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Ben Morecell, "Engineers... Scientific and Social"
address delivered at the 1953 Annual Meeting of the Society of Automotive Engineers, 1953 Jan 14

Engineers . . .
Scientific and Social

By

BEN MOREELL

*Chairman of the Board
Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation*

An Address

Delivered at the 1953 Annual Meeting of
THE SOCIETY OF AUTOMOTIVE ENGINEERS

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Public Relations Department
Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation
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ADDRESS BY ADMIRAL BEN MOREELL

Chairman of the Board

Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation

to the

SOCIETY OF AUTOMOTIVE ENGINEERS

1953 ANNUAL MEETING

JANUARY 14, 1953

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

ENGINEERS—SCIENTIFIC AND SOCIAL

I WOULD like to talk with you about engineers and their significance to our economic and social structures.

My dictionary defines engineering as "the art and science by which the properties of matter and the sources of power in nature are made useful to man in structures, machines, and manufactured products."

We scientific engineers have learned that our unceasing efforts to perfect this art and science are essential for the improvement of our material standards of living. And I believe that we may, with due modesty, point with pride to our professional achievements.

However, my purpose here is not to give an accounting of the good works of scientific engineers. For I believe that we should all be more concerned with a "pseudo-engineering" that is developing to an alarming extent among us—a kind of engineering which is quite different from that "science by which the properties of matter are

made useful to man." I refer to the profession of "social engineering", whose practitioners are known as "social engineers".

A MASTER PLAN

These social engineers—who appear to be more numerous and, at the moment, far more powerful, than we scientific engineers—are dedicated to the thesis that, by using the force of government, mankind in the mass can be changed and molded to conform to a master plan, in much the same way that engineering materials can be processed in accordance with preconceived designs.

We scientific engineers have the unchanging laws of chemistry, physics, and the other natural sciences to guide our efforts. By means of those laws, when we come to understand them, we can predict the behavior of the materials and forces of nature. But the social engineers either know nothing of nature's immutable laws, or choose to ignore them. Instead, they have their man-made and variable laws of compulsions, prohibitions, and other restrictions on the free actions of individuals. By means of these, they claim, they can *compel* the behavior of men in a manner that will redound to the good of mankind!

We scientific engineers recognize that the materials we use and the laws we follow come from the Creator — a Power of which man himself is but an infinitesimal manifestation—and that these materials may be used and these laws observed to the advantage of mankind. The "raw

material" used by the social engineers is all of mankind itself — and the laws and rules which they follow come from no source other than their desire to remold humanity in their chosen images. Scientific engineers process their raw materials to create products for the service of mankind. Social engineers use their raw material—human beings—to create products designed to serve and please their own fancy—and frequently to satisfy their craving for personal power. And often they do this by appealing to the baser traits of man — laziness, greed, selfishness and irresponsibility.

PLANS AND EXPERIMENTS

We scientific engineers do extensive planning and experimenting. We construct models in order to obtain data with which to predict the behavior of the full-scale prototype.

Social engineers also are given to extensive planning and experimenting. They, too, construct models in order to secure a better idea of how they may control the full-scale project. For example, in 1933 practically an entire State, with all of its people—Tennessee—was selected for what was called "a pilot plant" and "a yardstick". I refer to the Tennessee Valley Authority, a project to which its "social engineer in charge" proudly referred as "a seamless web—the unity of land and water and men", all under his direct authority.

The Chief of the Woman's Auxiliary of the Social Engineers is famed for her experiments with model villages and other "social reforms". From these she moved into the Planning Division of the United Nations where—in collaboration with the master social engineers of other nations—she has been busily planning to apply her experiments on a world-wide basis.

Social engineers who have worked in the field of agriculture have, at various times, set aside tracts of land and all of their inhabitants for test projects. Then, satisfied that they had produced a happier, healthier, and more perfect human being, they have returned to Washington and attempted to place into operation a master plan to transform all of mankind by use of the force of government.

GOVERNMENT CONTROL

They have built model housing developments. The occupants are carefully selected, house-broken, and taught to conform to certain behavior patterns. If the operation of the models and the conduct of the people placed in them are pleasing to the planners, they demand from government the power to force many others to conform to the standards they have set—standards which they claim will reduce crime, improve morality, and develop a better society. But, actually, experience has shown that almost always the ultimate effects are the direct opposite of those which they predict.

These self-anointed friends of humanity are deeply concerned about your health, your diet, your attitude toward other people, your business, and your job. In short, they believe in government-forced control of man in relation to his wages, hours, working conditions, prices, savings, insurance, drinking habits, entertainment, and a host of other problems that every person must face in his daily living.

