

We do well to remember that only one of the Antonines was styled a philosopher.

Unfortunately, Rakove seems to overlook this. In deference to his academic colleagues, he all too frequently forgets that a philosopher and a successful ruler are seldom combined in a single body. Such an observation is unwelcome in academic circles, whose inhabitants expect to travel into power with wisdom as their passport. But the wisdom which Rakove respects so much is essentially trivial; the academic wisdom in political matters is totally subsumed in the proposition that the body politic is capable of infinite perfectability. This is as ludicrous a description of the possibilities of political bodies as of human bodies: none of us believes that the class klutz can be turned into the college quarterback by lifting weights, or, to make the analogy more precise, by reading books about lifting weights. Chicago, after all, would not become Erewhon or Utopia even if Edward Levi were its mayor.

But Rakove burdens his left shoulder with a pail full of the quaint belief that Chicago could be improved if only the proper incantation were spoken, and the proper passing genuflection made towards the busts of the Founding Fathers. Madison, he tells us, would not have approved of Daley (maybe, maybe not), but then Chicago is not plantation Virginia. In order to maintain his standing with his academic colleagues, Rakove loads himself down with paragraphs like the following:

...under Daley's rule, few ambitions have been able to counteract Daley's ambitions, and the constitutional rights of the place have been subordinated to the interests of the man...Because he has come to

dominate the city, the normal checks and balances which are the built-in protections of a democratic political system have, to some extent, been compromised in Chicago...the Madisonian concept of safeguarding individual rights and the general welfare through checking power internally within a governmental system has not operated very well in Chicago either.

Oi, professor, the checks and balances in Chicago have been working very well indeed. They are the checks and balances of the several constituencies which contend for power within the city, but which, under Daley's leadership, have been willing—in the most checked and balanced way—to postpone their hope of ultimate and lonely victory for the practical possibilities of present compromise. The major failings of the Daley regime have been revealed by external governments—in matters like checking the ballot boxes in the national election of 1960, or investigating the possible violation of the civil rights of Fred Hampton, or in helping to maintain order during the awful days of 1968, during which Daley felt threatened by the ideologies which his practical system must forever avoid.

I suspect that Rakove the professor forgets what Rakove the politician does not; that Chicago would be diminished, perhaps to the level of Calcutta, if someone tried to govern it with a system that fits comfortably in the House of Burgesses of Williamsburg, Virginia. He has forgotten also that that government is best which is best suited to the real constitution of the governed. He has also forgotten that those who carry water on both shoulders must have a very narrow head, or wear a heavy slicker. □

James Grant

Homage to Ebenezer Scrooge

If the twentieth century has a salient failing, it is that so few of us listened when Scrooge spoke.

I admire Ebenezer Scrooge. Not the reconstituted Scrooge, whom everyone likes, the radiant, cloying Scrooge of Christmas morning. Give me the grasping Scrooge.

To start with, he was honest. He was punctual. He was solvent. His credit was impeccable. "Scrooge's name," Dickens concedes, "was good upon the 'Change for anything he chose to put his hand to." Of course, when a mortgage payment fell overdue, Scrooge promptly foreclosed. Sanctity of contract cuts both ways, dammit.

Scrooge wasn't your ordinary clubman, but he wasn't immune from the tugs of human sentiment. He could never bring himself to take down the name of Jacob Marley, his deceased partner, from the counting-house door. He despised Christmas, but gave Bob Cratchit, his dimwitted clerk, the entire day off—with pay. Still he kept his wits about him. Attests Dickens: "He was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral [Marley's] and solemnized it with an undoubted bargain."

Diligent to a fault, Scrooge perused the financial press over dinner on Christmas Eve and, records Dickens, "beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker's book." Yes, yes, I know, shocking behavior. But ask yourself this, gentle reader: What is Christmas, a day given over to the celebration of objects, without bargains—without bankbooks?

But I wander. Scrooge was a wag and a phrase-maker, even in the face of supernatural terror. To Marley's ghost, he gamely

rejoined: "You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you whoever you are."

Small wonder, then, that Scrooge offered himself to the world as he was. Small wonder, too, that at last he succumbed to the world. Who wouldn't recant following a nocturnal bout with three phantoms and the shade of one's late partner? Evil—or what passes for evil—would vanish from the face of the earth if only Jacob Marley and the Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future would consent to work the other 364 nights of the year.

A self-made man and individualist, Scrooge (the old Scrooge) kept to himself and bade others do the same. "It's enough," he said, dismissing a pair of United Fund pests, "for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly." In 1943, 100 years after the publication of "A Christmas Carol," the world was convulsed by men and nations who insisted on doing precisely the opposite. If the twentieth century has a salient failing, it is that so few of us listened when Scrooge spoke.

