

Principles in Default

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The knight was returning to the castle after a long, hard day. His face was bruised and badly swollen. His armor was dented. The plume on his helmet was broken and his steed was limping. He was a sad sight.

The lord of the castle ran out and asked, "What hath befallen you, Sir Timothy?"

"Oh, Sire," he said, "I have been laboring all day in your service, bloodying and pillaging your enemies to the west."

"You've been doing *what?*" gasped the astonished nobleman.

Thinking the man must be a little deaf, Timothy repeated what he had said, only much louder.

"But I haven't any enemies to the west," was the reply.

"Oh!" said Timothy. And then, "Well, I think you do now."

There is a moral to this little story. Enthusiasm is not enough. You need to have a sense of direction.

For some of us old-timers, it seems as if America has lost its sense of direction as it has embraced one ill-considered social change after another, changes which have confused and corrupted the people, dividing them into innumerable pressure groups, all struggling against each other for more than their share. Fifty years ago, things were very different. The people of this nation generally lived and worked together amicably and productively because a set of widely accepted principles gave direction to their individual lives and their common endeavors.

I want to disinter for you three of those by-gone principles and in each case identify an event that turned out to be a catalyst in disestablishing the principle. The first event was the launching of Sputnik in 1957. That first satellite scared the daylights out of the American people. All of a sudden, the comforting barricade against foreign enemies, which the two oceans had always provided, vanished when that Communist contrivance loaded with who-knows-what deadly peril began circling the globe. It was panic time in the USA.

The realization that the Soviet Union had surpassed the United States in technological know-how caused American educators to scrap the long-cherished and jealously-guarded principle of the separation of school and state—federal subsidies must not be involved in funding our education. That such a principle even existed startles us today. So, listen to the vehemence of this statement issued jointly by the National Education Association and The American Council on Education. It was disseminated nationally just before the end of World War II and was designated a statement of alarm.

For more than a quarter of a century, and especially during the last decade, education in the United States, like a ship caught in a powerful tide, has drifted ever farther into the dangerous wastes of Federal control and domination. . . . Present signs indicate that unless it is sharply checked by an alert citizenry, it will continue even more rapidly after the war. . . . The trend toward the Federalizing of education is one of the most dangerous on the current scene.

As they had predicted, shortly after war's end, President Truman pressed hard for legislation to provide funds for education. Very quickly, Carleton College's President Donald Cowling mobilized the nation's college and university presidents. The torrent of objections they poured upon the Congress put a stop to that bit of Truman mischief.

A decade later, Sputnik pierced the sky and the National Defense Education Act was adopted with only token resistance. The floodgates of Federal funding had been opened. Soon after his election, Jack Kennedy proposed much broader Federal aid. Hoping to revive higher education's army of resistance, and with the advice of Dr. Cowling, I enlisted twenty-eight college and university presidents to try to help the Congress understand why Federal subsidies would compromise higher education. Our campaign lasted two years, but the tide had turned and our efforts in 1961 and 1962 were brushed aside. Nonetheless, the arguments we offered are worth reviewing. Here are three of them:

- 1) If there is an established principle separating church from state, then if state moves in, church must move out. As you know, God is not welcome on many campuses nowadays. Goodbye, God.
- 2) When Federal aid becomes a substantial portion of educational funding, when Washington is your paymaster, then the entire teaching profession becomes a political captive, with every teacher and professor subject to pressure on his own pocketbook to vote for the candidate who promises the most additional Federal subsidies. Goodbye, political freedom.
- 3) Prior to Federal funding, the faculty on each campus labored to devise the best possible program of education to serve its own particular student body. Now many campus programs are designed so they can qualify for Federal grant programs. Goodbye, local initiative. Hello homogenization. And, hello political correctness.

Well, that hallowed principle—the separation of school and state—has disappeared down the memory hole.

A second principle was shredded in 1969 after 400,000 free spirits gathered at Woodstock for rock music and fun. When the news first broke that the open use of marijuana and other illegal drugs was commonplace among the multitude at Woodstock, I contacted the White House. (I should note that when I was in the

Eisenhower Administration, Mr. Nixon was my immediate superior.) I urged that the Federal Government step in and terminate the Woodstock festival.

I noted that the growing frequency of the use of marijuana on the campuses was a large and growing problem needing attention, but in this case, the open defiance of Federal law by tens of thousands amounted to an insurrection. I suggested that if the government failed to intervene, it would, by that failure, seem to reinforce the growing disregard for the importance of abiding by the laws. Moreover, that inaction might forfeit the last chance to deal effectively with the drug problem.

The president's advisors thought otherwise and no action was taken. It is unfortunate that most people don't realize that when a person takes up an illegal habit, he becomes less inclined to abide by other laws and rules. He tends to set his own moral code, deciding for himself which of society's rules and obligations he will observe, and which he won't. Goodbye lawfulness.

Just before he retired to Ireland, Walter Trohan, the *Chicago Tribune's* esteemed Washington Bureau Chief, expressed his deep anxiety about the future of an America in which the youth have so little respect for the law. That was twenty-five years ago. Those youth now run the government. And the idea industries.

A third principle was blitzed by NBC television on January 9, 1975, with a three-hour prime-time special. The promotional campaign for it was nationwide, high-powered and comprehensive. What had been billed as a report on the status of modern women turned out to be a celebration of the sexual freedom enjoyed by various groups across the country, and a condescending disparagement of marriage and the natural family.

At that time, something called The Fairness Doctrine required television programmers to provide a balancing commentary if they advocated just one side of a major, controversial issue. With the help of a Chicago attorney, I registered a Fairness Doctrine Complaint charging NBC-TV to do a second three-hour prime-time special, presenting the family as a holy and wholesome institution, essential to civilized living, and sustained by codes of sexual morality. At a press conference, I invited other citizens to write the Federal Communications Commission in support of the complaint. A great many did. Both the complaint and a subsequent appeal were denied without any acknowledgment of the substance of the complaint.

Most people's opinions are influenced by what they see and hear. Television is what they see and hear more than anything else. Indeed, television has become the most powerful educational force there is. A problem arises because the great bulk of television is designed to entertain. By its nature, entertainment tends to push against and mock the mores of society, whereas a primary function of education must be to explain and reinforce those mores that are the standards of behavior that make civilized living possible. Thus television has become a monstrous paradox, constituting the dominant educational force, but grinding away in its entertainment function, tearing down that which education must build up. It is a dangerous and devastating self-contradiction which the Federal Commu-

nications Commission wouldn't even acknowledge, or else was too dumb to understand.

As you know, NBC's blockbuster assault on sexual morality opened the way for the forces of moral anarchy to dominate the idea industries. They have, since then, issued such a profusion of materials championing radical feminism and gay rights that even a large part of the clergy does not seem to remember the principle which was the target of NBC's blitz; that is, sexual liberation and the natural family are mutually exclusive. You cannot have both. The more there is of the one, the less there will be of the other. The legal sanction and the public approval of sexual activity, other than within the covenant of marriage, are just as toxic to the natural family as illegal habits are to the principle of lawfulness.

The American society has been seriously damaged because the citizens are ignorant of these principles and have defaulted on them. I believe these principles need to be rediscovered and reapplied.

I close with an Abraham Lincoln quotation Herb London cited recently: "When you are lost in life, do as you would when lost in a forest. Retrace your steps." Ω