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Commentary: The President

LEADERSHIP AND LISTENING: FORD'S DILEMMA

by Dick Behn

President Ford can win reelection in 1976. It is doubtful, however, if he will be reelected if he continues to support the gloom and doom Indochina positions backed by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger or the gloom and doom economics of Secretary of the Treasury William Simon. Rumors of the impending departures of the two cabinet secretaries are among the most durable commodities in Washington. The two have perhaps done more than anyone else to fill the Washington leadership vacuum in the past two years. But both are increasingly trapped by their own ideological and philosophical dogma.

The Washington Post's Hobart Rowen recently observed that "Simon is seen as an ideologue, bitterly opposed to the large [federal] deficit, and helping to make his dismal prophecy self-fulfilling by emotional rhetoric and dubious debt management strategy." Kissinger's critics have been more diverse, ranging across the ideological spectrum from Gov. Meldrim Thomson(R-N.H.) on the right to U.S.Rep. Ron Dellums(D-Cal.) on the left. The Indochina debacle has underlined the absence of creative foreign policy leadership in the Administration.

President Ford has the admirable quality of listening to diverse viewpoints. He needs, however, some new viewpoints and new leadership in the State and Treasury Departments. The President's task might be easier in these and other areas if he realized that nothing he does will appease the GOP's right wing---which is already infatuated with the idea of Ronald Reagan in the White House and which will continue to exact its pound of flesh from the White House without any compensating indications of loyalty. The major split in vocal conservative thinking is not pro-Ford and anti-Ford but pro-Reagan within the Republican Party (such as U.S.Rep. Philip Crane) and pro-Reagan outside the Republican Party (such as National Review publisher William Rusher). Former OEO Director Howard Phillips is working full time to develop the grassroots network for a true conservative campaign under the auspices of the "Conservative Caucus." Richard Viguerie, best known for his direct mail work for Republican conservatives, is now working feverishly for Alabama Gov. George Wallace(D). Phillips, for one, believes that there still is a possibility of a Reagan-Wallace ticket. So, apparently does Wallace's wife Cornelia, who recently told columnist Vera Glaser that Reagan and Wallace are "in the same boat" and "it would be interesting to run a little poll and see what people think" of a Reagan-Wallace ticket." Back in the GOP, South Carolina Gov. James Edwards(R) has said: "I'd be very tempted to go with Reagan anywhere he goes," when Edwards was asked about a third party ticket headed by Reagan.

The President is not going to reconvert these malcontents. Some, like Viguerie, believe: "The Republican Party is dead. We should say the proper prayers, give it a decent burial and go on to a new party." Others are ready to fight the President tooth and nail for the GOP nomination. The President obviously needs to be sensitive to conservative concerns, but he cannot act effectively as President if he persistently worries about what Reagan and Mississippi GOP Chairman Clarke Reed will think.

In a recent editorial, the Detroit Free Press observed:"There is a need in the nation for a strong and responsible conservatism, free of the can and humbug and shrillness of the 1964 era. Many issues today are ready-made for strong leadership to make a case for less, rather than more, government action and for streamlined, human answers to problems that are often made more complex by massive liberal solutions...The Republican Party will not, however, carve out such a role for itself if it listens to those who argue that there was a narrowly conservative mandate in 1972, which still exists in spite of all Richard Nixon did to destroy it...President Ford can, we believe, build a new and broader mandate if he chooses to do so. If he does not choose to do so---or if he lets himself get distracted by the bitter and exclusionist attitudes of some who would advise him now---he may find that the Republican Party has hit the self destruct button and made its mission impossible." Additional opinions on the state of the GOP follow:

● "GOP Blinks On Thomson," by Rod Paul. Concord (N.H.) Monitor, March 6, 1975. New Hampshire Gov. Meldrim Thomson(R) has been unpredictable more often than he has been Republican; Thomson's press conference announcement last winter that Ford probably could not win the New Hampshire primary unsettled Republican National Chairman Mary Louise Smith. According to Paul, "Shortly after Thomson made those statements, Mrs. Smith reportedly telephoned several New Hampshire party leaders, asking them if Republican support for Ford was as slight as Thomson indicated. The answer from many of the state's party leaders was that Thomson did not speak for New Hampshire Republicans---that Ford did have support in the state. Mrs. Smith then asked one GOP leader here: "then why is he governor?"

