

THE PUBLIC BE DAMNED!

One of the most dangerous and philosophically invalid concepts prevalent today is the concept of "the public interest" or, as it is frequently called, "the common good".

This is a dangerous concept because it has been used to justify the most brutal violations of human life, liberty and property. It is philosophically invalid because the basic premise and logical origins of these concepts totally contradict the objective nature of reality and man's natural rights.

What "Public Interest"?

What exactly is the "public interest" or "the common good"? These vague, often indefinable, terms have long been used in public policy to explain why priorities of social action have been set or why certain actions must be prohibited which normally would be considered non-regulatable.

However, one should not be fooled into assuming that these terms have objective meanings because of their frequency of usage. In fact, they have no definite meaning, only certain common connotations.

They vaguely refer to the existence of goals, priorities or interests held by a large number of persons (usually, but not always, the majority) in a certain geographic area which, because of their popularity, are assumed to have gained moral superiority to those goals held by a few people or by a single individual. Thus, the inference is made that these majority standards must prevail even if this means suppressing or controlling the minority interest.

In practice, the public good is never measured in any scientific manner, and, more often than not, those in political power justify their action according to what they think the majority *should* desire or what that opinion should be.

There is no such thing as "the public interest" (with the one exception that is discussed below), and the correct term should be "majority interest" or "plurality good". However, the use of the correct semantics would betray the fundamental roots of these concepts and expose their corrupt premises.

The premise of both of these concepts is that some men must dominate and some must be dominated; that one group must always lose for the other to gain. The reason that the polemicists have avoided this fact is that they fear the ugly truth: that for every use of the concept of "public interest" or "common good" someone is trampled . . . someone is denied his rights and interests by a self-imposed elite.

Social Tyranny

Recent American history is full of examples of the use and, therefore the misuse, of the concept of "the public interest".

The imprisonment of thousands of Japanese-Americans during World War II is today regretted by most Americans. Yet, in the midst of the War, the "public interest" demanded that these Americans be denied their legal and property rights.

The draft, long recognized as slavery by advocates of individual liberty, is labelled a "necessary evil", or even a positive good, by others in the name of the "common good". Thus tens of thousands of young Americans were killed in Vietnam for that meaningless crusade.

Around this nation, one sees land seized under the "common good" doctrine of eminent domain so that one more superhighway, parking lot or tenement house can grace the landscape.

During the infamous "Red Scare", hundreds of innocent persons had their rights abridged in the name of the "public interest".

Taxation policies require that persons without children help pay to educate the children of others . . . more injustice in the name of the "common good".

Food consumers subsidize farmers for not growing crops, and productive workers toil for long hours to support those on welfare—all for the "public interest". State and local governments try to legislate morality, suppress rock festivals, prohibit marijuana, and harass people who just look different—all in the name of the "common good".

Self-Sacrifice Vs. Liberty

The heart of the "public interest" principle is the dominance of ethical subjectivism in our culture. Ours is a culture of "moral grayness" in which people are taught that nothing is either completely good nor bad, moral or immoral, black or white. Morality is to be determined by counting noses, as if numerical prevalence was some guarantee of truth. (If everyone except Columbus believed the earth was flat, did that make it so?)

Libertarians long ago discovered that individuals need not sacrifice their interests for the claimed "good" of the group. Individuals can live their life as they please, allowing others to do likewise; obtaining their goals through voluntary association and trade.

Rational man neither needs to be sacrificed for the so-called "common good" or sacrifice others to it. As mentioned before, there is only one real common good . . . only one policy truly in the public interest . . . and this is the policy of individual liberty: free trade, non-sacrifice and non-coercion. All other "public" policies which do not recognize these liberties are in fact degrading and harmful to everyone.

Libertarians recognize that the good for one man can never be outweighed by the collectivist good of many men. All individual goals and rights are properly inviolable as long as one does not violate the rights of others.

