

many of them and they always outnumber the hard-core Toms and Dicks in any society — are rarely conscious of any principles of action. They merely react to this or that urge or pressure. Yet, by their reactions, they plot the course of government. In a huff of grievances against an inept King George, the Harrys may let Tom constitute a government of strictly limited powers. That is, they do not then react against the principles for which Tom stands. But without understanding or conviction, the Harrys of another day may just as easily swing behind Dick and his subtle arguments for expanding the government into a full-blown welfare state, riding roughshod over Tom and his principles. And about all Tom can do under the circumstances is to tolerate the trend and “render unto Caesar.” Not until Caesar’s oppression moves the Harrys to rebel can they again hear the sober admonitions to repeal special privileges and cut government back to a more limited defensive role.

So Tom and Dick have their respective principles of government. But the government, in fact, is always a compromise; it’s what the Harrys, by their reactions, say it is.

Because of its coercive nature,

government can be a dangerous servant; it can compel productive persons to stop whatever they may be doing and divert their time and energy instead toward the things said by the effective governing majority to be more important. Government can protect life and property against aggression; or, it can take from some to give to others. But these are contradictory behaviors; the one more or less precludes or negates the other. How clearly one perceives that basic contradiction largely determines his ideal of the proper role of government.

A person of foresight undoubtedly will see that government ought to be strictly limited to a negative defensive role so as to be the least possible burden upon the constructive and peaceful pursuits of individuals. It is similar to a drug that may be highly effective and appropriate as treatment of a disease. But those who do not foresee the potential tyranny may ask that government apply its coercive powers to all sorts of reform measures and charities and services to consumers that otherwise would be left to voluntary cooperation in the market. This use of the drug in a flight from reality becomes an addiction that weakens and destroys the individual. 

CLARENCE B. CARSON

Throttling the Railroads

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The Nature of Railroading

THERE WERE TWO basic charges against the railroads which promoted the increasing government regulation and control over the years. One was that they *discriminated* among their customers, particularly among shippers, and that this discrimination resulted in unjust rates. Specifically, critics claimed that the railroads favored those making large shipments over those making small ones, that they charged more for some short hauls than they did for long ones, that they gave preferential rates to some cities and denied them to others, that they gave rebates to

strategically situated shippers, and that they gave free passes to influential persons to ride passenger trains. These practices were said to be unjust because they meant that small shippers, those living in cities or towns without preferential rates, farmers, and people without influence were not only paying their own way but were also subsidizing favored customers.

The second charge against the railroads was that *competition* among them was *imperfect*. Some locations were served by several railroads and might have, in addition, water transport available, while others would be served by only one railroad. Those who were served by competing lines benefited from lower rates, while

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