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FAMILY & STATE CARE ^{of} FUTURE GENERATIONS

Never in ancient régime any notion of taxing inheritance for the sake of state income, the whole philosophy of law of succession and inheritance being that each family should do the maximum possible to protect its descendants, any fiscal measures against family fortune would have undermined ~~the~~ ^{the} primary purpose. Taxes, therefore, were levied on commerce and income, on the revenue of the ~~existing~~ ^{current} generation, and not upon the lineage property.

With the abolition of lineage property in the Code Civil, the juridical basis of protecting transgenerational ~~for~~ wealth disappeared. The possessor was free to liquidate everything. Such did not happen, of course, as family transmission of wealth continued as before — but now according to ~~social~~ ^{social} social-psychological impulses. Nevertheless, the time would surely come when the state could begin to think of ~~the~~ family wealth as being a contemporary possession and not of the lineage, and thereby tax it for the common good. The state, as it were, stepped into the shoes of the church, ~~now~~ which had from the high middle ages got the right — the deceased making voluntarily a bequest — to have up to one-fifth of the goods. The state's interposition was not voluntary, of course, but on fond its rationale (had it chosen to see it in these historical terms) was as great; it now provided most of the social service functions that the medieval church had done: education, ~~kept~~ health, & old age & ~~social~~ ^{social} indigence.

In a larger fashion, the state took over the burden of
caring for future generations which the family had exclusively
been able to affect ~~the~~ before the 19th century. If the rationale
of protecting lineage property in the ancien régime had been to
enable parents to provide for descendants, the social opinion
state of the later 19th and 20th centuries gave a blanket
guarantee to all citizens of ~~the~~ at least a minimum ~~stan-~~
dard of living for all future generations. The needs of
the state to perform this function at large could be an excuse
to dip into the wealth of families - at least those of really hand-
some means - to an extent not confiscatory but still dis-
criminatory.

At least through the nineteenth and into the twentieth
centuries, the defense of transgenerational wealth for economic
reasons remained valid in capitalist countries. As long as
businesses remained chiefly family businesses, economic enter-
prise - ^{and stability} - and ^{therefore} the general health of the state - was
still related to ~~great~~ perpetuated family wealth. Where and
when this ceases to be true, ~~then~~ where, for example, most
great businesses are ~~held by~~ ^{owned} by common stockholders,
where the personal family element is reduced to a ^{small} fraction
of the whole, then ~~the~~ ~~same~~ justification of transgenerational
fortunes ~~is no longer valid~~ ^{in terms of the public good, in so far as they preserve} economic stability becomes moot. Not
that there are not other "justifications" for ~~great~~ transgenerational
fortunes that are ~~not~~ available, but I leave those for others to
set forth.