

The Proper Role of Government

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Men in the public spotlight constantly are asked to express an opinion on a myriad of government proposals and projects. "What do you think of TVA?" "What is your opinion of Medicare?" "How do you feel about Urban Renewal?" The list is endless. All too often, answers to these questions seem to be based, not upon any solid principle, but upon the popularity of the specific government program in question. Seldom are men willing to oppose a popular program if they, themselves, wish to be popular—especially if they seek public office.

Government Should Be Based Upon Sound Principles

Such an approach to vital political questions of the day can only lead to public confusion and legislative chaos. Decisions of this nature should be based upon and measured against certain basic principles regarding the proper role of government. If principles are correct, then they can be applied to any specific proposal with confidence.

Are there not, in reality, underlying, universal principles with reference to which all issues must be resolved whether the society be simple or complex in its mechanical organization? It seems to me we could relieve ourselves of most of the bewilderment which so unsettles and distracts us by subjecting each situation to the simple test of right or wrong. Right and wrong as moral principles do not change. They are applicable and reliable determinants whether the situations with which we deal are simple or complicated. There is always a right and wrong to every question which requires our solution. (Albert E. Bowen, *Prophets, Principles and National Survival*, p. 21-22) Unlike the political opportunist, the true statesman values principle above popularity, and works to create popularity for those political principles which are wise and just.

The Correct Role of Government

I should like to outline in clear, concise, and straight-forward terms the political principles to which I subscribe. These are the guidelines which determine, now and in the future, my attitudes and actions toward all domestic proposals and projects of government. These are the principles which, in my opinion, proclaim the proper role of government in the domestic affairs of the nation:

[I] believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society.

[I] believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life...

[I] believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments; and that sedition and rebellion are unbecoming every citizen thus protected, and should be punished accordingly; and that all governments have a right to enact such laws as in their own judgments are best calculated to secure the public interest; at

the same time, however, holding sacred the freedom of conscience. (D&C 134: 1-2,5.)

The Most Important Function Of Government

It is generally agreed that the most important single function of government is to secure the rights and freedoms of individual citizens. But, what are those rights? And what is their source? Until these questions are answered there is little likelihood that we can correctly determine how government can best secure them. Thomas Paine, back in the days of the American Revolution, explained that:

Rights are not gifts from one man to another, nor from one class of men to another...It is impossible to discover any origin of rights otherwise than in the origin of man; it consequently follows that rights appertain to man in right of his existence, and must therefore be equal to every man. (P.P.N.S., p. 134.)

The great Thomas Jefferson asked:

Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? (Works 8:404; P.P.N.S. p. 141.)

Starting at the foundation of the pyramid, let us first consider the origin of those freedoms we have come to know as human rights. There are only two possible sources. Rights are either God-given as part of the Divine Plan, or they are granted by government as part of the political plan. Reason, necessity, tradition and religious conviction all lead me to accept the divine origin of these rights. If we accept the premise that human rights are granted by government, then we must be willing to accept the corollary that they can be denied by government. I, for one, shall never accept that premise. As the French political economist, Frederick-Bastiat, phrased it so succinctly, "Life, liberty, and property do not exist because men have made laws. On the contrary, it was the fact that life, liberty, and property existed beforehand that caused men to make laws in the first place." (The Law, p. 6)

The Real Meaning Of The Separation Of Church And State

I support the doctrine of separation of church and state as traditionally interpreted to prohibit the establishment of an official national religion. But I am opposed to the doctrine of separation of church and state as currently interpreted to divorce government from any formal recognition of God. The current trend strikes a potentially fatal blow at the concept of the divine origin of our rights, and unlocks the door for an easy entry of future tyranny. If Americans should ever come to believe that their rights and freedoms are instituted among men by politicians and bureaucrats, then they will no longer carry the proud inheritance of their forefathers, but will grovel before their masters seeking favors and dispensations—a throwback to the Feudal System of the Dark Ages. We must ever keep in mind the inspired words of Thomas Jefferson, as found in the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. (P.P.N.S., p. 519)

Since God created man with certain unalienable rights, and man, in turn, created government to help secure and safeguard those rights, it follows that man is superior to the creature which he created. Man is superior to government and should remain master

over it, not the other way around. Even the non-believer can appreciate the logic of this relationship.