● "Right Wing Slaps At Ford Are Too Much," by Clayton Fritchey. Nashville Tennessean, March 12, 1975. "Everybody agrees that Gerald Ford is an amiable man, but the way he turns the other cheek in the face of continuous Republican right-wing slaps at himself and his Administration is forbearance beyond the call of either political or Christian duty. From the outset of his Administration, the President has been consistently needled by that little group of righteous ideologues who regard themselves as the only 'true' Republican conservatives; yet Mr. Ford makes no effort to defend himself or counterattack, although as a congressman for 25 years he could point to one of the most conservative records in the history of the House," writes Fritchey. The columnist suggests: "All [Ford] need do is politely ask Reagan or senators like Jim Buckley, Barry Goldwater and Jesse Helms what they would do about recession, unemployment and energy if they were in the White House.

● "Polls Give The Nod to Ford," by Jerald terHorst. Chicago Tribune, April 2, 1975. "Once-euphoric Democrats and the Republican right-wing are slowly coming to grips with a hard fact posed by many of their own private election experts and other professional analysts. Incredible as it may seem, Jerry Ford currently ranks as the likely winner of the 1976 Presidential race." In that opinion, terHorst agrees with columnist Joseph Alsop and political analyst Richard Scammon, but not many other political observers. As terHorst admits: "That view runs counter to popularly held notions of liberals and conservatives and even many business and labor organizations. Nor does it square with the opinions of many pundits and editorial cartoonists who portray Ford as nice but dull, honest but indecisive, and lacking in all the leadership qualities needed to handle the nation's business." As Scammon points out, the key election test is not Ford's popularity or job rating, but how he fares against possible Democratic or Republican challengers.

● "What The GOP Right Wing Wants," by Patrick Buchanan. San Francisco Examiner, March 16, 1975. The press has maligned recent discontent among Republican conservatives, according to Buchanan, former in-house conservative for the Nixon Administration and now a syndicated columnist. Buchanan asserts that conservatives want to broaden the party's base, but through a "political alliance with the social conservatives of the Democratic party." Divisions on party reform within the GOP pose a dilemma for President Ford, asserts Buchanan: "Beneath the President his party moves closer and closer to conflict between left and right. Richard Nixon may have been the last of the Eisenhower generation of Republicans able to unite the divided wings of the Republican Party. Gerald Ford does not have his savvy, skill, national political experience, or the 20 years of IOUs which Richard Nixon had in the Republican bank, to draw upon when he wanted to impose wage-and-price controls, or take a walk on the Great Wall of China." In another recent column, Buchanan chortles at the probability that Ford will have to set up a CREEP-prototype to run his 1976 renomination campaign. "If President Ford envisions coopting the [Republican National Committee] as his nomination campaign vehicle, he is going to find himself with a southern rebellion within his new campaign committee; and Mrs. [Mary Louise Smith, party chairman] will soon find herself back baking pies for the grandchildren in Iowa."

● "What The Right Thinks Of Mr. Ford," by Nick Thimmesch. New York Times, April 13, 1975. "As far as many leaders of the conservative movement are concerned, President Ford is almost a hopeless case; his threats to veto new spending bills are not enough to satisfy the complaints on his right wing. 'He draws one line, complains Allan H. Ryskind, an editor of Human Events, a rightist weekly, "and when Congress steps across, he falls back and draws another. How can we accept that?" Conservatives want firmer leadership from Ford on budgetary and Indochina issues than he has thus far exhibited. They seem perfectly content, however, to give up on Ford and line up behind Reagan. Observes Mississippi GOP Chairman Clarke Reed: "Right now I couldn't keep the Mississippi delegation in line for Ford against Reagan. The bugle could blow, and Reagan could answer within two months."