THE RIGHT TO PLAN

Now, I do not deny to any person the right to make any plan he chooses—whether it be a plan to fly to the moon or a plan to create a superior human being. But I do deny to the planner the right to force me, or any other person, to conform to his plan.

We scientific engineers do not need laws to force people to adopt our plans or to buy our products. I believe that each of us is willing to leave the decision to the competitive market where all persons have complete freedom to buy or not to buy, to join or not to join, to invest or not to invest.

But these would-be managers-at-large of society are not willing to extend freedom of choice to others than themselves. They must have the power of government—the police force—behind their plans or they are helpless. They know that in almost all cases a free people in a free market would reject their wares. That is why they want to abolish the market economy and force people to conform to their plans or to suffer the penalty of fines and imprisonment.

For example, I am an unwilling "stockholder" in the Tennessee Valley Authority. I continue to pay money into that project for the simple reason that the police force will use violence upon me should I refuse. I am willing to sell my share of TVA, and of all similar welfare projects, at a large discount. In fact, I would give my equity to these humanitarians if they would only stop forcing me to subsidize their schemes!

CHOICE OF A FREE PEOPLE

They claim they can "prove conclusively" that the Tennessee Valley Authority is a great financial success which regularly returns a profit to the people of America. If this is so, why do they come to Congress almost every year for additional appropriations? Why do they not offer stock in the open market where the people can have a choice?

The answer is simple: A free people would reject the stock. If this were not so, there would have been no reason to make their participation compulsory in the first instance.

These "promoters with the public purse" have been planning a Missouri Valley Authority and various other such authorities for many years. And they have been using your money to propagandize the gullible into believing that the projects are economically sound; that they will pay back far more than they cost. If this is so, why do they demand that the police force, government, recruit their stockholders?

GOOD INTENTIONS

These social busy-bodies may have the best intentions in the world. Their personal lives may be above reproach. Their primary motive may be only to "do good for the people". I question neither their intentions nor their sincerity. But I do question their basic belief that good can be accomplished through the use of violence. To illustrate my point, let us consider the French Revolution. The people rebelled against a government that forced them to conform to its decrees on wages, prices, profits, employment, housing, and similar matters.

It would be logical to suppose that the revolt against a government of favoritism would reject favoritism and entrust their social and economic relationships to a market and a society where freedom of choice was controlling.

It is true that some effort was made in this direction in the early stages of the French Revolution. But soon there came to power Robespierre—a man of unquestioned personal integrity and habits—a dedicated humanitarian. He became the foremost "social engineer" of his day. Here is his master plan for re-creating the people of France:

"In our country," he said, "we desire to establish morality, honesty, principles, duties, reason, contempt of vice, pride, greatness of soul, love of glory, good people, merit, genius, truth, happiness, greatness of man, generosity, strength—in short, we desire to substitute all the virtues of a republic for all the vices of a monarchy."

"FOR THE GOOD OF THE PEOPLE"—

Who can disagree with those noble objectives? Certainly, I do not, any more than I disagree with those of most of our own social planners. But Robespierre had no faith in people. He rejected any thought that the people would develop those desirable virtues by their own choice if left free to do so. So, he decided to establish virtue by the use of violence; to use the power of government to force all people to conform to his plan for making them better. He became known as the "humanitarian with the guillotine". Those who refused to conform to his concepts of morality and economic behavior were fined or imprisoned or executed.

When it came his own turn to bow to the guillotine, his defense was the same as that of all humanitarians who rely on the force of government for the accomplishment of their good works. He said that his every act had been "for the good of the people"; that he was only trying to help them to peace, prosperity, and happiness.

ADOLPH HITLER: SOCIAL ENGINEER

And so it is with all social engineers, including Hitler, Stalin, and our own domestic brand. Hitler looked upon people as clay to be molded to his purposes. Some of this clay—human beings—did not meet his specifications. So he destroyed it in much the same manner that a scientific engineer discards defective material. His program of social

reform allowed little freedom of choice. He used the force of government to regulate wages, prices, profits, working conditions, unions, rents, housing, education, medical services, social security, production, and a host of other vital matters. And he, too, repeatedly announced that all these things were being done for "the good of all the people". That is the familiar chant of these "public benefactors". The dictator who "liquidates" a group of persons is practicing social engineering—as is the public official who takes money from one group of citizens and gives it to another group—in the form of public housing or some other socially "useful" project.

Both are doing what they say is "best for the people as a whole". They may differ in their approach, but if you think that our domestic brand is any less determined than the foreign variety, just try deducting from your tax bill your share of the cost of socialized housing in America. First, you will be fined. If you refuse to pay the fine, you will be sentenced to prison. If you resist the officer who is sent to arrest you—well, just what does happen in our country to persons who resist arrest?