The Source of Government Power

Leaving aside, for a moment, the question of the divine origin of rights, it is obvious that a government is nothing more or less than a relatively small group of citizens who have been hired, in a sense, by the rest of us to perform certain functions and discharge certain responsibilities which have been authorized. It stands to reason that the government itself has no innate power or privilege to do anything. Its only source of authority and power is from the people who have created it. This is made clear in the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States, which reads: "WE THE PEOPLE...do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

The important thing to keep in mind is that the people who have created their government can give to that government only such powers as they, themselves, have in the first place. Obviously, they cannot give that which they do not possess. So, the question boils down to this. What powers properly belong to each and every person in the absence of and prior to the establishment of any organized governmental form? A hypothetical question? Yes, indeed! But, it is a question which is vital to an understanding of the principles which underlie the proper function of government.

Of course, as James Madison, sometimes called the Father of the Constitution, said, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary." (The Federalist, No. 51.) Natural Rights

In a primitive state, there is no doubt that each man would be justified in using force, if necessary, to defend himself against physical harm, against theft of the fruits of his labor, and against enslavement of another. This principle was clearly explained by Bastiat:

"Each of us has a natural right—from God—to defend his person, his liberty, and his property. These are the three basic requirements of life, and the preservation of any one of them is completely dependent upon the preservation of the other two. For what are our faculties but the extension of our individuality? And what is property but an extension of our faculties?" (The Law, p. 6.)

Indeed, the early pioneers found that a great deal of their time and energy was being spent doing all three—defending themselves, their property and their liberty—in what properly was called the "Lawless West." In order for man to prosper, he cannot afford to spend his time constantly guarding his family, his fields, and his property against attack and theft, so he joins together with his neighbors and hires a sheriff. At this precise moment, government is born. The individual citizens delegate to the sheriff their unquestionable right to protect themselves. The sheriff now does for them only what they had a right to do for themselves—nothing more. Quoting again from Bastiat:

"If every person has the right to defend—even by force—his person, his liberty, and his property, then it follows that a group of men have the right to organize and support a common force to protect these rights constantly. Thus the principle of collective right—its reason for existing, its lawfulness—is based on individual right. (The Law, p. 6.)

So far so good. But now we come to the moment of truth. Suppose pioneer "A" wants another horse for his wagon. He doesn't have the money to buy one, but since pioneer "B" has an

extra horse, he decides that he is entitled to share in his neighbor's good fortune. Is he entitled to take his neighbor's horse?

Obviously not! If his neighbor wishes to give it or lend it, that is another question. But so long as pioneer "B" wishes to keep his property, pioneer "A" has no just claim to it.

If "A" has no proper power to take "B's" property, can he delegate any such power to the sheriff? No. Even if everyone in the community desires that "B" give his extra horse to "A", they have no right individually or collectively to force him to do it. They cannot delegate a power they themselves do not have. This important principle was clearly understood and explained by John Locke nearly 300 years ago:

"For nobody can transfer to another more power than he has in himself, and nobody has an absolute arbitrary power over himself, or over any other, to destroy his own life, or take away the life or property of another. (Two Treatises of Civil Government, II, 135.; P.P.N.S., p. 93.)

The Proper Function Of Government

This means, then, that the proper function of government is limited only to those spheres of activity within which the individual citizen has the right to act. By deriving its just powers from the governed, government becomes primarily a mechanism for defense against bodily harm, theft and involuntary servitude. It cannot claim the power to redistribute the wealth or force reluctant citizens to perform acts of charity against their will. Government is created by man. No man possesses such power to delegate. The creature cannot exceed the creator.

