

Economic Centralization Trend World-wide, Says Lecturer Here

Rev. Dr. Lonergan of Montreal Addresses Audience
At Regiopolis College on Sunday Afternoon

"The trend to economic centralization is world-wide. Fully developed in Communist Russia and in National Socialist Germany, and to a less extent in Fascist Italy, it is no less real in the democracies. To reverse this trend is extremely difficult. To bring it to full maturity is extremely easy." So stated Rev. Dr. Bernard Lonergan at a meeting held yesterday afternoon at Regiopolis College.

Dr. Lonergan is professor of theology at the Immaculate Conception Theologate in Montreal, holds degrees from the University of London, England, and the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, and has contributed to various quarterlies.

Elaborating his topic, "The Trend to Economic Centralization," the speaker pointed to the contrast between the emergence of parliaments, to enable the monarchs to obtain funds from the people, and the present situation, in which no government is embarrassed financially, in which private citizens have to pay taxes and subscribe to loans if they wish their money to retain its value. Where before money was a power of individuals, now it is a power of the state. In like fashion economic initiative has passed from the small man to the systematic development of new products by research laboratories and to the flotation of new issues through giant corporations. With promises of social security this transition from personal to impersonal initiative foreshadows a fuller development of state initiative. Finally, as money and initiative, so also ownership has lost its old significance.

In the XIXth century ownership, initiative, and management were in the hands of a single individual, and the number of such individuals was very large. Today, owners have been reduced to the humble role of shareholders, while the control of economic activity lies in the hands of directors, managers, superintendents—of vast bureaucracies doing everything in triplicate and providing a striking illustration of the Marxian doctrine that capitalism digs its own grave, he stated.

"The difficulty in reversing the trend to centralization, it was claimed, as well as the real menace of this trend, lies far deeper.

Victorian agnostics would have been insulted if one suggested that their position led logically to a decline in the esteem of Christian marriage. But that decline has taken place. Logic has won out. Similarly, today, there are great and sincere professions of devotion to liberty, but one may suspect the solidity of the underlying logic. The modern intellectual cannot take at face value such a document as the American Declaration of Independence. We hold these truths to be self-evident—but have not Kant and Comte disposed of self-evidence?—that all men were created equal. But is the equality in bodily physique, in heredity, in temperament, in intelligence, in character? Is it in the possession of immortal souls? But how many modern intellectuals believe in immortal souls? How many more believe in the sterilization of the unfit?" the speaker asked.

"The connection between modern intellectuals and the decline of liberty is not abstract and remote. If there is to be a solution of economic problems compatible with human liberty, it will have to be a solution formulated in terms of precepts to individuals and not in terms of plans for governments. But it is quite apparent that economic science is doing much more to provide plans and to prepare experts for brain-trusts than to formulate precepts at once analogous, and complementary to the old precepts of thrift and enterprise."

Responsibility Placed

Dr. Lonergan concluded with a citation from Walter Lippman's celebrated address to Phi Beta Kappa in 1940 in which the responsibility for a great part of modern mental confusion was laid to the doors of the educators who "progressively removed from the curriculum of studies the western culture which produced the modern democratic state."

Among those present were Most Rev. Joseph O'Sullivan, DD, Archbishop of Kingston; Rev. Arthur Wilson, rector of Regiopolis College. The speaker was introduced by Mrs. S. Murray, president of the Regiopolis Ladies' Auxiliary, and a vote of thanks was extended by Mrs. J. C. Newlands. After the meeting refreshments were served under the con-
venership of Mrs. A. C. Hanley.