● "The Liberals' Notion of 'Loyalty,'" by William A. Rusher. Cincinnati Enquirer, March 25, 1975. National Review publisher Rusher is not impressed by the GOP loyalty oath recently circulated among Republican officials, which is understandable, considering his new book advocating a third conservative party. Writes Rusher: "For those with a long memory, the spectacle of liberal Republican senators like Charles Percy and Hugh Scott urging a 'loyalty oath' on their fellow Republicans is heavy with ironies. As they circulate the document on the Senate floor, Percy and Scott can look up at the presiding officer: Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, who will be one of the beneficiaries---perhaps the chief beneficiary---of whatever 'loyalty' to the GOP is generated by this maneuver." Rusher doesn't like the way Rockefeller treated Sen. Barry Goldwater(R-Ariz.) in 1964 when the latter was running for President. Writes Rusher of a Reaganite takeover of the GOP in 1976: "The idea of making the GOP the vehicle of a conservative majority, consciously designed to include the 10 million Ameri-

cans who voted for George Wallace in 1968, sends Scott and Percy right up the tree. If and when a Republican convention makes such a decision and nominates a ticket symbolizing that coalition, you will have heard the last of these bravos and their 'loyalty oath.'

● "A Washington Perspective," by Lou Cannon. The California Journal, April 1975. While in Washington at the Republican National Committee meeting in March, California GOP State Chairman Paul Haerle "convinced key strategists in the Ford Administration that he is in the President's corner and not [Ronald] Reagan's in any showdown fight for the presidential nomination," writes Cannon. Haerle was once appointments secretary to then-Gov. Reagan. Concludes Cannon, "State chairmen do not deliver votes in California, of course. Nevertheless, Haerle's ungrudging support for Ford has encouraged White House advisers to believe that Reagan's putative candidacy is, at this moment, more talk than anything else. The President has real problems in a few southern states and New Hampshire but, without California, the conservatives who dream of derailing Ford within his own party simply have no chance."

● "The City Politic," by Richard Reeves. New York Magazine, March 10, 1975. Reeves does not have a high opinion of Ronald Reagan's chances of becoming President, and he evidently has even less respect for the conservative arithmetic which asserts that there is a conservative majority in the United States just waiting for the right conservative savior to lead it to the polls. Writes Reeves, "The reason Reagan can't win...was quantified in 1968 by Lloyd A. Free and Hadley Cantril in a book called The Political Beliefs of Americans. What Free and Cantril showed was that '23% of Americans are both ideological conservatives and at the same time operational liberals.' In other words, a lot of Americans believe and agree with conservative rhetoric about 'too much government,' but when asked specific questions about Social Security, federal aid to education, or national health insurance, they support those big government programs. They are not going to vote for Ronald Reagan, who is going around the country talking about the 'the Godlessness of the socialist ant heap.' They may love what he's saying, but they won't vote for him because he may actually mean it." Free, by the way, is a Nelson Rockefeller pollster of long standing.

● "The Conservatives and the GOP," by Reg Murphy. Atlanta Constitution, March 17, 1975. Commenting on conservative Republicans and speculation about a third party, Constitution Editor Murphy says: "A national party headed in that direction would last longer than a dinosaur on the prairies or a walking catfish in the High Sierras---but not much longer. What can [Republican conservatives] be thinking of? Not politics in the United States, clearly. Ronald Reagan could get elected President in this recession about as easily as Sen. Hubert Humphrey could lead the Ku Klux Klan." Commenting on the selection of Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) to chair the Committee on Conservative Alternatives, Murphy says, "Choosing Jesse Helms to plan the future is every bit as appropriate as naming the Titanic's captain the Sailor of the Year. You could think all day without chancing upon a less likely intellectual ready to lead a movement."

● "The Tax Bill: Alienating the Republican Right," by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak. Washington Post, April 4, 1975. Columnists Evans and Novak believe Gerald Ford is about to be garroted by the GOP right. "Passing up what may be one of his last, best chance to appease the Right right by vetoing the tax cut bill, President Ford again rejected advice from his staunchest congressional supporters---and probably his own instincts---to follow the urgings of White House aides." In so doing, Evans and Novak contend, Ford alienated not only the already-alienated Republican right, but also the GOP loyalist group which backs him. "Signing the tax bill is seen by such [loyalist] Republicans as the latest in their ideological grievances: Vietnam amnesty, selection of Nelson Rockefeller, planned deficit spending, cabinet appointments, the Senate filibuster fight, liberalized convention delegate selection."

