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COLLEGE REPORT

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In early summer, I wrote a column which I vaguely titled "Thoughts on Freedom." In rereading it recently, a few others came to mind which seemed timely, and I develop them here today.

Every nation, no matter how autocratically governed, allows its members freedom to act in various ways; but the quantity and quality of rights constitutionally affirmed in free or open societies greatly surpass those available in authoritarian states.

Consider, for example, the first amendment to the United States Constitution. It prohibits Congress from enacting legislation against freedom of worship, freedom of speech, and freedom of press; and it also assures the right of peaceful assembly and the right of citizens to petition the government for redress of grievances. None of these five freedoms flourishes behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains.

LET ME illustrate the statement just made above about the incalculable worth of the two-party system, or at least adhering as closely to it as possible. Between the establishment of the fourth French Republic in 1946 and the election in 1958 of General de Gaulle first as premier and later as president, France had more than 20 governments. During the same period we had two (those of Truman and Eisenhower) and the British also had two. Why the difference?

The answer lies in the contrast between the fact that the United States and Britain function under the two-party system and that France has traditionally had so many parties that none could command a legislative majority during the post-war turmoil. Thus coalition government fell whenever a really important issue arose.

A SOUND system of political parties constitutes a second characteristic of free societies. Observe that I have said the right to vote because both male and female members of Communist nations 13 years old and above have the suffrage. On their ballots they must choose, however, between members of the Communist party who differ no more than bowling pins.

Further, they can express themselves only on measures that the party overlords have predetermined. Lincoln described a free society as "of the people, by the people, for the people;" but Lenin declared that "liberty is . . . so precious that it must be rationed," that is, limited to those unquestionably faithful to the ruling class.

The party system of democratic countries, it must be said, can become chaotic as in France before General de Gaulle's election, grow lopsided as in the American Solid South of a few years ago, and be encumbered by political bosses and hacks. Imperfect as it may be, however, the English-speaking peoples of the world have made it into a remarkably effective instrument for dealing peacefully with diversity of public opinion. Political philosophers agree that without an enlightened party system no nation can function as a free society and the fewer the numbers of parties above the two the greater both social stability and social progress.

THIS BRIEF discussion of the crucial importance to free societies of a healthy party system leads into a third characteristic of free societies, namely, their broad tolerance of variant behavior and diverse opinions. Observe that I have said broad tolerance and not complete tolerance because no society, no matter how free, allows its people unrestricted liberty of action or expression of beliefs. Like freedom, tolerance is not an absolute; but free societies allow their members very extensive latitude especially on fundamental topics such as economics, politics, and religion. Thus they have come of late to be called open societies—open to differences of opinion and hence new ideas.

But, there is precedent for this tolerance of ideas in our own American history. Our Founding Fathers believed, in the words of the late Mr. Justice Learned Hand, that "the spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not so sure that it is right" and, as Mr. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes expressed it, "the best truth is the power of thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market place."

Otherwise stated, upholders of tolerance avow that final truth has not been achieved in any area of human concern and that hence diversity of opinion is inevitable and, further, desirable. On these premises and others, free societies such as our own cherish tolerance.

Ask Authority to Pay Court Fines by Check

Authorization for the Municipal Court Districts of Los Angeles County to accept checks for the payment of fines and bail is being sought by Supervisor Kenneth Hahn.

Hahn, chairman of courts for the county, said the acceptance of checks would provide a great convenience to citizens with practically no risk to the courts.

Payments To Jobless On Increase

SACRAMENTO — An increase in unemployment insurance paid here has been reported despite continued decreases in the amount paid throughout the state, Peter Weinberger, director of the state department of employment, has reported.

During the month of August, the department paid out \$28,736,227 as compared to \$33,568,101 during August 1967, a drop of \$4,831,874. Payments from the Torrance office for August of this year totaled \$553,788, Weinberger said, as compared to \$499,832 for the same month in 1967.

At Hahn's request, an amendment to the County Administrative Code is being drafted for final action.

ACCEPTANCE of checks will help the court districts better handle the increasing volume of court business and to bring them in line with modern business practice, Hahn said. Superior Courts in Los Angeles already have the authority to accept checks.

Hahn acted after consulting with Downey Municipal Court Judge Leon Emerson, who researched the results of other court districts accepting checks and found a loss ratio of only about .006 per cent.

"IT WOULD seem people are very reluctant to give bad checks to the courts," Judge Emerson told Hahn. "If 95 per cent of all business is carried on by checks, the courts are behind the economic times," Emerson suggested.

Noting checks are readily available to almost the entire population of our country, Hahn said it seems an undue inconvenience and hardship to force people to come to the courthouses with cash or go to the post office or bank and buy a money order.

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