RELIGION AND SOCIAL ENGINEERS

Now you may ask: Did our great religious teachers practice social engineering? Was Jesus a social engineer? Recalling that I have defined social engineers as those who would re-make mankind in the mass *by using the force of government*, my answer is an emphatic no. For Jesus al-

ways appealed only to individuals. He asked that each one make a *voluntary* choice to follow God's way. He said to the *individual*, "The Kingdom of God is within YOU." That is, it does not lie in the group, or in the mob, or in the vote of the majority, but in the *individual* himself. Nor did Jesus ever appeal, or even suggest an appeal, to the force of government for the accomplishment of good works. Instead, He appealed to each person to reform *himself*, that he might be born again. He recognized no such thing as "group morality". Rather, He taught that each individual must eventually answer *personally* for his own deeds of commission and omission, from which it follows that no one can divest himself of his responsibility by hiding behind someone else or even behind our collective agent—government.

THE "AUTHORITY" CONCEPT

All social engineers are devotees of the pagan concept of authority. Their every action shows clearly that they do not believe that freedom as a way of life will work.

They believe inherently that free men cannot possibly be adequately housed, clothed, or fed. By their actions they show clearly that they consider themselves superior in intelligence to the rest of us. *For our own good* they desire to force the rest of us to live and act and think as they believe we should.

EXAMINE THEIR CREDENTIALS!

Since they assume for themselves a higher degree of intelligence and morality than the rest of us, I suggest that we examine their credentials. Who has commissioned them to use us as raw material, to be molded as they see fit? Surely no such commission could be valid unless it were signed by the Almighty Himself. Apparently no social engineer ever stops to consider that this raw material he is remolding is composed of human beings—creatures of God, created in God's image. Or, if he does think about it, apparently he concludes that God's work should be improved upon. It is my belief that God intended men to be free to make their own decisions and to be responsible for the consequences of those decisions. Thus it seems to me that it is an act against God for men to pass laws which destroy individual liberty; which force some persons to conform to the ideas and plans of other persons; which deprive persons of the responsibility for their own acts and for their own welfare.

It seems to me that there is convincing evidence to support my beliefs on this subject. And the basic evidence is found in the fact that no person is physically or mentally or morally identical to any other person. For example, we know that the fingerprints of all persons are different. And these differences—these individualities, these inequalities—carry through all the physical, mental, and moral characteristics of mankind.

THE LAW OF NATURE

This inequality among persons is a law of nature—a law which is just as unchangeable and just as necessary to understand as is any other natural law, as, for example, the law of gravity. This particular law is known as the “law of variation”, and from the unrestricted operation of this law comes all human progress. The law of variation permits children to be different from their parents. It permits brothers to think differently and to act differently. It permits the existence of both misers and philanthropists, saints and sinners, rich and poor. It is the foundation for all conceivable human relationships. These natural variations underlie all commerce and trade and exchanges of any kind—including all the aspects of social and economic life within a society.

The law of variation permits inventors to invent, managers to manage, and scientific engineers to improve the material well-being of mankind. It permits each person to seek a job or profession which is most suited to his natural talents and his desires. It encourages a voluntary division of labor, with resulting maximum efficiency and greater prosperity for all. Without this variation—this unequalness—our social structure would be similar to that of an anthill or a beehive, where each member is born to do a certain predetermined job, which he does with blind allegiance to his society and with no consideration of personal interests or preferences.

EQUALITY AND POSSESSIONS

The slogan of the social engineer is “equality” and the tools he proposes to use to bring this about are the compulsions and prohibitions of government. But what does he mean by equality? Certainly I am not equal to anyone else. I frequently meet persons who are my superior in intelligence, in morality, in health, and in material possessions. By equality does he mean that we should all have equal intelligence? If so, his arguments should be directed to God. If not equality of intelligence, does he mean that one of the most important by-products of intelligence—material possessions—should be equalized? Or, if he merely intends that some degree of equality of possessions should be achieved, just *what* degree does he have in mind? If his concept of equality is what he chooses to call “adequate” housing for all, then does not the same principle apply to adequate clothing, food, medical care, entertainment, education, and work for all? And should we not have adequate religious training for all? Surely he does not intend to leave that vital subject to chance! In due time I am quite sure that he will get around to controlling that, too.

When the social engineer uses his compulsions to establish equality or “adequateness” in one area, he may deny vehemently that he intends to establish it elsewhere. In fact, he usually does issue such a denial. But it never works that way. Once it is conceded that people should be forced to conform to the ideas of others, there is no principle on which we can rely to deny the same authority in any area.

