacher!) should know, it is impossible that all men could share completely common views. Abe Lincoln and Jimmy Carter are wrong: houses, as M. E. Bradford has pointed out, are always divided, in one sense or another. If the President does not know this, he should re-read his Bible.

Mr. Carter has noticed that there is a widening gap between Washington, D. C. and the individual, between the government and the citizen. He would "bridge" this gap by making the government — and so himself — bigger, more powerful, more comprehensive in its control and planning, more hostile to individual liberty, and, as we shall see, still more ineffectual in alleviating the energy "crisis." He would counter the influence of the "big shots" by establishing at least two new super-agencies, the Energy Security Corporation (which will no doubt out-DOE the DOE), and the Energy Mobilization Board, an ominously-titled agency which will undoubtedly have the same effectuality in cutting governmental red tape as Carter's past governmental reorganization efforts have had in streamlining bureaucracy. Since these two new beaureaucracies are not enough, we must also have imposed on us rigid presidential controls on imports, congressionally-mandated fuel decrees to utility companies, and total control by the President over "every state, county and city, and every average American" (Are un-average Americans to be excepted?), in the form of presidentially-mandated conservation and "standby" (!) gasoline rationing. Not to mention increased governmental theft, in the form of increased taxation, de-capitalizing governmental borrowing on the capital markets, governmental inflation of the currency to pay for the foregoing boondoggles, and for the increased "aid to needy Americans"—welfare payments — "to cope with rising energy prices."

Mr. Carter would close the gap between the individual and the government by increasing governmental control over the individual, by decreasing the individual's freedom to lead his own life.

He would make the individual more important and the "big shots" less by creating new, mammoth bureaucracies to manipulate the individual, and by giving himself new powers to oversee, plan and direct the individual's life. Tocqueville was precisely accurate, when he forecast such tender ministrations, over a century ago "Over this kind of men stands an immense, protective power which is alone responsible for securing their enjoyment and watching over their fate. That power is absolute, thoughtful of detail, orderly, provident, and gentle. It would resemble parental authority if, father-like, it tried to prepare its charges for a man's life, but on the contrary, it only tries to keep them in perpetual childhood. It likes to see the citizens enjoy themselves, provided that they think of nothing but enjoyment. It gladly works for their happiness, but wants to be (the) sole judge of it.

Washington, D. C., says Mr. Carter, has become an island. To remedy this he would make it a continent.

There are, Mr. Carter tells us, only two approaches to the energy "crisis:" that in which "hundreds of well-financed and powerful special interests" twist and pull the helpless Congress in every direction. And that in which the President and the bureaucrats twist and pull us in every direction. Note that Mr. Carter does not consider the government or its ally, the media, to be a "well-financed and powerful special interest." Perish the thought! The view of the media and the politicians requires the oil companies (the scapegoats) to be populated by knaves or devils and the government bureaucracies to be populated by angels. The Christian view requires both to be populated by fallen (but hopefully saved) men.

Note well that our President rejects out-of-hand the path of free enterprise, which, he says, leads to "fragmentation and self-

interest. Down that road lies a mistaken idea of freedom: the right to grasp for ourselves some advantage over others." (etc., etc.) No clearer statement of his socialist animus against biblical economic and political principles could be desired. His rejection of the biblical principles of godly self-interest, private property ownership, and our Lord's command to OCCUPY, to have dominion, is patent. Mr. Carter's un-biblical coercion is "a balanced and fair approach that demands sacrifice. A little sacrifice from everyone." A little sacrifice from Jimmy and the bureaucrats to think up more regulations for us to live under, to command that we conform to these unconstitutional, un-biblical and economically inane strictures on our freedoms, and to enforce these new commandments. And a little sacrifice from us to obey them. Jimmy Carter would forsake the path of biblical economics to lead us down the road to serfdom.

