

ened President John Tyler with secession if Texas were admitted to the Union. By the Jeffersonian test, that, to be legitimate, a government must rest upon the consent of the governed, the Confederacy had legitimacy by the time of Fort Sumter. What the Union took back in 1865 was not free men and free states, but defeated rebels and conquered provinces.

In 1861 it had been an open question whether a state had a right to secede. The question was submitted to the arbitration of the sword and settled only at Appomattox. But, of all the wars America ever fought, "vital interests" were at risk in the Civil War. Had South Carolina, Georgia, and the Gulf states broken away, British and French would have moved in to exploit the Southern free-trade zone to undermine Northern industries, and wean the West away from the Union. Indeed, during the war, Napoleon III installed a puppet regime in Mexico in violation of the Monroe Doctrine, and the British were moving troops into Canada. The first secession would not have been the last. Fragmentation of the nation was at hand. As a private in the 70th Ohio wrote home in 1863:

Admit the right of the seceding states to break up the Union at pleasure . . . and how long will it be before the new confederacies created by the first disruption shall be resolved into still smaller fragments and the continent become a vast theater of civil war, military license, anarchy and despotism. Better settle it at whatever cost and settle it forever.

With the Deep South gone, the United States would have lost a fourth of its territory, its window on the Caribbean and the Gulf, its border with Mexico, and its port of New Orleans—the outlet to the sea for the goods of Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, and the Middle West. The South would have begun to compete for the allegiance of New Mexico and Arizona; indeed, rebellions arose in both areas and had to be put down by

Union troops.

To Lincoln, secession meant an amputation of his country that would have destroyed its élan and morale. Disunion was intolerable. Where Jackson said it directly, "Disunion is Treason," and "preservation of the Union . . . the highest law," Lincoln used his rhetorical powers to elevate the cause to one of universal values. But his goal was the same as Jackson's.

Lincoln was the indispensable man who saved the Union. He accepted war and may have provoked war to restore that Union. In the end, that war freed the slaves. "At last after the smoke of the battlefield had cleared away the horrid shape which had cast its shadow over the whole continent had vanished and was gone for ever," wrote England's John Bright. But was war necessary to free the slaves, when every other nation in the hemisphere, save Haiti, freed its slaves peacefully, without the "total war" Lincoln's generals like Sherman and Sheridan unleashed on the South? To Lincoln, then, belongs the credit of all the good the war did, and full responsibility for all the war cost.

While the men of government had one set of reasons for going to war, the men who marched into the guns had another: patriotism, love of country. They fought, as Macaulay said, for the reasons that men always fight, "for the ashes of their fathers and the temples of their gods."

We are fighting against "traitors who sought to tear down and break into fragments the glorious temple that our fathers reared with blood and tears," a Michigan private wrote to his younger brother. A month before he fell at Gettysburg, a Minnesota boy wrote home that he was willing to give his life "for the purpose of crushing this g--d--- rebellion and to support the best government on God's footstool."

In the war's last days, a Union soldier captured a wounded rebel and was astonished by the man's ferocity. "Why do you keep fighting like this?" he demanded. "Because you're here!" the dying rebel replied. c