In general terms, therefore, the proper role of government includes such defensive activities, as maintaining national military and local police forces for protection against loss of life, loss of property, and loss of liberty at the hands of either foreign despots or domestic criminals. The Powers Of A Proper Government

It also includes those powers necessarily incidental to the protective function such as:

1. The maintenance of courts where those charged with crimes may be tried and where disputes between citizens may be impartially settled.
2. The establishment of a monetary system and a standard of weights and measures so that courts may render money judgments, taxing authorities may levy taxes, and citizens may have a uniform standard to use in their business dealings.

My attitude toward government is succinctly expressed by the following provision taken from the Alabama Constitution:

That the sole object and only legitimate end of government is to protect the citizen in the enjoyment of life, liberty, and property, and when the government assumes other functions it is usurpation and oppression. (Art. 1, Sec. 35.)

An important test I use in passing judgment upon an act of government is this: If it were up to me as an individual to punish my neighbor for violating a given law, would it offend my conscience to do so? Since my conscience will never permit me to physically punish my fellow man unless he has done something evil, or unless he has failed to do something which I have a moral right to require of him to do, I will never knowingly authorize my agent, the government, to do this on my behalf.

I realize that when I give my consent to the adoption of a law, I specifically instruct the police—the government—to take either the life, liberty, or property of anyone who disobeys that law. Furthermore, I tell them that if anyone resists the enforcement of

the law, they are to use any means necessary—yes, even putting the lawbreaker to death or putting him in jail—to overcome such resistance. These are extreme measures but unless laws are enforced, anarchy results.

As John Locke explained many years ago:

“The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom. For in all the states of created beings, capable of laws, where there is no law there is no freedom. For liberty is to be free from restraint and violence from others, which cannot be where there is no law; and is not, as we are told, “a liberty for every man to do what he lists.” For who could be free, when every other man’s humour might domineer over him: But a liberty to dispose and order freely as he lists his person, actions, possessions, and his whole property within the allowance of those laws under which he is, and therein not to be subject to the arbitrary will of another, but freely follow his own. (Two Treatises of Civil Government, II, 57; P.P.N.S., p. 101.)

I believe we Americans should use extreme care before lending our support to any proposed government program. We should fully recognize that government is no plaything. As George Washington warned, “Government is not reason, it is not eloquence—it is force! Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master!” (The Red Carpet, p. 142). It is an instrument of force and unless our conscience is clear that we would not hesitate to put a man to death, put him in jail or forcibly deprive him of his property for failing to obey a given law, we should oppose it.

The Constitution Of The United States

Another standard I use in determining what law is good and what is bad is the Constitution of the United States. I regard this inspired document as a solemn agreement between the citizens of this nation which every officer of government is under a sacred duty to obey. As Washington stated so clearly in his immortal Farewell Address:

The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitution of government—But the constitution which at any time exists, until changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government. (P.P.N.S., p. 542.)

I am especially mindful that the Constitution provides that the great bulk of the legitimate activities of government are to be carried out at the state or local level. This is the only way in which the principle of “self-government” can be made effective. As James Madison said before the adoption of the Constitution, “[We] rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government.” (Federalist, No. 39; P.P.N.S., p. 128). Thomas Jefferson made this interesting observation: “Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the forms of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question.” (Works, 8:3; P.P.N.S., p. 128.)