As to what became of Scrooge, we must take Dickens at his word. "He became," the author vows, "as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town or borough, in the good old world." But somewhere, I hope, perhaps in the wilds of Argentina, the real Scrooge lives, minding his own business and asking nothing of anyone else than that they do the same. □

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Leslie Lenkowsky

A Nation of Deadbeats?

The welfare state has not made Britons lazy. But in providing the public services that Britons have wanted, it has put them to work in economically unproductive jobs.

The welfare state is, in a sense, a British invention. Although social insurance originated in Imperial Germany, the goals and methods adopted elsewhere were more likely to be those of Edwardian England. To careful observers such as Lord Bryce, New Zealand seemed "the social laboratory of the world," but the research and writings of British social reformers have had a wider influence. The Scandinavian nations proved more able to fashion durable social reforms out of the economic slump of the 1920s and 1930s; yet it was the British wartime plan of Sir William Beveridge that captured the imagination of the world. Indeed, the term "welfare state" first came into widespread usage to denote the postwar programs for social security and health care established by Britain's Labour Government.

A generation later, one might well wonder whether the bill for this burst of national ingenuity has at last come due. Is the price of leadership in providing "cradle to grave" security a steady decline in economic vitality, of which the current crisis is the latest and most severe instance? Has the "namby-pamby state," to use Andrew Shonfield's term, turned Britain into a country of deadbeats, "floating through life on a kind of giant mattress provided by the state, consisting of a combination of cottonwool and old-fashioned down"? Was Beatrice Webb right to object to the wave of Liberal reforms that culminated with the establishment of unemployment and sickness insurance in 1911 and 1912 because, as she later wrote:

The fact that sick and unemployed persons were entitled to money incomes without any corresponding obligation to get well and keep well, or to seek and keep employment, seemed to us likely to encourage malingering and a disinclination to work for their livelihood.

Would it not be ironic if the germs of the "English sickness" were to be found in the National Health Service, and its kindred enterprises!

During the relative affluence of the 1950s and early 1960s, it would have been ridiculous to think so. There was a great debate then over reforming the welfare state, but the critics addressed themselves to entirely different concerns. To some Conservatives and a few liberal economists, the continuing expense of the health and social services was simply unnecessary. They argued that, contrary to Beveridge's assumption of high postwar unemployment, the average Briton was prosperous enough to pay directly for whatever help he needed, and that the resulting competition among providers would improve its quality. The Fabians and some Socialists thought an increasingly affluent Britain would become

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an "irresponsible society" if it failed to give a larger share of a bigger pie to those most in need. And some of the country's fiscal and monetary policy experts, recognizing that sustained economic growth was far from assured, worried about the welfare state's claim on aggregate demand. Few souls troubled about its impact on individual initiative and self-reliance.

But even economists have been hard-pressed to explain Britain's calamitous record in the 1970s, and so, once again, there has been a revival of interest in the pampering theory. A key plank of Margaret Thatcher's platform is her claim that the welfare state has mollycoddled the nation and given rise to a "progressive consensus" that scoffs at self-help and hard work. The support for these views by Sir Keith Joseph, who had presided over the health and social services during the administration of Edward Heath, endows them with the credibility of a penitent. With its proposed "new industrial strategy," the current Labour Government moved in a similar direction, promising to give lower priority to social programs and higher to identifying and supporting manufacturing firms likely to grow. "Productivity" has become a fashionable word among economic planners. A Downing Street "think-tank" report on the automobile industry, for example, asserted:

With the same power at his elbow, and doing the same job, a continental car worker normally produces twice as much as his British counterpart.

The report blamed overmanning, restrictive work rules, low investment, and similar industrial conditions for British sluggishness. Yet these alone may not be sufficient to explain how the nation, conserving energy by a three-day work week in the winter of 1974, could still manage to produce nearly four days of output; many observers suggest that, except in emergencies, British workers have simply become lazy.

Such evidence as can be gathered, however, does not easily fit the notion that the welfare state has contributed to Britain's plight by reducing the incentives to work harder. For one thing, other countries have devoted as much or more of their resources to welfare programs without sharing Britain's economic weakness. For another, the growth of Britain's welfare state has not stopped private spending from increasing throughout most of the postwar era. And in the presumably central matter of income redistribution, the impact of the British welfare state has so far been rather mild. What the welfare state has done is expand in such a way that the services sector of the British economy has grown much faster than the manufacturing and industrial sector; the welfare state has hurt Britain not so much by dampening its energies as by channelling them into less productive endeavors.

The Welfare States

Except in its health service, Beveridge observed at the beginning of his 1942 report,

British provision for security, in adequacy of amount and in comprehensiveness, will stand comparison with that of any other country; few countries will stand comparison with Britain.