All this is to be done, of course, in the name of "freedom" — as all things must be in the modern world. Mr. Carter's formula is truly wonderful: the more governmental controls imposed upon us the more oil we will be able to save; the more oil we save, the more control we will have over our own lives. Presto! The more the government controls our lives, the freer we will be! Never mind that there is no mention of removing the governmental controls on prices and allocations, the further disincentives to production in the form of continued double taxation and the addition of a new "windfall profits" tax, plus the climate of uncertainty in the oil industry, created by the demagogic rhetoric of Mr. Carter and other politicians. Never mind the geometrically increased controls on both the oil industry and our lives inherent in the content and implications of his "balanced and fair" proposal. Just remember: the more the government controls our lives, the freer we will be!

IN DEFENSE OF LIFE

by Mark Elam

Of all the questions which concern those who value freedom, the right to life should rank as one of the premier concerns. All too often the subject of abortion is ignored or downplayed in political and even theological discussion. When politicians bemoan the violation of human rights in the world, the question of the right to life is conveniently left out. When religious leaders stand before their congregations and enumerate the sins of the world, the immorality of abortion is rarely included.

Those who do speak out in favor of the right to life are not portrayed as advocates of human rights, but more often than not as one-issue, narrow-minded zealots who are of course members of the Catholic Church (no matter what their religious affiliation may truly be).

When 60,000 life advocates march on Washington, D. C. in freezing weather, the event is viewed by the media as routine and insignificant. When nuclear protectors congregate in Washington, in the warmth of spring and in fewer numbers, it constitutes a major media event.

The pro-life movement in our nation clearly faces many such obstacles. Despite some of the obstacles, however, pro-lifers have made many important gains in recent years, and will no doubt make more such gains in the near future, given sufficient commitment by Christians to the good work of the enterprise. However, our concern here is not with our political successes so much as with the principles which underlie them. Let us briefly consider the nature of "human rights," with special emphasis on the "right to LIFE."

"Human rights" is a term which has taken on many varied and

sometimes diametrically opposed meanings in recent years. The Soviet Constitution, for instance, enumerates a long list of "human rights" to be enjoyed by all Soviet citizens (at least those who have survived the Gulag). Yet if anything is evident in this example, it is that for human rights to exist, such rights must necessarily be based upon more than mere words or human invention.

The idea of rights is not found in ancient humanistic thought. It is a characteristically modern idea. But it is an idea which the moderns have — after the fashion of apostate men — stolen from the Christian centuries. It is an idea derived from those biblical principles of justice, the laws of God, which established immutable standards of ethics for men and at the same time unchangeable principles protecting the individual's life, possessions and liberty. It is derived, particularly, from the medieval and Reformation idea of Natural Law, which essentially equated that moral law knowable by man's conscience-based reasoning with Biblical law. Many Christians, believers in Natural Law (OCCUPY! will have a series on the concept of Natural Law.), still speak of rights in this older sense.

But the modern humanistic notion of natural law is not only stolen from Christians, but perverted. Modern political thinkers, such as Hobbes and Rousseau (and, some would say, Locke), have perverted the Christian concept of individual rights in at least two ways. First, they have sought to base rights on man, rather than on the eternal decrees of their Creator. They have, in other words, worshiped the creature, rather than the Creator. (Romans 1:25) Second, they have sought to base these rights on

the desires of man, rather than on the desires of God. Man is thus seen as the measure of all things his will, his desires, are seen as determinative of what is right, of law. The law of man's desires thus replaces, in modern theory, the law of God's desires. Since God's every desire is good, man, who seeks to worship himself as God, equates fallen man's every desire with the good. Thus every desire of man, in principle, becomes equally valid and legitimate. Philosophically then, there can be no possible distinction between the diverse desires of men, for man has philosophically cast the Creator out of His universe. Philosophically, all desires are equal, without the Sovereign God of Scripture as (at least) a reference point. It is impossible to distinguish between desires, so all fallen human desires are rendered free and equal to all godly human desires. Politically, however, those desires which are, in one way or another, strongest at a given moment will dominate, while other desires struggle for dominance or mere survival.

An illustration of the modern notion of "human rights" is the ancient pagan practice of abortion. One argument which consistently arises in the course of debate over abortion is the claim by pro-abortionists that pro-lifers are attempting to impose their views on others. After all, if all desires are equal, there is no right; so what right does anyone have to impose his subjective views or beliefs on others? Pro-abortionists naturally reject the suggestion that their own attempts to force taxpayers to finance abortions is in fact pro-abortionists' forcing their beliefs on others. "Free" (taxpayer financed, government-coerced) abortions become "a basic right to be enjoyed by all women." Such rhetoric, of course, is deceitful. But then if all desires are equal the desire to force your desires on others is equally as legitimate as the desire not to be coerced.