The Value Of Local Government

It is a firm principle that the smallest or lowest level that can possibly undertake the task is the one that should do so. First, the community or city. If the city cannot handle it, then the county. Next, the state; and only if no smaller unit can possibly do the job should the federal government be considered. This is merely the application to the field of politics of that wise and time-tested

principle of never asking a larger group to do that which can be done by a smaller group. And so far as government is concerned, the smaller the unit and the closer it is to the people, the easier it is to guide it, to keep it solvent and to keep our freedom. Thomas Jefferson understood this principle very well and explained it this way:

“The way to have good and safe government, is not to trust it all to one, but to divide it among the many, distributing to every one exactly the functions he is competent to. Let the national government be entrusted with the defense of the nation, and its foreign and federal relations; the State government with the civil rights, law, police, and administration of what concerns the State generally; the counties with the local concerns of the counties, and each ward direct the interests within itself. It is by dividing and subdividing these republics from the great national one down through all its subordinations, until it ends in the administration of every man’s farm by himself; by placing under every one what his own eye may superintend, that all will be done for the best. What has destroyed liberty and the rights of man in every government which has ever existed under the sun? The generalizing and concentrating all cares and powers into one body, (Works, 6:543; P.P.N.S., p. 125)

It is well to remember that the states of this republic created the Federal Government. The Federal Government did not create the states.

Things The Government Should Not Do

A category of government activity which, today, not only requires the closest scrutiny, but which also poses a grave danger to our continued freedom, is the activity not within the proper sphere of government. No one has the authority to grant such powers, as welfare programs, schemes for redistributing the wealth, and activities which coerce people into acting in accordance with a prescribed code of social planning. There is one simple test. Do I as an individual have a right to use force upon my neighbor to accomplish this goal? If I do have such a right, then I may delegate that power to my government to exercise on my behalf. If I do not have that right as an individual, then I cannot delegate it to government, and I cannot ask my government to perform the act for me.

To be sure, there are times when this principle of the proper role of government is most annoying and inconvenient. If I could only force the ignorant to provide for themselves, or the selfish to be generous with their wealth! But if we permit government to manufacture its own authority out of thin air, and to create self-proclaimed powers not delegated to it by the people, then the creature exceeds the creator and becomes master. Beyond that point, where shall the line be drawn? Who is to say “this far, but no further?” What clear principle will stay the hand of government from reaching farther and yet farther into our daily lives? We shouldn’t forget the wise words of President Grover Cleveland that “...though the people support the Government, the Government should not support the people.” (P.P.N.S., p.345.) We should also remember, as Frederick Bastiat reminded us, that “Nothing can ever be use from the public treasury for the benefit of one citizen or one class unless other citizens and other classes have been forced to send it in.” (The Law, p.30; P.P.N.S., p. 350.)

The Dividing Line Between Proper And Improper Government

As Bastiat pointed out over a hundred years ago, once government steps over this clear line between the protective or negative role

into the aggressive role of redistributing the wealth and providing so-called “benefits” for some of its citizens, it then becomes a means for what he accurately described as legalized plunder. It becomes a lever of unlimited power which is the sought-after prize of unscrupulous individuals and pressure groups, each seeking to control the machine to fatten his own pockets or to benefit its favorite charities—all with the other fellow’s money, or course. (The Law, 1850, reprinted by the Foundation for Economic Education, Irvington-On-Hudson, N.Y.)

The Nature Of Legal Plunder

Listen to Bastiat’s explanation of this legal plunder:

“When a portion of wealth is transferred from the person who owns it—without his consent and without compensation, and whether by force or by fraud—to anyone who does not own it, then I say that property is violated; that an act of plunder is committed... How is the legal plunder to be identified? Quite simply. See if the law takes from some persons what belongs to them, and gives it to other persons to whom it does not belong. See if the law benefits one citizen at the expense of another by doing what the citizen himself cannot do without committing a crime... (The Law, p. 21; P.P.N.S., p. 377.)

