



AMERICAN FEDERALISM: FUTURE

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A SOCIETY is free only to the extent that its individual members are free. In short, if men are to remain free, self-government being a very important freedom, they must scrupulously maintain control of government. That is the essence of the American tradition of federalism. The assumption that a good cause allows government to do anything needed and that the government should decide what constitutes a good cause is the totalitarian mentality in action.

When these totalitarians are well intended, they are no less dangerous. We are all to become equal, not in our traditional American equality of *opportunity* but in the new sense, featuring equal-

ity of *condition*. This is the essence of the new paternalism. In the words of Willmoore Kendall: "The equality of the Declaration is the equality to which, say, Abraham Lincoln was born — an equality that conferred upon him merely an equal right to compete with his fellow men in the race, as we run it here in America, for whatever prize he in his equality chose to go after. Not so the egalitarianism of the Liberals. It must pick Lincoln up at dawn in a yellow bus with flashing lights, so saving him shoe leather, whisk him off to a remote consolidated school (financed, in all probability by inflationary bonds), feed him a free lunch, educate him for democracy, protect him from so-called concentration of social and economic power, eke out his income by soaking the rich, doctor

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him, hospitalize him, and finally, social work him — if, as he probably will now, he turns into a juvenile delinquent. Equality, by offering him the rewards of self-reliance, encourages him to become, above all, self-reliant; egalitarianism encourages him to play the angles."¹

With remarkable foresight, Tocqueville foresaw the planner's state which would leave no room for diversity, creativity, or individual difference; and he warned repeatedly that the only safeguards against such a road were free institutions and private and decentralized forms immune from the planner's touch. He told a France soon to be ground beneath the heel of a Napoleon III that the local institutions he had seen in America were their last best hope. He warned that unlimited power is in itself a dangerous thing because God alone is competent to exercise such power. France did not listen; let us hope America will.

Then everything includes itself in power,

Power into will, will into appetite.

In these words, Shakespeare describes the unenviable progression of human beings who would play God. The problems of power and

¹ Willmoore Kendall, *The Conservative Affirmation* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1963), pp. 17-18.

appetite are indeed closely related to our situation in America. As Franklin emerged from the Constitutional Convention, a woman tugged on his sleeve and asked what system of government had been proposed for the American people. His famous reply remains timely after nearly two centuries: "A Republic, if you can keep it." Later amplifying his remarks, he predicted that the new nation would be well administered for a number of years, "but only end in despotism, as other forms have done before, when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic government, being incapable of any other."

The Appetite for Power

In the problem of power and appetite we have another of those chicken and egg difficulties. Does the excessive centralization of power produce such an appetite to be satisfied that all desire for self-help is destroyed? Or is it appetite that so weakens moral fiber as to make centralization of power inevitable? No matter which comes first, the individual citizens of this nation must make the moral choice to control appetite if the trend toward centralization is to be reversed. This is the problem posed by Irving Babbitt forty years ago in his book entitled *Democracy and Leadership*, when he warned that