● "Inside the GOP: A Death Wish?" by Richard Rodda. Sacramento Bee, March 16, 1975. "Has the Republican 11th Commandment---thou shalt not speak ill of other Republicans---outlived its usefulness? Former Gov. Ronald Reagan, one of the principal beneficiaries [of the commandment], is being accused of undermining the policy of GOP brotherly love." Rodda quotes a New York magazine article where Richard Reeves quotes the former California governor as saying, "Maybe the time has come to forget the 11th Commandment." The Sacramento Bee political editor notes the genesis of the 11th Commandment: "Once the conservative image was established in California [in 1964], the 11th Commandment was promulgated. Reagan, candidate for governor in 1966, rode to the party's nomination on the commandment. It was used principally to keep former Mayor George Christopher of San Francisco, candidate of the GOP moderate wing, from making unkind remarks about Reagan."

● "Threat to Ford From Right Eases, Survey Shows," by Godfrey Sperling, Jr. Christian Science Monitor, April 4, 1975. Summarizing the results of a survey of half the GOP's state chairmen, Sperling writes: "The President can have the [GOP] nomination next year if he wants it (and he says he does.) Whereas a few weeks ago many of these leaders were giving Mr. Ford low marks, they now see him measuring up to his presidential responsibilities." Interest in a third party seems to have dissipated, according to Sperling, who noted that the "conservative-minded" chairmen were impressed that the President was "moving aggressively." An earlier Sperling survey had found the GOP leaders unimpressed by the party's titular leader.

POLITICS: KENTUCKY

THE GUBERNATORIAL CONTEST: A HORSERACE OR A ROUT?

by Eric Karnes

Kentuckians have the privilege---or the curse---to have an election every year. The top 1975 race is for the post now held by Gov. Julian Carroll(D), who became the state's chief executive when Wendell Ford was elected to the Senate last November. Carroll had been lieutenant governor since 1971 and already had been looking wistfully toward a gubernatorial race in 1975. Fate made him the incumbent instead.

The major primary foe for Carroll is Jefferson County Judge Todd Hollenbach, a young Louisville attorney with great ambition and little governmental ability. Hollenbach's seven years as administrator of Kentucky's largest county government have not been marked either imagination or innovation. Hollenbach, however, brings to his contest with Carroll a fresh image, impressive personality, and ample funding. Carroll is the odds-on favorite to win the May 27 primary, but Hollenbach cannot be dismissed. If he can carry his home county by a large margin and do well in other urban areas such as Lexington and northern Kentucky, he just might give the governor a derby-size run.

Republicans, meanwhile, gave the state's voters a Keystone Cop act for several months, attempting to find candidates to run for various statewide and legislative offices. A "search committee" was established to interview potential candidates, most of whom showed little interest in entering a contest widely touted as a Democratic sweep. One Republican official declared that the Kentucky Republican Party was "beginning to look a lot like the people in the Mississippi GOP back in the sixties. They have to beg for anyone to run."

Republicans did field, however, a full slate for the nine statewide offices. The ticket is headed by gubernatorial candidate Robert Gable, a Frankfort resident, president of a timber and coal mining company in southeastern Kentucky, and a former commissioner of parks in the administration of former Gov. Louie B. Nunn(R). Gable, in fact, ran a losing race against Nunn in 1972 for the GOP Senate nomination. Nunn easily won the primary and then lost the general election.

Gable is young, moderately conservative, and an attractive candidate. He will be a decided underdog to Carroll, but will run an aggressive and well-financed campaign. Kentucky voters seem to be quite disgusted with the state government's inability to come to grips with problems of education, the economy, and environmental protection. Gable, if he runs a reform-oriented campaign, might chase Carroll down to the wire.

However, Gable himself has two problems. He was finance chairman in the 1971 losing gubernatorial campaign of Tom Emberton(R), whose campaign was allegedly the recipient of \$100,000 from the Nixon campaign operation. The money supposedly never reached the campaign treasury, and Democrats have already begun to cast partisan aspersions. Gable, however, was never personally linked to any wrong-doing nor involved in speculations regarding the money.

The second problem involves the coal industry's role in Kentucky. Kentuckians have a love-hate relationship with the black mineral---happy about the economic boom it has brought to the previously depressed mountains, but greatly concerned about the consequences of strip mining abuses. This environmental feeling is especially strong in urban areas which now cast almost half of Kentucky's total vote. Gable will need to walk a thin line between defense of his own coal interests and the need for stricter controls and enforcement of environmental regulations.

