

Ferdie J. Deering

AUG. 18 1975

No Such Thing as a Free Lunch

THE earliest fairy tales were told to illustrate a timely point, and perhaps this version of an old one, published not long ago in Industry Week magazine, has meaning for us:

The Land of Kulumar was the richest and most powerful of all nations. Its fields were bountiful, and its granaries were full. Its flocks were fat and sleek.

Sire, the Generous, surveyed all this plenty and said: "Surely, a country as rich as Kulumar should provide food and housing and garments for our less fortunate. I will ask the Lawmakers to levy a tax on the workers to provide this."

And the Lawmakers, each of whom hoped one day to become Sire, levied the taxes. They then said: "Let there also be free circuses for those who do not work, and soft hassocks and free food and wine." And the Lawmakers levied more taxes.

When the workers of Kulumar heard of the free circuses, the soft

hassocks, and the free food and wines, and then figured their monstrous taxes, they said: "That is for us!" Farmers left their fields and flocks. Weavers laid down their shuttles. Blacksmiths cooled their forges. Everybody went to watch the circuses.

Plenty turned to scarcity. No longer was there abundant food. Garments were hard to come by.

So Sire, the Generous, who was well-intentioned, went to the Wise Man of the Mountain and said: "Wise One, I have tried to give the good life to my people. But they no longer want to work. Food and goods are scarce. Prices are outrageous. Taxes are even more so. Give me a solution."

And the Wise Man of the Mountain replied in Kulumese: "Tanstaaf!" Which, translated, means: "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch!"

Meanwhile, back in the United States of America, Rep. Charles B. Rangel, D-N.Y., has been drafting

legislation that would provide the poor with "clothing stamps," as well as food stamps.

About one in every four Americans now is eligible to receive food stamps, and the giant Health, Education and Welfare Department (HEW) is handing out benefits at such a rate that Caspar Weinberger, former secretary, said when he resigned:

"If social programs continue growing for the next two decades at the same pace they have in the last two, we will spend more than half of our whole gross national product (GNP) for domestic social programs alone by the year 2000. Should that day ever come, half of the American people will be working to support the other half."

Maybe Weinberger heard something from the Wise Man of the Mountain that Congress and the American people haven't heard: "There aint no such thing as a free lunch!"