As Bastiat observed, and as history has proven, each class or special interest group competes with the others to throw the lever of governmental power in their favor, or at least to immunize itself against the effects of a previous thrust. Labor gets minimum wage, so agriculture seeks a price support. Consumers demand price controls, and industry gets protective tariffs. In the end, no one is much further ahead, and everyone suffers the burdens of a gigantic bureaucracy and a loss of personal freedom. With each group out to get its share of the spoils, such governments historically have mushroomed into total welfare states. Once the process begins, once the principle of the protective function of government gives way to the aggressive or redistributive function, then forces are set in motion that drive the nation toward totalitarianism. “It is impossible,” Bastiat correctly observed, “to introduce into society... a greater evil than this: the conversion of the law into an instrument of plunder.” (The Law, p. 12)

Government Cannot Create Wealth

Students of history know that no government in the history of mankind has ever created any wealth. People who work create wealth. James R. Evans, in his inspiring book, *The Glorious Quest*, gives this simple illustration of legalized plunder:

Assume, for example, that we were farmers, and that we received a letter from the government telling us that we were going to get a thousand dollars this year for ploughed up acreage. But rather than the normal method of collection, we were to take this letter and collect \$69.71 from Bill Brown, at such an address, and \$82.47 from Henry Jones, \$59.80 from Bill Smith, and so on down the line; that these men would make up our farm subsidy.

Neither you nor I, nor would 99 percent of the farmers, walk up and ring a man’s doorbell, hold out a hand and say, “Give me what you’ve earned even though I have not.” We simply wouldn’t do it because we would be facing directly the violation of a moral law, “Thou shalt not steal.” In short, we would be held accountable for our actions.

The free creative energy of this choice nation “created more than 50 percent of all the world’s products and possessions in the short span of 160 years. The only imperfection in the system is the imperfection in man himself.”

The last paragraph in this remarkable Evans book—which I commend to all—reads:

“No historian of the future will ever be able to prove that the ideas of individual liberty practiced in the United States of America were a failure. He may be able to prove that we were not yet worthy of them. The choice is ours. (Charles Hallberg and Co., 116 West Grand Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60610)

The Basic Error Of Marxism

According to Marxist doctrine, a human being is primarily an economic creature. In other words, his material well being is all important; his privacy and his freedom are strictly secondary. The Soviet constitution reflects this philosophy in its emphasis on security; food, clothing, housing, medical care—the same things that might be considered in a jail. The basic concept is that the government has full responsibility for the welfare of the people and, in order to discharge that responsibility, must assume control of all their activities. It is significant that in actuality the Russian people have few of the rights supposedly “guaranteed” to them in their constitution, while the American people have them in abundance even though they are not guaranteed. The reason, of course, is that material gain and economic security simply cannot be guaranteed by any government. They are the result and reward of hard work and industrious production. Unless the people bake one loaf of bread for each citizen, the government cannot guarantee that each will have one loaf to eat. Constitutions can be written, laws can be passed and imperial decrees can be issued, but unless the bread is produced, it can never be distributed.

The Real Cause Of American Prosperity

Why, then, do Americans bake more bread, manufacture more shoes and assemble more TV set than Russians do? They do so precisely because our government does not guarantee these things. If it did, there would be so many accompanying taxes, controls, regulations and political manipulations that the productive genius that is America’s would soon be reduced to the floundering level of waste and inefficiency now found behind the Iron Curtain. As Henry D. Thoreau explained:

“This government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. It does not keep the country free. It does not settle the West. It does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometime got in its way. For government is an expedient by which men would fain succeed in letting one another alone; and, as has been said, when it is most expedient, the governed are most let alone by it. (Quoted by Clarence B. Carson, *The American Tradition*, p. 100; P.P.N.S., p.171.)

