



America at Her Best

THE NATION continuously redistributes itself, as the voluntary choices of millions of individuals, families, and concerns make themselves felt. The North goes South, the center of population crosses the Mississippi, and those urban denizens with the will and means flee the inner cities. Many view this process of adjustment with some anxiety, for the realignment of the national belts, as we have come to call them, may weaken a region's self-image and transform the character of the nation as a whole. The anxiety deepens into worry as one beholds the dissolution of neighborhoods in urban areas, for this is an ugly thing, an ugliness many are left behind to confront as it steadily worsens.

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Yet, I hold a radically different view. To me the process is natural and beautiful; it is the American ideal at work; it is America at her best. Yes, it has its ugliness, but when one considers the cause, the effect, and the alternative, the beauty of such natural adjustment is plain.

The beauty of which we speak so passionately inheres in the conceit of a federation of sovereign states, for federalism is a noble system. Based on the humanizing conception of pluralism and the natural tendency of men to seek kindred kith and like minds, the federalist system enables the smaller statewide majorities to overrule the national majority locally in matters of local concern, thus allowing the people a greater measure of control over their own lives. It is not truly the states

which have rights, but the citizenry by and with whose authority they are endowed. Among these rights is the right to self-determination, realized in full measure only by a highly federated system. Such a system serves the interest of peace, as well. A large part of the reason our nation has weathered two centuries of history is that, with the painful exception that nearly destroyed it, the American systems, political and economic, have not insisted on an artificial and imposed uniformity, the rigidity that is ripping apart our neighbor to the North and perturbing finally even our archenemy to the East.

States Subjugated

Today's centralism, in contrast, has relegated the states to the status of administrative serfs constantly faced with the choice "prostitute or destitute"; these once-sovereign entities are finally learning that the inevitable result of dependence is subservience, a lesson the people, too, should learn. Untold waste of sinful proportions is another unavoidable result of large groups managing small persons and the little details of their lives; this, too, we have seen.

But worst of all, the quiet and automatic protection that federalism affords freedom has been weakened. For when the power to tax—that wellspring of tyranny which sparked the Revolutionary War—and the

government encroachments thus enabled are concentrated at the state level, any substantial decrease in liberty results in the natural removal of the productive base to other states. The states are thus in competition for their means, with relative freedom one of their main dimensions of competition. This is true of nations, too, as witness the brain drain, the mass exodus of intellectuals, professionals, and producers from the Continent since the Second World War. Was America not formed by a like group of men, seeking refuge from the harsh doctrines of an authoritarian world and a new life amidst plenty? Has this country not been settled from coast to coast by men of distant lands seeking their fortunes in a free world?

This, then, is the cause of the population shifts we have witnessed, this the answer to the query "Why have they gone?" The deterioration and decay of our once-majestic metropolises are, to use Rilke's words, merely "outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual disgrace." It is the disgrace of governments which increasingly do more and more of what they should not do and less and less of what they should do. Urban flight is the natural reaction to the drive toward a more coercive society marked by the paradoxically simultaneous loss of both liberty and security. It is a philosophical, if intuitive, judgment by the good people

of this land on governments which presume to dictate to them above their level of tolerance and which no longer protect life, liberty, and property.

The More Central Control, the Less Personal Freedom

What the social planners in the institutes for public policy see as the problem, the founding fathers saw as the solution. Erosion of the tax base is not the problem, high taxes are. Loss of children to bus is not the problem, busing is. Loss of subjects over whom to rule is not the problem, subjection is. The effect of free movement between semi-autonomous entities is to naturally correct localities which do not preserve liberty and maintain security; even so authoritarian a state as New York has been forced to take notice. The frightening alternative to this quiet and automatic protection, realized only partially under today's centralism, is an artificial and imposed uniformity which leaves no escape.