The GOP gubernatorial candidate will not be blessed with a strong GOP ticket. Most of the other eight statewide candidates are politically unknown. This, however, could be turned into a GOP asset if Gable is able to mount an effective, "throw the rascals out" campaign against the entrenched Democrats. Even if he were elected, Gable would have a rough time in the General Assembly. This Democratic club now has an overwhelmingly Democratic margin: 78-22 in the House and 29-9 in the Senate. It is the lowest Republican showing since the middle fifties. Republicans have an outside chance to pick up two Senate seats and possibly 12 House seats. Only 60 of the 100 House seats are even being contested by the moribund Kentucky GOP. Best chances for GOP gains are in Louisville and Lexington where a number of marginal and Democratic districts have credible Republican challengers.

The spring outlook is for another Democratic sweep. Kentuckians are fortunately notorious for upsetting early predictions and Gable has the potential for doing the upsetting. He is burdened by a weak state party organization, decreasing GOP registration, and lack of local party leadership. If the challenger can put together his own campaign staff on a statewide basis and excite voters with a program that offers something new, Bob Gable could end up winning the roses. ■

Contributor Notes: Eric Karnes is Kentucky correspondent for the FORUM. William K. Woods is a FORUM contributing editor and assistant professor at Wilmington College, Ohio. U.S.Rep. Millicent Fenwick (R-N.J.) was director of New Jersey's Office of Consumer Affairs before her election to Congress.

POLITICS: STATES

U.S. Rep. Gary A. Myers (R-Pa.) has introduced legislation which would limit the congressional franking privileges of former members of Congress to "matters pertaining to the closing of the official business of an office." Under current law, congressmen retain their free postal privileges until April 1 of the year after they leave office. Former U.S. Rep. Frank Clark (D-Pa.), Myers' predecessor, used the franking privilege to mail 150,000 newsletters to former constituents at a cost of over \$10,000. Clark is now a business consultant.

ALASKA

House Minority Leader Tom Fink (R-Anchorage) has resigned from the state legislature rather than disclose the names of his insurance agency clients as required by a new Alaska law. Former House Speaker Fink filed a personal financial disclosure statement but said a listing of his clients would be "a violation of my conduct as a life insurance agent." There were massive resignations from state boards and agencies last December as a result of the new law.

CONNECTICUT

A GOP task force has called on the Connecticut GOP to "take action to repudiate the concept that the Republican Party be a narrow-based party of one philosophy, one ideology or of one social or economic group." The study group, headed by F. Mac Buckley, an unsuccessful 1974 congressional candidate, called for new leadership and new organization for the party. Referring to the GOP's 1974 debacle and its poor image, the task force report stated: "Reconstruction of our image will require us to become more people-oriented with emphasis on groups that we have been unable to relate to in the past. In order to accomplish this change, we require new leadership, a positive platform and an effective public relations program." The task force, appointed by GOP State Chairman Vincent Laudone, called for abolition of the party lever on voting machines and a new organization of the GOP State Central Committee.

HAWAII

Carla Coray, Hawaii's perceptive Republican state chairwoman, will not seek reelection at the GOP State Convention May 16-17. Mrs. Coray, who ran against U.S. Rep. Patsy T. Mink (D-2nd) in 1974, said she is leaving the chairmanship to "keep her options open" for a 1976 campaign. Hawaii developer George Henrickson is the only announced candidate to succeed her.