In 1801 Thomas Jefferson, in his First Inaugural Address, said:

“With all these blessings, what more is necessary to make us a happy and prosperous people? Still one thing more, fellow citizens—a wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, which shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it had earned. (Works 8:3)

A Formula For Prosperity

The principle behind this American philosophy can be reduced to a rather simple formula:

1. Economic security for all is impossible without widespread abundance.

2. Abundance is impossible without industrious and efficient production.
3. Such production is impossible without energetic, willing and eager labor.
4. This not possible without incentive.
5. Of all forms of incentive—the freedom to attain a reward for one’s labors is the most sustaining for most people. Sometimes called the profit motive, it is simply the right to plan and to earn and to enjoy the fruits of your labor.
6. This profit motive diminishes as government controls, regulations and taxes increase to deny the fruits of success to those who produce.
7. Therefore, any attempt through government intervention to redistribute the material rewards of labor can only result in the eventual destruction of the productive base of society, without which real abundance and security for more than the ruling elite is quite impossible.

An Example Of The Consequences Of Disregarding These Principles

We have before us currently a sad example of what happens to a nation which ignores these principles. Former FBI agent, Dan Smoot, succinctly pointed out on his broadcast number 649, dated January 29, 1968 as follows:

England was killed by an idea: the idea that the weak, indolent and profligate must be supported by the strong, industrious, and frugal—to the degree that tax consumers will have a living standard comparable to that of taxpayers; the idea that government exists for the purpose of plundering those who work to give the product of their labor to those who do not work. The economic and social cannibalism produced by this communist-socialist idea will destroy any society which adopts it and clings to it as a basic principle—any society.

The Power Of True Liberty From Improper Governmental Interference

Nearly two hundred years ago, Adam Smith, the Englishman, who understood these principles very well, published his great book, *The Wealth of Nations*, which contained this statement:

The natural effort of every individual to better his own condition, when suffered to exert itself with freedom and security, is so powerful a principle, that it is alone, and without any assistance, not only capable of carrying on the society to wealth and prosperity, but of surmounting a hundred impertinent obstructions with which the folly of human laws too often incumbers its operations; though the effect of these obstructions is always more of less either to encroach upon its freedom, or to diminish its security. (Vol. 2, Book 4, p. 126)

But What About The Needy?

On the surface this may sound heartless and insensitive to the needs of those less fortunate individuals who are found in any society, no matter how affluent. “What about the lame, the sick and the destitute?” is an often voiced question. Most other countries in the world have attempted to use the power of government to meet this need. Yet, in every case, the improvement has been marginal at best and has resulted in the long run creating more misery, more poverty, and certainly less freedom than when government first stepped in. As Henry Grady Weaver wrote, in his excellent book, *The Mainspring of Human Progress*:

Most of the major ills of the world have been caused by well-meaning people who ignored the principle of individual freedom, except as applied to themselves, and who were obsessed with fanatical zeal to improve the lot of mankind-in-the-mass through some pet formula of their own. ... The harm done by ordinary criminals, murderers, gangsters, and thieves is negligible in comparison with the agony inflicted upon human beings by the professional ‘do-gooders,’ who attempt to set themselves up as gods on earth and who would ruthlessly force their views on all others—with the abiding assurance the end justifies the means”. (p. 40-41; P.P.N.S., p. 313)

The Better Way

By comparison, America traditionally has followed Jefferson’s advice of relying on individual action and charity. The result is that the United States has fewer cases of genuine hardship per capita than any other country in the entire world or throughout all history. Even during the depression of the 1930’s, Americans ate and lived better than more people in other countries do today.

What Is Wrong With A “Little” Socialism?

In reply to the argument that a little bit of socialism is good so long as it doesn’t go too far, it is tempting to say that, in like fashion, just a little bit of theft or a little bit of cancer is all right, too! History proves that the growth of the welfare state is difficult to check before it comes to its full flower of dictatorship. But let us hope that this time around, the trend can be reversed. If not, then we will see the inevitability of complete socialism, probably within our lifetime.

The Reasons America Need Not Fall For Socialist Deceptions

Three factors may make a difference. First, there is sufficient historical knowledge of the failures of socialism and of the past mistakes of previous civilizations. Secondly, there are modern means of rapid communications to transmit these lessons of history to a large literate population. And thirdly, there is a growing number of dedicated men and women who, at great personal sacrifice, are actively working to promote a wider appreciation of these concepts. The timely joining together of these three factors may make it entirely possible for us to reverse the trend.

