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## Book Review of Planning for Freedom

John M. Court

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## BOOK REVIEWS

## PLANNING FOR FREEDOM

by EUGENE V. ROSTOW. New Haven: The Yale University Press, 1959. PP. 437 \$6.00.

This title, "Planning For Freedom", will seem to many to be a contradiction in terms. If we must follow a plan, we are no longer free. By and large we do not want anyone planning our freedom for us. The initial reaction of many will be: Is not the issue, Planning versus Freedom? Is not Soviet Russia a horrible example of "planned" freedom? The conscientious Protestant contends that God's plan will be communicated to him directly through the Holy Spirit. To him, this constitutes the wellspring of freedom. Consequently many Americans are deeply suspicious when the State undertakes to plan an important part of life for us. A great many others, however, are more concerned with how well they may live than how free is their soul. It is peculiarly apt, then, for Dean Rostow, Head of the Yale Law School and a Jew, to point out so succinctly that unless we more comprehensively and effectively plan the management of our economy, we are likely to lose what freedom we have left.

Dean Rostow does not confine himself to philosophical generalities. He is a perceptive realist and a gifted economic mechanic as well as a man of philosophical vision. His major purpose is to spotlight the significance of the fundamental legal framework in which our economic system now operates. In doing so he surgically dissects the Employment Act, the antitrust laws, the budgetary system, the fiscal policy, and the role of the Federal Reserve System. He then proceeds to a disquisition on the maladministration of railroads, public utilities, and the other overly regulated elements of our economy.

In this volume Dean Rostow has written as neither a lawyer, nor an economist, nor a sociologist nor an historian. He is perfectly capable of doing so, of speaking convincingly in the special language of each professional field. Instead, as an educator deeply concerned with the ultimate purpose of education,

he has addressed his exposition to a lay audience and has drawn his bow on a more important target than that offered in any one of these specialized fields of study. In "Planning For Freedom" he has attempted to set forth a meaningful design for the survival of our political economy in the difficult foreseeable future of the protracted Cold War. Educated readers who are conscious of a public obligation in the maintenance of Western Civilization will find no obscurity in his language, and should come to a firmer grasp of the depth and scope of the challenge to the West. It is essential, then, as Rostow has done, to analyze the objectives of our national economy, the control devices available to manage it, and the inadequacies and limitations of these objectives as well as these controls. This he has coupled with a lucid review of our economic history which pinpoints the ominous consequences which ensue when the managers misunderstand the objectives or mismanage the controls of our complex economy.

In this country the hackneyed political terms "liberal" and "conservative" have grown almost meaningless through long abuse. To classify Rostow in either camp would do him a disservice. He is not obsessed with a panacea. As a good schoolman, he professes an abiding faith that education is man's road up from barbarism and that as our society as a whole becomes better educated it will become more proficient in avoiding the disasters of earlier civilizations. Like a true conservative his approach to the riddle of a stable economy is to consider each element of our economic and legal complex individually and to prune only as necessary. He recognizes perfection is not attainable, and that the true criteria for economic judgment is the effectiveness of the practice rather than the neatness of theory. A staunch advocate of pluralism in the best American tradition, he detests the cartelization and nationalization of industry. On the liberal side, Rostow seems to me somewhat blind to the pro-union distortion of our present laws, to the innate inefficiency of federal bureaucracy, and to the hopeless imbalance of our existing tax distribution between local and federal coffers. On the other hand, he has surveyed a vast field with penetrating perspective and knowledgeably writes, in his conclusion:

"Socialism is one in a long list of rituals through which man has sought to transform himself into his

hope of virtue. Perhaps such faiths play a useful part in the war between good and evil. It certainly is to the glory of man that he dreams such dreams. Unhappily the socialist panacea has been no more effective than its predecessors. The difficulty, alas, is not capitalism. Serpents have been found in the most cooperative gardens. Work is just as tedious in a nationalized factory as in one privately owned. Crime doesn't disappear with full employment nor even with socialism. Egos are as tiresome in Paradise as elsewhere . . . Capitalism, the Polish story goes, is the exploitation of man by man, Socialism the reverse!"

Rostow has captured the essence of the great dilemma confronting America on the threshold of the Sixties. How far can the gravity of the totalitarian system pull us out of our free orbit without permanent dislocation of the fundamental relationships between the citizen and the state, the state and the economy, the economy and society? To what extent do law and social concepts govern the economy and to what extent can it be governed? With the infinite multitude of checks and balances in our plural system of government is it possible to effectively control the economy without sacrifice of our birthright?

No matter what one's political, economic, or historical attitude or outlook may be, I believe the Dean will provoke in his reader a searching reexamination of first principles and basic tenets. There are no pat answers, no easy solutions to the hydra-headed problems he poses. Surely then the more minds bestirred to think about them, the better for all of us.

J. M. C.