Freedom of association includes both the freedom to associate and the freedom not to associate. The flight of productive citizens from the tired cities, in particular, and the Northeast, in general, is a powerful use of both freedoms, a primal expression of the American ideal. "Tis a cause for reflection that in 120 years the defenders and detractors of the dignity of man have switched

positions but the centers of power have not.

Massachusetts, the birthplace of our Revolution (or is it counterrevolution?) and center of abolitionist ferment, is today the home of authoritarian scholarship and the establishment politicians who write such notions into law. Mississippi, once a slave state who gave her native son to the Presidency of the Confederate States of America, today alone does not profess to own the child's mind by compelling his attendance at a government school unless his parents pay a private academy. She joins the Carolinas, a study shows, in hampering productive enterprises and citizens least. Once it was in New York that our federal constitution was so ably defended to the citizenry; today one must look to the state courthouses of Louisiana for a meet explication. Yet the ideas of the Northeast still hold sway, for liberalism is there defined and there practiced.

Now the winds of welcome change have swept across America, for in Ronald Reagan the statewide majorities throughout this land have chosen one of those Americans, few and far between, who deeply appreciate federalism for what it is and not for some one issue or other. If this noble conception could be endeared once more to the American heart, what a boon it would be for the liberty-loving and what a blow to the apolo-

gists of a central, omnipotent authority. I can think of no better defense of such sentiment than the words of Jefferson:

These principles form the bright constellation which has gone before us and guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation. The wisdom of our sages and blood of our heroes have been devoted to their attainment. They should be the creed of our political faith, the text of civic instruction, the touchstone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them in moments of error or of alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety.

The residential elections of the last decade like the more recent governmental elections are a repudiation of those who would replace the Con-

stitution's Old Deal of liberty and prosperity with government, more government, and yet more government—while marauders roam our streets in search of criminal mischief and the ruthless abductors of whole continents move to engulf the world like a hungry, pathogenic amoeboid. The time has not come for the nation conceived in liberty to die. If we have faltered, it is for want of attention to the caveat of the Virginia Bill of Rights: "No free government, or the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people, but . . . by frequent recurrence to fundamental principles." Now that the blessed misery that accompanies the beginnings of tyranny has finally gripped the American people "let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety." ☉

Centralized or Multiple Economies

THE centralized economy still has a very great attraction for many people. It relieves them of responsibility for the conduct of their own lives so long as they adhere to the prevailing collective ideas and emotions. . . .

On the other hand, the multiple economy depends for its efficiency, not on the concentration of economic direction, but on the breaking up of that direction into as many hands as is reasonably possible. It makes every capitalist direct his own small share of the economy. His right to do so arises from his ownership of property. A multiple economy is planned or directed by the owners of farms, factories, ships, banks, trucks, shops, and in fact the owners of any property which is capable of assisting in the great work of the production of goods.

IDEAS ON



LIBERTY

GEORGE WINDER



Conflict in Canada

If you are troubled by the social and economic conditions in the United States, you may find comfort in the thought that things might be worse. They are worse by far in most parts of the world, which are torn by conflict and strife and lingering in poverty and despair. Even our Canadian neighbors to the North are suffering from irritations and aggravations that not only are creating serious social and economic problems but also are casting doubt on the political future of Canada.

The people are chafing from rampant inflation, confiscatory taxation, soaring interest rates, and the worst recession since 1962. Ontario, the home for 90 per cent of Canada's au-

tomotive industry and wealthy heartland of Canada, is suffering the harshest impact of the recession. A host of corporations have collapsed, leaving investors impoverished and workers facing a grim future. Western Canada is coping with its own brand of economic disaster. A serious drought is hurting the grain farmers, causing feed prices to soar and the cattle industry to suffer painful losses. But above all, the West is locked in a bitter political struggle with Ottawa about energy production which both levels of government, the federal as well as the provincial, are anxious to tax at ever-higher rates. It's an ugly political fight about redistribution of income and property by political force.

Canada is a federal parliamentary state and member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It came

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