How Can Present Socialist Trends Be Reversed?

This brings up the next question: How is it possible to cut out the various welfare-state features like cancer cells onto the body politic? Isn’t drastic surgery already necessary, and can it be performed without endangering the patient? In answer, it is obvious that drastic measures are called for. No half-way or compromise actions will suffice. Like all surgery, it will not be without discomfort and perhaps even some scar tissue for a long time to come. But it must be done if the patient is to be saved, and it can be done without undue risk.

Obviously, not all welfare-state programs currently in force can be dropped simultaneously without causing tremendous economic and social upheaval. To try to do so would be like finding oneself at the controls of a hijacked airplane and attempting to return it by simply cutting off the engines in flight. It must be flown back, lowered in altitude, gradually reduced in speed and brought in for a smooth landing. Translated into practical terms, this means that the first step toward restoring the limited concept of government should be to freeze all welfare-state programs at their present level, making sure that no new ones are added. The next step would be to allow all present programs to run out their term with absolutely no renewal. The third step would involve the gradual

phasing out of those programs which are indefinite in their term. In my opinion, the bulk of the transition could be accomplished within a ten-year period and virtually completed within twenty years. Congress would serve as the initiator of this phase-out program, and the President would act as the executive in accordance with traditional constitutional procedures.

Summary Thus Far

As I summarize what I have attempted to cover, try to visualize the structural relationship between the six vital concepts that have made America the envy of the world. I have reference to the foundation of the Divine Origin of Rights; Limited Government; the pillars of Economic Freedom and Personal Freedom, which result in Abundance; followed by Security and the Pursuit of Happiness.

America was built upon a firm foundation and created over many years from the bottom up. Other nations, impatient to acquire equal abundance, security and pursuit of happiness, rush headlong into that final phase of construction without building adequate foundations or supporting pillars. Their efforts are futile. And, even in our country, there are those who think that, because we now have the good things in life, we can afford to dispense with the foundations which have made them possible. They want to remove any recognition of God from governmental institutions. They want to expand the scope and reach of government which will undermine and erode our economic and personal freedoms. The abundance which is ours, the carefree existence which we have come to accept as a matter of course, can be toppled by these foolish experimenters and power seekers. By the grace of God, and with His help, we shall fence them off from the foundations of our liberty, and then begin our task of repair and construction.

As a conclusion to this discussion, I present a declaration of principles which have recently been prepared by a few American patriots, and to which I wholeheartedly subscribe.

Fifteen Principles Which Make For Good And Proper Government!

As an Independent American for constitution government I declare that:

1. I believe that no people can maintain freedom unless their political institutions are founded upon faith in God and belief in the existence of moral law.
2. I believe that God has endowed men with certain unalienable rights as set forth in the Declaration of Independence and that no legislature and no majority, however great, may morally limit or destroy these; that the sole function of government is to protect life, liberty, and property and anything more than this is usurpation and oppression.
3. I believe that the Constitution of the United States was prepared and adopted by men acting under inspiration from Almighty God; that it is a solemn compact between the peoples of the States of this nation which all officers of government are under duty to obey; that the eternal moral laws expressed therein must be adhered to or individual liberty will perish.
4. I believe it a violation of the Constitution for government to deprive the individual of either life, liberty, or property except for these purposes:
 - a. Punish crime and provide for the administration of justice;
 - b. Protect the right and control of private property;
 - c. Wage defensive war and provide for the nation's defense;
 - d. Compel each one who enjoys the protection of government

to bear his fair share of the burden of performing the above functions.