The Conquerors

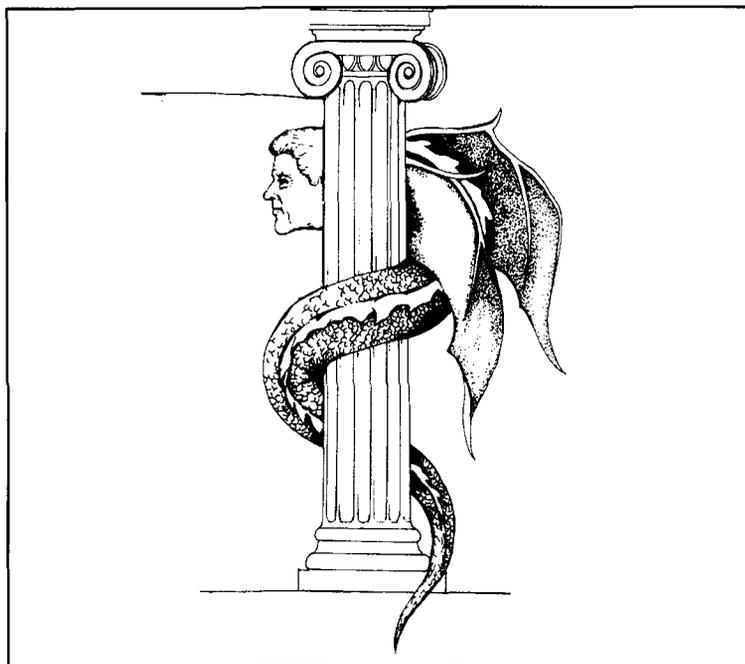
by *Harold McCurdy*

We're gobbling up the planet, we Americans,
gobbling it up and turning it into
automobiles, computers, nuclear devices
and all manner of effluvia deadly to mountain lions,
to alligators, to salamanders, to spotted owls, to people,
and wondering why it is that family values
are disappearing in spite of the passionate rhetoric
of divorced senators and adulterous presidents.

Our assembly lines have conquered most of the earth.
When China and India at last catch up with
our USA standard of living and billions of gas-guzzlers
roar across their vast landscapes, eliminating
the quaint villages, the colorful bazaars, the green rice-paddies,
we shall, with a sense of mission accomplished, depart,
leaving to them what is left while we speed off
to gobble up and mechanize the rest of the galaxy.

Caesar's Column

by Samuel Francis



If anything could make the modern presidency look good, it is the modern Congress. Intended by the Framers, through a misinterpretation of the British constitution, to offer a check to the executive branch, the federal legislature has in fact evolved into merely its partner and more often its lackey. The President now openly intervenes in congressional elections to ensure the return of those lawmakers most subservient to him, and as soon as congressmen take office, they begin to learn how to manipulate the administrative state within the executive branch to glue themselves to their seats. Because of the federal leviathan itself, the services a congressional office can today perform for its constituents (and often for nonconstituents) extends far beyond getting them passports and appointing their daughters to the military academies. Jobs in government, federal contracts and subsidies, welfare of all kinds, and expert guidance through the leviathan's tortuous web of wish-granting genies permit congressmen to build up bank accounts of political favors among voters within their districts and real bank accounts from political donations for future campaign expenses. It is probable that most of what modern legislators spend their time on today is practicing the arts of massaging, twisting, and squeezing the executive bureaucracy for their own personal political interests, and if the congressman himself does not do it, every office contains aides whose jobs consist of little but managing "constituent services," the exploitation of the executive branch for the benefit of voters. It is precisely because of the emergence of these arts that Newt Gingrich was able to say some years ago that there was less turnover in the membership of Congress than there was in that of the Soviet Politburo, and short of gross incompetence or personal scandal, there is no reason why any congressman who has learned how to pinch the udders of the executive cow properly should ever get kicked

off his stool.

In the modern American political system, then, the legislative branch no longer checks and balances the executive branch and in fact has become largely an extension of it. This in part explains why the "Republican Revolution" has been such a flop. After nearly four years of the "revolution," Mr. Gingrich and his minions of the Grand Old Party have spectacularly failed to abolish a single government agency, terminate a single government program, or reverse a single judicial decision. One of the great triumphs of the "revolution" was to enact a law requiring that Congress must be bound by the laws it imposes on other citizens, so that today congressional staffers must pay Social Security and their bosses must observe OSHA and affirmative action regulations. In passing the new law the Republicans entirely missed the point. The purpose of drumming the fact that congressional offices were not bound by many of the laws and programs they had passed was to get rid of the laws and programs, not to make sure that more people were burdened by them. By requiring their own offices to abide by OSHA rules and affirmative action regulations, the congressmen merely passed whatever burdens such rules impose on to the citizens and taxpayers for whom the congressmen are supposed to work.

The second great victory of the Republican Revolution was the adoption of the line-item veto, a favorite gewgaw of Beltway policy-wonks that supposedly allows the President to eliminate "pork barrel" from congressional legislation. Whether it will or not remains to be seen, but one certain result of the measure will be to enhance the power of the presidency over Congress even further, giving the chief executive in essence a license to blackmail dissident lawmakers by threatening to cut out measures necessary to their political survival. When the Republicans finally enacted the line-item veto, after decades of ballyhoo about it from the Beltway right, no one seemed to understand why President Clinton himself was so gleeful about

Samuel Francis is a nationally syndicated columnist.