PENNSYLVANIA

Gov. Milton Shapp (D) has his problems. Last fall, Shapp fired Property and Supplies Secretary Frank C. Hilton for alleged improprieties in the placement of state insurance policies. In addition to a federal indictment on kickback charges, Hilton also faces state fraud charges. The insurance scandal, however, is only the "tip of the iceberg," according to Philadelphia Inquirer reporter William Ecenbarger. The whole state procurement operation is under federal investigation, according to Ecenbarger, who says: "Most federal investigators firmly believe that other top administration officials are vulnerable and will be caught in the widening web of corruption. Thus far Shapp has not been tarred directly but he has left himself open to charges of failing to respond firmly and quickly enough to evidence of wrongdoing among his subordinates." Shapp has also created controversy by pushing for confirmation of Herbert Denenberg to the State Public Utility Commission. By pushing for confirmation of the controversial consumer advocate without any chance of success, Shapp abrogated an agreement with his former insurance commissioner. Denenberg could have remained in office through a variety of delaying tactics whereby his nomination would not have come to a vote. "The governor promised me and the people he would put me on the PUC ... and do everything possible in his power to keep my name in committee until enough votes were found for confirmation," said Denenberg before he was rejected on a 28-22 vote. Responding to his former aide's accusations of betrayal, Shapp said: "He lost... primarily because he is totally incapable of working within a system which he totally alienated." A Democratic state senator explained the defeat of the abrasive idealist by saying, "Denenberg thinks he's the only virgin in the whorehouse." Shapp's sincerity is also being questioned on state funding for Special Philadelphia Prosecutor Walter M. Phillips, Jr., who has been investigating almost every Democrat in the city. Those investigations are a cause for acute anxiety for Philadelphia Democrats, from Mayor Frank Rizzo (D), seeking renomination in a corruption-tainted primary, on down. The probable difficulties in achieving passage of state funding for the Phillips anti-corruption unit led Attorney General Robert Kane to suggest that Phillips' unit be eliminated and the investigations be turned over to the more politically pliable Philadelphia district attorney, Emmett Fitzpatrick. A Phillips phase-out is one thing behind which Philadelphia's feuding Democrats can all get. Another is jubilation at the parole of former City Commissioner Maurice Osser, who had been preparing to make a grand jury appearance before pressure from Democratic officials won his release from federal prison. Osser was an acknowledged expert on corruption in Philadelphia and his possible testimony was upsetting a lot of Democratic stomachs.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Republicans still struggling to get out from underneath 1974 campaign debts can take some heart from the predicament faced by South Carolina Democrats. Three losing candidates for governor along with the incumbent Democratic lieutenant governor each owe over \$100,000 in campaign debts. When their debts were combined with those of the state Democratic committee in early April, the total came to over \$800,000.

COMMENTARY: NEW TOWNS

NO TIME TO BUG OUT ON NEW TOWNS

by William K. Woods

New towns are in trouble. Specifically, a lot of hand-wringing is being done concerning the status of the 17 federally-sponsored new communities. All of them confront bleak financial futures while several of them teeter on the edge of bankruptcy. Rumors also abound that the Department of Housing and Urban Development would like to cut its losses and get out of the new town business entirely.

Any short-term assessment would probably reinforce HUD's predilection to extricate itself from what appear to be costly real estate follies. When James Rouse, the builder of Columbia, Maryland, asserted that entrepreneurs could make a profit while erecting new communities based upon visionary social and environmental planning, he did not foresee the current economic doldrums. Buttressed by a flourishing economy and a booming housing market, a number of builders like Rouse turned from conventional suburban residential developments in the 1960s to construction of whole new towns. After minor involvement with new communities in the form of mortgage loans and guarantees provided by 1966 and 1968 laws, the federal government jumped into the new town process with the passage of the Urban Growth and New Community Act of 1970. Now the staff of HUD's new community division nervously appraises the \$252 million in loan debentures that the federal government guarantees for these risky investments in a higher quality of life.

What went wrong? Due to the nature of their physical size and to the fact that they are more than lots with houses, new communities absorb huge costs before a nickel of profit is made. Buying sufficient land constitutes the major expenditure, but planning costs and the installation of basic facilities like roads, sewers and electrical lines also eat up the developer's capital. Furthermore, federally-sponsored new towns are required to incorporate social, economic, environmental, and technological goals that raise expenses prior to the time when land and housing sales plow back some income into these projects. By adding to these factors the worst building and real estate depression in decades, a new town crisis was almost inevitable.

New town developers also blame HUD and the Nixon and Ford Administrations for their woes. Passed by a Democratic Congress, the provisions of the new community development act were never favored by the Nixon White House. Beside loan guarantees, federally-sponsored new towns were to have access to approximately \$1 billion worth of grants for housing, transit, health, education, and community development. On top of that, \$168 million was to be divided among these projects for planning purposes. HUD released only a trickle of this grant money, and developers further complained of the endless red tape necessary to qualify for both loan guarantees and grants. The final irony occurred when a federal housing freeze was imposed. Required to incorporate low- to moderate-income housing in their plans, the 17 new towns no longer possessed the means for implementing this goal.