5. I hold that the Constitution denies government the power to take from the individual either his life, liberty, or property except in accordance with moral law; that the same moral law which governs the actions of men when acting alone is also applicable when they act in concert with others; that no citizen or group of citizens has any right to direct their agent, the government to perform any act which would be evil to the conscience if that citizen were performing the act himself outside the framework of government.
6. I am hereby resolved that under no circumstances shall the freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights be infringed. In particular I am opposed to any attempt on the part of the Federal Government to deny the people their right to bear arms, to worship and pray when and where they choose, or to own and control private property.
7. I consider ourselves at war with international Communism which is committed to the destruction of our government, our right of property, and our freedom; that it is treason as defined by the Constitution to give aid and comfort to this implacable enemy.
8. I am unalterably opposed to Socialism, either in whole or in part, and regard it as an unconstitutional usurpation of power and a denial of the right of private property for government to own or operate the means of producing and distributing goods and services in competition with private enterprise, or to regiment owners in the legitimate use of private property.
9. I maintain that every person who enjoys the protection of his life, liberty should bear his fair share of the cost of government in providing that protection; that the elementary principles of justice set forth in the Constitution demand that all taxes imposed be uniform and that each person's property or income be taxed at the same rate.
10. I believe in honest money, the gold and silver coinage of the Constitution, and a circulating medium convertible into such money without loss. I regard it as flagrant violation of the explicit provisions of the Constitution for the Federal Government to make it a criminal offense to use gold or silver coin as legal tender or to use irredeemable paper money.
11. I believe that each state is sovereign in performing those functions reserved to it by the Constitution and it is destructive of our federal system and the right to self-government guaranteed under the Constitution for the Federal Government to regulate or control the States in performing their functions or to engage in performing such functions itself.
12. I consider it a violation of the Constitution for the Federal Government to levy taxes for the support of state or local government; that no state or local government can accept funds from the Federal and remain independent in performing its functions, nor can the citizens exercise their rights of self-government under such conditions.
13. I deem it a violation of the right of private property guaranteed under the Constitution for the Federal Government to forcibly deprive the citizens of this nation of their property through taxation or otherwise, and make a gift thereof to foreign governments or their citizens.
14. I believe that no treaty or agreement with other countries should deprive our citizens of rights guaranteed them by the Constitution.

15. I consider it a direct violation of the obligation imposed upon it by the Constitution for the Federal Government to dismantle or weaken our military establishment below that point required for the protection of the States against invasion, or to surrender or to surrender or commit our men, arms, or money to the control of foreign or world organizations of governments. [Editor's note: United Nations, NATO, NAFTA, etc...]

These things I believe to be the proper role of government.

We have strayed far afield. We must return to basic concepts and principles—to eternal verities. There is no other way. The storm signals are up. They are clear and ominous.

As Americans—citizens of the greatest nation under Heaven—we face difficult days. Never, since the days of the Civil War—100 years ago—has this choice nation faced such a crisis.

In closing I wish to refer you to the words of the patriot Thomas Paine, whose writings helped so much to stir into a flaming spirit the smoldering embers of patriotism during the days of the American Revolution:

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it NOW, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem to lightly; 'tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. (The Political Works of Thomas Paine, p. 55.)

I intend to keep fighting. My personal attitude is one of resolution—not resignation.

I have faith in the American people. I pray that we will never do anything that will jeopardize in any manner our priceless heritage. If we live and work so as to enjoy the approbation of a Divine Providence, we cannot fail. Without that help we cannot long endure.

All Right-Thinking Americans Should Now Take Their Stand

So I urge all Americans to put their courage to the test. Be firm in our conviction that our cause is just. Reaffirm our faith in all things for which true Americans have always stood.

I urge all Americans to arouse themselves and stay aroused. We must not make any further concessions to communism (socialism) at home or abroad. We do not need to. We should oppose communism (socialism) from our position of strength for we are not weak.

There is much to be done. The time is short. Let us begin—in earnest—now, and may God bless our efforts, I humbly pray.

[Published in 1968. Ezra Taft Benson served as Secretary of Agriculture in the Eisenhower Administration.]