

# the National Program Letter

● A monthly letter of thought and opinion about America's problems

## BIRTH OF AMERICAN ENTERPRISE

One day at Plymouth Colony, in 1632, something happened that ought to be enshrined in the memory of every American citizen, generation after generation. It was the beginning of the American economic system based on private ownership of property and individual responsibility. It would have begun sooner or later in America because the pilgrims and those who came before and after them coveted individual freedom. And the private ownership system is the only system that brings personal freedom.

When the 101 passengers and crew of 48 came ashore at Plymouth Rock from the Mayflower, their first action was to set up a colony of buildings to live in. In the center of the colony they built the "Common Storehouse." Then, following the provisions of the Mayflower Compact, they elected community officials for the purpose of maintaining order and a defense against the Indians. Parcels of land were assigned each colonist in the name of King James of England. All the produce from all these parcels went into the central storehouse. And from this storehouse equal shares of everything were doled out to the colonists.

### A Stagnating System

This was communal living very much like the tribal communism of man's earliest days on earth—but with two structures of government, the self-imposed colony government, and the rigid code of action imposed by King James whose subjects the colonists were. For about a year the rugged communal life provided the bare needs. But some of the less industrious colonists began to shirk when they found that no matter how little they worked and produced on their land they still got an equal share from the storehouse.

In time the hard working colonists rebelled at supporting these lazy ones; they, too, began to lean on their plows and sit in the tree shade at the edge of the field. Stores of foodstuffs dwindled. When Plymouth Colony was two years old, starvation threatened. No man could benefit by his own produce, or feed his own family. It all had to go to the central storehouse; and when divided up equally, it would not sustain the Colony's life because there were too many shirkers.

### The Change

The Colony leaders called a meeting. Their desperate plight was discussed. It was suggested that the parcels of land be given to each family and that each family have full ownership rights to all it produced. The lazy ones opposed this arrangement, but common sense and the strong impulse for individual freedom prevailed. Private ownership of property became the fundamental base of the new world's economic system. And with it came freedom.

The fields of Plymouth Colony blossomed. Women and children worked at planting and cultivating beside the man of the house. Men cut their timber, hewed the logs and built backyard workshops where they could make crude tools and manufacture furniture — for themselves, and for sale! In time a system of currency was developed to expedite exchange and commerce. Even some of the lazy colonists caught the spirit of enterprise and contributed to progress. At the autumn harvest of 1623, Governor William Bradford of Plymouth Colony proclaimed "Thanksgiving unto God."

### Freedom's Anchorage

The solid anchorage of private ownership is the bulwark of freedom in America against which all brands of Welfare State advocates and all varieties of Socialists and Communists direct their most concentrated work. If they could dislodge this keystone they would thus strip our American people of their independence, their freedom — and a central authority dispensing some form of Socialism would take over.

Think a moment about your freedom. If your rights of ownership were taken away, the ownership would go to some form of government. Your home would not be yours. You would live in it subject to the will of the government. If the stores were owned by the government, you would buy what the government offered at the price fixed by the government. Americans will not vote themselves into such a situation with their eyes open. But with their eyes half open they can be fooled, and bit by bit the right of private ownership can be pulled gently away from them. We must examine carefully every move toward "public ownership" of anything. In most cases it carries civilization back toward the stagnation of primitive communism.

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