How should Congress and the Ford Administration respond to the plight of the government-supported new towns? Certainly a careful analysis of the law, HUD's administration of the program, and the projects themselves should be launched. At this juncture, such an evaluation seems necessary in order to understand how to correct certain obvious failings. Such a critical study might, however, completely discredit the new town process as a creative mechanism within national domestic policy. Not only would this be a waste of already expended energy and resources, but such a conclusion would constitute a giant step backwards in the development of urban growth policy. For despite their financial woes---a condition that really mirrors the economy---new towns still provide a framework for dealing with numerous current issues. New towns can be justified as a partial solution to either the energy, environment, or urban problems.

Juxtaposed against the spread of randomly-sited housing, factories, shopping centers, and recreation facilities over huge swathes of land, new towns provide a means for integrating these activities into well-planned developments. Not only is the land better served, but the blending of occupational and residential functions reduces long distance commuting. Cleaner air, better land use, and reduced gasoline consumption can all result from development of a new community.

It is more difficult to fulfill the social and economic goals of new towns. Due to their operators' profit motivations, private ventures cannot be expected to make more than token efforts to provide jobs and housing for low-income Americans. Although federally-supported new communities must have plans for housing low-income residents, there remain some serious drawbacks to this guideline. Disregarding the complications created by the federal housing freeze, it must be acknowledged that almost all new communities are private ventures that were established to make money. Since economic and social programs for low-income people won't create financial rewards for developers, new town entrepreneurs will probably keep these efforts to the minimum level that still allows them to retain HUD backing.

This last issue stimulates some final questions that need to be asked about the scope of the present new communities program. Although I advocate the continuance of a federal new town policy, I do not argue for preserving the status quo. The current law seems inadequate in several ways. First, the decisions of private new town developers precede government involvement, and thus, the crucial impacts of these projects are made prior to federal involvement. Since site location has a crucial bearing on the economic, environmental, and social goals that can be achieved, the federal government should have a voice concerning location of new communities.

The entire process of HUD sponsorship should, in fact, be reevaluated. At the moment, new town developers and planners merely adjust their priorities and blueprints to incorporate certain HUD guidelines. If new towns are to be significantly utilized as vehicles in a national growth policy, then HUD or another federal agency must be more intimately involved in planning, constructing, and administering these developments. Clearly, the proper blend of public and private leadership has not yet been mixed, and it may turn out that a number of projects should be entirely public entities. Such questions could be properly thrashed out in a congressional review of the program.

Despite the short-term aggravations, this is not time to bug out on new towns. Long-term domestic trends and chic current preoccupations like the energy crisis should make the new town concept more viable than ever. With so much rhetoric presently flowing out of Washington on gasoline conservation, it would be short-sighted indeed if Congress and the Administration scuttled a program that would get a lot of people walking more and driving less. ■

COMMENTARY: CONSUMERS

GOVERNMENT: THE BIGGEST CONSUMER RIPOFF?

by Millicent Fenwick

Consumer impatience with shoddy goods and misleading labelling is long overdue. There were stones in the sacks of grain sold in ancient Rome and there is a lot of water in the cans of peas still being sold under "net weight" labels. On reflection, there seem to be three main causes for contemporary consumerism: inflation; the increasing complexity of the things we buy (things bought by people who don't understand exactly how they work and sold by people who don't understand them either); and finally the decline of neighborhoods and communities where everyone knew everyone and where the shopowner and the consumer were often schoolmates and friends.

As a cause of consumer dissatisfaction, inflation is an obvious culprit; consumption complexity is less so. Technological developments have made almost every single item we buy a subject for "specialist attention only." A Model T Ford could be repaired by any backyard tinkerer interested enough to do the job; now we have specialists for virtually every auto make. The first radio signal I ever heard as a child came from a crystal set which a handyman hooked up, using the radiator as a ground. Consider the comparative complexities of the contemporary color TV.

