

The Government We Deserve

JOSEPH ZASHIN

THE LEGEND on our small change is "In God We Trust". Which might imply that in men we do not. Not an unusual thought, since honest men are hard to find. Diogenes made us aware of this in his ancient world. In religious teachings throughout the ages, we find the precept "not in men do we trust. . ." uttered circumspectly in most periods and lands so as not to offend the ruling despot.

Recognizing this, the Founding Fathers set up our system of checks and balances so any assumption of too much power would run into a constitutional block. Jefferson emphasized this in the admonition that the best governed people are the least governed. Again not an original thought, but found throughout all history.

We suffer from too much government. Some call it "bureaucracy" and the contending parties promise to limit it when they assume power. But it never seems to happen. Bureaucracies accrete. They keep adding to themselves in numbers, cost and the usurpation of our liberties until we have sense enough to howl. Richard Nixon made much of the size and waste of government under LBJ, and vowed to reduce the swollen ranks and cost. When he reached the White House, he soon outdid LBJ.

Do we need all that government? Those in government themselves know best that we do not. They see at first hand the overstaffing, minimal effort, snails pace performance, waste, inefficiency and ever mounting prodigious cost.

Government becomes an ever heavier drag on our lives. It has to be paid from the sweat of our brows in mounting taxes. It soon usurps functions that it is least capable of, knows least about and messes up in the most outrageous ways.

It begins with the myth that the number one man in the top office is endowed by his election with superhuman qualities. He is extolled, lionized, set apart and endowed with honours and privileges beyond any potentate of any age. In short, he soon believes that he has instant wisdom to handle matters that would stagger Socrates, Solomon and Confucius rolled into one. And to assure that the man will think that way, we let him surround himself with clacques of sycophants and lackeys. Little wonder that we wind up in the mess we are in today. We get the kind of government we deserve for a people who will elect a Richard Nixon in the first place, and

after four years of catastrophe, re-elect him by a wider margin.

We must drastically reduce the size and function of government, and not be afraid to do it. It is more than throwing out one gang and replacing it with the other faction. We must clean out the bureaus to improve our national circulation. We must clear away the deadwood to see what we are doing and where we are going. Much of what we would lose are not public servants, but deadbeats perpetuating themselves in unproductive jobs. And worse, there are venal men who sell out the public to corrupt influences, and for sums so paltry in comparison to the privileges and preferences they permit, that it is proper we have the warning on our small change.

A word on wars — on leaders who bring us to wars or the brink of wars in relations with other nations. We should pass an international resolution requiring nations which come into dispute to send delegations to a remote desert area. There the participants would be given a minimum of comforts, two days supply of food and water and toilet paper, and ordered to effect a solution. If they fail in two days, they remain at their peril until they do. If they expire, another set of delegates would be sent to a desolate spot under similar conditions to have a try. Certainly, it would be more civilized than armies of men slaughtering each other.

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JAIME SERRA GASULLA

We regret to report the death in Spain of Mr. Jaime Serra Gasulla, economist, expert on industrial and insurance matters, for many years Vice-President of the Club of Friends of Unesco, and member of the Friends of the United Nations. Born in Barcelona, 1916, he studied in the Henry George School of Social Science and became Vice-President of the International Union for Land-Value Taxation and Free Trade.

Mr. Serra Gasulla had a great personality and was known by his active work as lecturer and writer. His ideas and teachings remain in the innumerable papers and courses he wrote. He belonged to various cultural organisations and he was appreciated for his deep love for his country.

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