Libertarians reject the utilitarian and pragmatic analyses of man's rights which lead to majority rule or to totalitarianism elitism.

The free individual lives his life as he pleases, gains values through trade, forms voluntary associations and respects the rights of others to do the same.

The free man, recognizing the danger to individual rights, is not about to let doctrines of "public interest" force him to become a slave to the demands of every special interest group favored by politicians.

The free man's credo is:

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"I must commend you on what is, I believe, the longest and largest libertarian educational effort in world history: S.I.L., its publications and activities. I cut my teeth on S.I.L. position papers in college back in 1969."

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Dr. Ludwig von Mises

"From my observation, since its inception in 1969, the Society for Individual Liberty has been an important factor in introducing and disseminating libertarian ideas. It has helped to provide a cohesive link for libertarians."

Robert LeFevre

SIL DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLE

Adopted October 1969

As Advocates of Individual Liberty We Affirm:

That every person has an inalienable right to their own life, liberty and property;

That the only proper use of force is in retaliation against those who violate human rights;

That the basic violation of human rights consists of the initiation or the threat of the initiation of force against the individual;

That all proper social organization can only be a consequence of voluntary association between individuals;

That the only economic system consistent with human prosperity and happiness is laissez-faire capitalism;

That the ideologies and instrumentalities of coercive collectivism are the basic threat to human rights and the existence of moral human societies;

And that both moral individuals and moral societies have the obligation to act in their own rational self-interest to protect themselves from those who seek to coercively control, direct and enslave them.

With the apostles of coercion increasingly predominant in the councils of man, it is the duty of all those who value their life, liberty and property to take appropriate action—intellectual and social—to preserve and extend their freedom.

We as libertarians resolve to resist all forms of involuntary collectivism and all programs and activities of government which violate our rights and attempt to take from us the ability to set our own goals and to determine our own destiny.

We work for the day when all individuals are free, and we look forward to a society of peace, plenty and freedom where the individual's rights are truly politically inalienable. As advocates of reason and liberty we seek and will settle for no less than:

FREEDOM IN OUR TIME

If you find yourself in substantial agreement with these principles and you wish to work to promote awareness and acceptance of the philosophy of libertarianism, then you belong in the Society for Individual Liberty. Use the membership application in this brochure.

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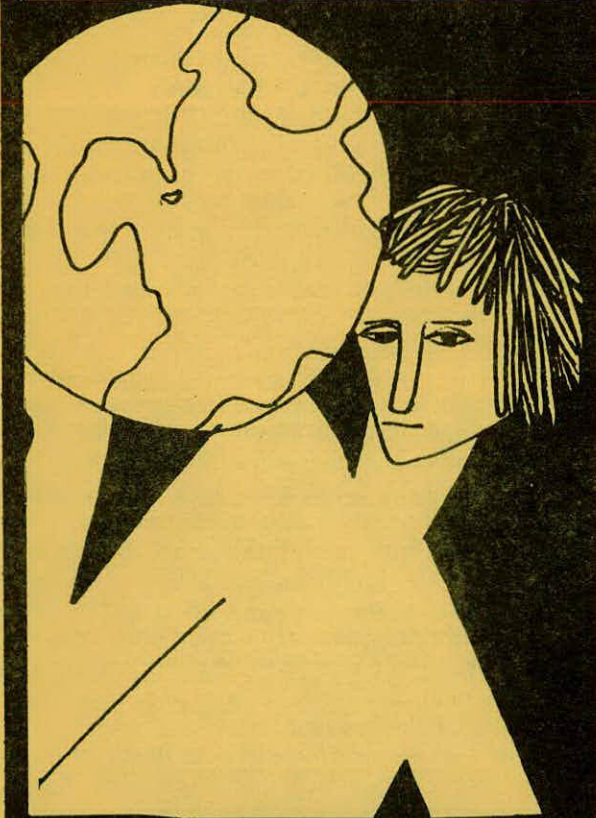
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