Finally, changes in the ways and places we live have made the old buyer-seller relationships progressively more rare. In past years, more people lived and died in the town where they were born, or, if they were pioneers, they moved to a small settlement where every new arrival was gratefully received and warmly welcomed by the boosters, who saw in new arrivals the confirmation of their judgment that this was a place which would prosper and grow. In the settled towns, retailers were generally long-established and well-known. A merchant understood the things he was selling and felt responsible for the way they worked. Now, even a toaster is so complicated that the answer to consumer complaints is too often: "Send it back to the manufacturer." (Meanwhile, the consumer has probably lost the box and the guarantee. The satisfactory relationship between buyer and seller has soured. In the past, the merchant took care of his customers. I remember when I was just married, I bought a lawn sprinkler from the local hardware store, but when I got it home, it didn't work. I telephoned the owner and told him I would bring it back. Within ten minutes he was on the lawn, wrestling with the sprinkler until it worked. It was his sprinkler; I was his customer. He had known me since childhood and I was his customer until he retired from business.

Now, we often buy on highways, stopping in response to neon signs. Customers and sellers are strangers and will remain so. There is an exchange of money, but no human interchange---no sense of trust and friendliness---and so the unhappy customer calls on the government for redress when things go wrong. Consumer protection agencies swing into action; regulations, class action suits and individual cases build up barriers of protection, in slow accretion, like a coral reef. The goal of the agencies is an equitable marketplace, a system that makes a more just and equitable relationship between buyer and seller. In the process, however, the retailer is squeezed between the regulations which protect the consumer and the absence of similar regulations to make the manufacturer treat the retailer with equal justice. This is particularly true of the small retailer who cannot effectively threaten---as the big chain stores can---to buy somewhere else. The state agencies' first responsibility is to protect the consumer, and in any case, it is hard for a state agency to demand and get justice from a manufacturer in another state.

Clearly, an equitable system for redress of grievances between maker and seller is the business of the federal government; I was happy, as a member of the House Small Business Committee, to find a sympathetic understanding of the issue in Congress. Justice cannot stop at one stage of the making-distributing-selling-buying-using process.

Having accomplished its other objectives, I think the consumer movement will eventually turn to government. For example, what do we do to redress a judicial system which is geared to defend the majesty of the state when its laws are broken, but ends a case of criminal fraud with no effort to bring restitution to the consumer? As matters stand, the whole court system (for which the consumer pays) turns from a criminal fraud conviction in which the consumer may have testified and advises only: "If you want your money back, get a lawyer and go into civil court." Not everyone has the time or the money. Some cases are too small and the civil court calendars are crowded. The government should concern itself because, although it is essential that the state uphold its laws, it is surely also justice that restitution be made to the citizen. This system has been in effect for years in the Netherlands. I have presented the plan to three successive New Jersey Supreme Court chief justices and sooner or later, I am convinced the citizen-consumer-taxpayer will get it.

Almost every governmental institution could stand this sort of scrutiny. For example, how do we remedy an educational system that, in one case, forced parents to go to court to find out how their children were measuring up to national averages in reading and arithmetic? What can a citizen do when government agencies are so hostile or indifferent that another government agency has to hire lawyers to negotiate for the supposed beneficiaries? As government grows and grows and reaches into more and more lives, it is becoming obvious that changes will have to be made in the system. It is not enough for government to expend money and look the other way when the taxpayer is frustrated and infuriated by the way the services are delivered. In the case of public housing, the taxpaying consumer can literally be destroyed by the housing itself.

Regulatory agencies and associated laws can also penalize the consumer. In transportation alone, Federal Trade Commission Chairman Lewis A. Engman has estimated that the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Civil Aeronautics Board are unnecessarily costing consumers \$16 billion every year. As a member of the Consumer Affairs Subcommittee of the Banking Currency and Housing Committee, I have urged an early review in this field. But action in all consumer-related fields will probably be delayed by the way we finance political campaigns. The path to a government that operates in the public interest—without special arrangements for special interest at the public's expense—inevitably leads to a system of campaign financing in which all contributions by organizations are prohibited and those of individuals are strictly limited. The link between a campaign contribution and subsequent government action is easy to trace now that contributor lists must be published, but all governmental-consumer improvement depends on a vigilant press and citizens concerned enough to react when they are informed.

There is a lot to do, but I am confident that the consumer groups, so lively and determined in the past, will eventually turn their attention to what can only be called the biggest consumer rip-off of them all. ■

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