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by PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY
Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

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## CREEPING SOCIALISM?

During the Roosevelt and Truman years, Republican can didates used to hold forth on a subject called "Creeping Socialism." This was defined as the growth of big government, with higher and higher taxes, a bigger and bigger national debt, more and more Federal controls, and a growing army of bureau crats regulating our lives, all leading to the ultimate horror of Socialism -; ·a.a they have in England.

I doubt that many votes were won by this oratory. The trouble was that the American voters didn't believe all this could ever happen. The result sounded too remote, the motives too incredible, and the semantics too extravagant.

It is now time for all those tiresome Cassandras to rise from the past and say, "I told you so." The lesson of England, with its shaky economy and 21.percent inflation, is indeed a spectre to make us shudder. But the growth of our own government has been greater than even the most pessimistic prophecies of 25 years ago. Consider these sobering facts:

It took 173 years for the U.S. Federal budget to reach $100 billion in 1962. It took only nine more years to reach $200 billion, and only five more years to reach $300 billion.

In 1930 government spending accounted for 12 percent of our Gross National Product. Today it accounts for 32 percent, and some predict it could rise to 60 percent by the year 2000.

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The govern::nent bureaucracy has grown so vast that today one out of every six working persons is employed directly by some governmental unit.

One of the reasons for the growth of this bureaucracy is the phenomenon that can be called "regulatory reflex." -When anyone sees something he thinks is undersirable, the suggestion immediately fol lows that the government take action. This usually means the creation of some new government agency, or an increase in the powers of an existing one, in order to substitute its decision-making power for the free market.

This often results in one group of zealots determining that others should not have what they want, but rather should have what they think is good for us, and then making the rest of us pay for it. Among the costly examples of regulatory reflex action are the com pulsory seat belt interlock in automobiles, the catalytic converters, and the stalling of the Alaskan pipeline.

President Ford stated recently that, if current economic trends continue, 11by the year 2000, 50 percent of our people will be living off the other 50 percent.11 This means that every taxpayer will be carrying on his back not only his own family dependents, but another citizen drawing unemployment insurance, Social Security, medicare, or general welfare payments.

President Ford added that he doesn't think that we are "over the cliff" yet. Maybe not. But the question is, as we head for the cliff, are we creeping or galloping?

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