Since advocates of life as well as advocates of abortion refer to "rights" in their respective arguments, it is imperative that we consider these "rights" more closely. It must first be noted that the rights which we enjoy in our nation today were described by the founding fathers as God-given and "inalienable." Though some will take umbrage at the suggestion that the rights spoken of by the founders are derived from God and not man, and that first and foremost among them is the right to life, this is clearly what the founding fathers suggested. Nowhere in the statements of these men is there the suggestion that one individual may deprive another of these inalienable rights simply because his or her subjective philosophy predicates that such rights do not apply to or restrain one's own desires or behavior.

Contrary to the claims of the abortion lobby, the "right" of a woman to do with "her own body" (a biologically and scripturally untenable notion — cf. Ps. 13: 13-17; Luke 1:41-44, etc.) as she pleases is not what is at question in abortion, from the perspective of individual rights. What is at question (and what pro-abortionists would recognize, if they would but objectively review the medical and biological evidence) is whether or not a woman has the right to do with the life of another individual as she pleases. Pro-abortionists claim to be pro-choice, but since when have inalienable individual rights become a matter of choice? Such rights cannot be taken away or transferred: there is no choice involved. To say that it is the "right" of a woman to take the life of her unborn child is a contradiction of the belief in inalienable rights. Interestingly enough, the very individuals who

place so much emphasis upon "choice" almost universally refuse to consider the right of the father to participate in the process of choosing whether the child (for which he is equally responsible) shall live or be murdered (as if even this would be a legitimate choice).

It is naive (at least in the immediate sense intended by pro-abortionists) to suggest that laws aimed at protecting our rights of life, liberty and property either do not or should not attempt to force beliefs upon the thief and the murderer to which they obviously do not adhere. One sort of moral system or another will be enforced. The question is the scope and content of the moral system enforced by government. The question is not whether morals will be enforced, but which morals will be enforced.

The possession of rights and freedom in general is not the equivalent of license to do whatever one pleases. Modern men may equate freedom with the ability to do whatever one wills, but Christians cannot. With their Christian heritage, the founders of our nation knew that rights are not to be equated with desires. It is no accident that the right to life precedes liberty and the pursuit of happiness in our Declaration of Independence, for without the former the latter rights cannot exist.

It was just such a distinction which prompted the authors of the Declaration to clearly enumerate these inalienable rights, and to verify their true origin as divine, rather than human. No rights, as such, can exist apart from God. To be consistent in any appeal to "human rights," it is essential that this verity be acknowledged. "Human rights" cannot have a human origin. Without the existence of God's word and person as the objective standard and ground of rights, it is impossible that "rights" could be anything other than hollow and fleeting desires of men. Without God's sanction, there can exist no basis for the inviolability of rights.

The confusion of rights with desires is a fundamental philosophical and moral error of humanistic man. This confusion leads, on the one hand, to anarchy, and on the other to the extension of government beyond the realm of the protection of true rights, God's principles of justice. The extreme of this alternative is sudden or violent authoritarianism or totalitarianism. A milder form of this alternative is gradualistic or pragmatic authoritarianism, in which, in one way or another, the government legislatively usurps the protection of individuals' rights by the promotion of individuals' or groups' desires. Abortion is one aspect of this. It really makes no difference that this is done by a majority or their representatives, for rights are still sacrificed to desires.

This, of course, is precisely what we see in American government today. The justification for such practices, however, depends on the humanistic notion that man is fundamentally good, not sinful. If the minority is good, then the minority's desires must be followed; the same must be said of the majority. But it is precisely because men are not angels, and thus frequently violate the rights of others, that, to paraphrase James Madison, it is the proper role of government to protect rights. And, to improve upon Madison's terminology, Christians must insist that the rights which governments protect are based on God's desires, not man's. Government must assure that true rights are protected — especially the fundamental right to life.