

"Force and Freedom"

AN ADDRESS by Vice Admiral H. R. Rickover on the occasion of receiving the Franklin Medal for Distinguished Service from the Printing Industries of Metropolitan New York, on "Freedom and the Knowledge Gap," was published in the Los Angeles Times, where W. E. Pereira read it and commented on it to the author.

The Admiral said wealth and power were not the aims of our Revolution, but that our country had its birth in national independence and individual liberty. Quoting Hamilton's allusion to the Constitution as representing "the energy of government and the security of private rights," he said, this security had been to some degree lost.

He spoke of a wide knowledge gap between the public and "that small elite of highly trained experts who understand science and technology." As the gifted forge ahead he says it will take all the moral resources we have to keep ours a humane society based on respect for the worth of every human being. The founding fathers discovered a practical answer to a fundamental question, "how to limit power so men could be free." Since then technology has been in use for a century, but we who are transients on the earth have wasted minerals, poisoned air and water, and generally used the earth's resources badly.

Said the Admiral, "There is need of wider recognition that government has as much a duty to protect the land, the air, the water and the natural environment against technical damage as it has to protect the country against foreign enemies and the individual against criminals."

This remark caught Mr. Pereira's attention and he wrote, "I find it rather unusual that we do not hesitate to declare the public domain of air, water, space, sunshine and rain (all economic 'land') but fear to tread against mis-

use and monopolizing of 'terra firma,' the land we usually hear about."

Oscar B. Johannsen, who read this same address in New York, made this observation on freedom:

"The famous Admiral holds strong convictions and has not hesitated to defend them. But in this eloquent address he surprises us by conforming to a familiar pattern by expressing an abstract desire for liberty to be gained by specific means which would actually diminish it. In his opinion education is necessary if democracy is to work—he feels this so strongly that he would deny a person the right *not* to be educated, as when he says, 'it is not enough to provide the fullest educational opportunities for everyone; these opportunities must also be used by everyone.'

"If a man is forced by the state to accept education he does not want, his liberty has been violated just as much as if he had been conscripted. If liberty is implemented by authoritarian means, it is a wild dream to assume that its benign influence will prevail throughout society. Instead, authoritarianism will arise to blight the land.

"The Admiral errs, I think, in promoting specific strictures to enhance freedom, but in much of what he says, he does recognize the primacy of the individual, as when he reminds us that we must 'never for a moment forget that a free society centers on man.'

"It is man that is all important—not society, technology, science, or government, but man. Man does not exist for them—they exist for him. First, last and always comes the right of the individual to liberty—for as Henry George said, 'Liberty means Justice, and Justice is the natural law—the law of health and symmetry and strength, of fraternity and cooperation.' His goal was the creation of a society of truly free men."