EQUALITY AND LAW

It seems to me that the only equality we can logically expect is equality before the law. In that event, no person would be subsidized at the expense of another. There could be no subsidies—for if every person were equal before the law, then the law could not take from some in order to give to others. If we were all equal before the law, there would automatically be a free market wherein no person could use the law to force upon any other person his concepts of wages, prices, or anything else.

Equality before the law means that no person may steal from another person, defame him, defraud him, injure him, or coerce him in any way. Equality before the law cannot exist until the law recognizes the right of every person to the possessions he has honestly acquired in a free society. There is no equality as long as the law takes from one person against his will to give to another person who has not earned it.

RESPONSIBILITY AND SECURITY

In my opinion, the greatest evil of our times is that so many of us are trying to impose on others our ideas as to how they should live their lives. And when they fail to behave as we think they should, we are tempted to resort to coercion—acting through our agent—government. We apparently see no inconsistency in the question, "How can you do good for the people if you just let them alone?"

We need not go beyond our own recent history to find examples of the demoralizing effect of depriving people

of the personal responsibility of being free. In response to the urging of our social engineers, many Americans are trying to avoid this responsibility by voting for men who promise to install a system of "government-guaranteed security", a partial return to the old slave laws of some of our Southern States that guaranteed to all slaves "the right to food and raiment, to kind attention when sick, to maintenance in old age." And the arguments used in defense of this present-day trend toward the bondage of a welfare state are essentially the same as those used formerly to defend the bondage of outright slavery.

For example, many of the slaveholders claimed to know what was "best for the slaves". After all, hadn't they "rescued" the slaves from a life of savagery? Our social reformers who advocate "government-guaranteed security" also claim that they know what is best for the people and they say, "After all, haven't the American people shown conclusively that they are incapable of handling the responsibility for their own welfare?"

WARDS OF THE GOVERNMENT

Many of the slaveholders believed sincerely that the "dumb, ignorant slaves" would starve to death unless their welfare were guaranteed by the masters. And the social engineers say, "Are you in favor of letting people starve?"

But let us consider the emancipated slaves. Many of them were old or crippled or sick. They had no homes, no

jobs, and very little education, but—most precious of all—they were free. They were responsible for their own welfare. They had the privilege of finding their own security.

Now, compare the remarkable progress of those former slaves to the lack of progress of the American Indians who have been made wards of the government; who were given state-guaranteed "security" instead of freedom with responsibility. In 1862 most American negroes were slaves. Today they are about as self-supporting and responsible as other American citizens. And in the meantime the Indians, as a group, have become less self-supporting and more dependent on government. It has even been claimed that many thousands of Indians will die of starvation unless the government feeds them. If this is true, why is it so?

MISUSE OF RESOURCES

I am aware that many social engineers justify their projects by pointing with horror to some instances of the misuse of human and natural resources in the market economy as it developed in the Western World. I freely admit and decry those abuses. My studies indicate that they were possible only because one group of citizens was able to obtain special favor from government at the expense of others—i.e., government failed in its basic duty to protect the rights of all citizens equally. However, I see no justification in such past errors for setting up other privileged groups and thus prolonging this process which has proved so corrosive to our public morals.

I am sure few will deny that, over the years, there has been a steady, substantial, and voluntary improvement in our social consciousness and behavior. I hold that our sole hope for continued progress in this area lies in the improvement by the individual of his own moral stature so that he will know what is right and want to do it, *voluntarily*, not by granting, by votes or otherwise, ever-increasing power and dominion to government to regulate and control our lives, our morals, and our property. That we are justified in expecting even greater developments in the field of morals is evidenced by the current tremendous outpourings of financial and other support for our churches, our charities, our educational institutions, our hospitals, and many other benefactions. The total of the *new* contributions, i.e., not including income on prior investments, is now estimated to be well in excess of four billion dollars per year. There is no dearth of beneficence here. *Our great error is a lack of confidence in the voluntary acts of free people.*

A philosopher friend recently summarized this subject in the following cogent words: "An incalculable amount of harm has been done by those who have gone forth to reform society. As a matter of fact, there is no way of reforming society except by making individuals better. And no one can make individuals better except the individual himself. If you want to be a reformer, reform yourself. That will keep you busy for a while and lend encouragement to others. Then, when there are significant numbers of transformed *individuals*, society will be reformed, *but not before.*"

The logo for J&L STEEL is a dark green square. Inside the square, the text "J&L" is positioned above "STEEL". Both are in a white, bold, sans-serif typeface. The ampersand in "J&L" is a simple, stylized design.

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