

# Harry Golden's "Only In America"

## WHAT IS FREE ENTERPRISE?

Another large supermarket chain has announced a merger. Where there were once two competitors, there will now be one company.

Free enterprise usually takes its worst beating from the free enterprise stalwarts. For example, the fellows, who want a high import duty on the goods of foreign competitors. They justify this somehow: "After all we opened up our market."

Free enterprise in its purest state existed on the Lower East Side or New York City among all the "foreigners" and principally among the Jews, who know all about living in a competitive world.

Even the earliest American pioneer got some help from the government in free land and subsidies, but the East Side immigrant got -- nothing from nobody to be ungrammatically brief. He got off the boat, borrowed \$40, from a relative and went down to the wholesale district. There he bought \$40 worth of sheets, pillow cases, and blankets and started walking toward New Jersey. A week later he was able to buy \$62 worth of sheets, pillow cases and blankets and this time started walking toward Connecticut. At the end of a year's work he had \$860, paid off the relative and either hired an assistant or opened a store.

The corner grocery fellow who was summoned to the counter when the opening door automatically rang a bell added to his income by selling products prepared in the home such as pickled herring, pickles, and sour tomatoes. All along the Lower East Side, these "foreigners" tried to figure out ways of making free enterprise pay, and yet remain pure.

The "for 2¢ plain" fellows installed lending libraries in America. A standard book was "David Copperfield" and another was "Les Miserables." Several Russian and German novels translated into Yiddish were also staples. You left a 15¢ deposit and paid a nickel for two week and when you returned the book, the soda water man would thumb through it to see if you had torn out any of the pages or defaced it in any way and then return your 15¢.

This is pure free enterprise and it is a vanishing commodity. There are some free enterprise stalwarts who say that unless we abandon all social welfare programs and return to the earlier systems of free enterprise, America is doomed. But even as they say this the government is building an airport for them or they live solely on government contracts or receive the results of government research which had cost the tax-

payer multi-millions. It appears to me that very few people understood the Lower East Side, probably because they never understood free enterprise in its purest form.

## THE DOCTORS

Within the past year I have read several articles in reputable publications as well as two books all of which were highly critical of the medical profession. The editors and the writers are taking the doctors to task and if the general public doesn't share their outrage, at least it is listening.

Let it be said no one is criticizing the ability of the doctors to work amazing cures, nor is anyone denigrating their diagnostic accuracy.

Indeed, medicine, as the saying goes, is better than ever. But the complaint of the knowledgeable seems to be that the doctors as a profession do not really have the community's interest at heart.

Certainly there is some truth in this. I've heard people complain that if Abraham Lincoln were shot at Ford's Theatre tonight, the first question a doctor would ask would be, "Well, can't he come to the office? I'm not handling house calls this week."

There was a time, of course, when there weren't so many cures as there are now and sick people simply languished. But today medicine has invented a therapy for every disease except those which kill you and the traffic across the threshold of the general practitioner and specialist is indeed so heavy that he can barely take care of his waiting room let alone the community outside.

The disfavor into which the medicos have fallen results I think from the opposition they put up as a lobby against such federal measures as Medicare, veterans hospitals, and the like.

It wasn't so much they opposed the establishment

of organizations financed with federal funds; that is anyone's prerogative. It was that the arguments the doctors forwarded against such establishments were specious arguments.

Doctors insisted socialized medicine did not work in Britain when they knew such a statement was false. It does work. The British live as long or longer than we do.

Socialized medicine has worked since Bismarck first introduced it to Germany in the 1870s. It works better, in fact, for the European countries almost all of which have a program of national medical insurance service which wiped out measles with the new vaccine far before the United States did with the same vaccine.

In addition, the doctors throw more money into the fight against measures of which they disapprove than they spend on research, say, for cancer cures. Now that Medicare and the ordinary veterans hospital is a fact, we wonder what all the shouting was about. For the doctors have been displaced neither economically nor socially.

Yet none of us are about to dispense with medicine. Nothing is as welcome to those of us who do poorly as the sight of a man who may make us well.

Some of the criticism perhaps is our own fault. There are terminal diseases and injuries which no medicine can cure. But more than once I've heard intelligent people blame the doctor for the patient's death. And there are people sick for a long time who come to hate not their affliction but their doctor.

Lastly, we are often jealous. Doctors make what the rest of us like to call "a good living," and though I am sure some doctors will disagree with me let us say they make on the average a better living than the vast majority of their patients.

I see no reason why they shouldn't. But then I see no reason either why the majority of us should die broke because we fell ill late in life. The folks can pay off the mortgage, the car and the refrigerator, but few of them pay off that last operation and the last hospitalization.

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