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THE CONSERVATIVE OPPORTUNITY SOCIETY

The Atlanta airport is a rather overwhelming place if your point of origin or termination is Atlanta; but it is well-designed to enable travelers to change planes efficiently in order to reach other destinations. It is fitting that the Congressman whose district includes the Atlanta airport should be one with a clear vision of where our nation is going, plus a plan to use appropriate and efficient vehicles to reach our destination.

Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) started off a step ahead of his confreres because he was a college professor before he ran for Congress. He understands how the American system operates, and he has innovative and ingenious plans to make it work better.

The way Newt Gingrich sees it, the dominant "liberal welfare state" has weakened our economy with high taxes, large deficits, and an oppressive centralized bureaucracy. Its policies discourage savings, work, and entrepreneurial innovation.

He believes that the liberal welfare state encourages attitudes that keep the poor unproductive and thus shackled in poverty; the ignorant uneducated and thus shackled in illiteracy; and the disadvantaged dependent on government bureaucracy and thus unable to learn the habits and skills of independence.

The American people have been trying to cut loose from the liberal welfare state in every presidential election since 1968. That year, Richard Nixon and George Wallace together received a landslide majority against the then-existing "Great Society" policies of President Lyndon B. Johnson.

In 1972, George McGovern and his extreme liberalism were crushed under one of the biggest presidential landslides in American history. In 1976, the most conservative Democrat in the 20th century (Jimmy Carter) was elected on an anti-Washington platform stressing a return to proven values.

In 1980, the most conservative, anti-liberal welfare state candidate in the 20th century of any party (Ronald Reagan) was elected President in a resounding repudiation of liberalism. Yet, despite these four presidential defeats, our nation's capital remains

"dominated by a liberal welfare state elite composed of lobbyists, intellectuals, members of the news media, and a clear majority in Congress."

These power bases put the President under acute pressure to accommodate the forces of the left. Thus, says Gingrich, "we have a frustrating deadlock in which the nation votes for change, but the establishment fights for the liberal status quo."

Gingrich believes in forcing liberals, especially incumbents, to bear the burden of their past promises, failures, and excesses. He focuses attention on the weaknesses and absurdities of the liberal welfare state in order to "remind people of the future America can't afford."

But Gingrich is not a gloom-and-doom conservative who just likes to groan about how bad things are, and how the nation is headed for perdition on a roller coaster. A problem-solver and a solution-seeker, Gingrich wants to build the "Conservative Opportunity Society" as "a clear-cut alternative to the liberal welfare state."

Gingrich has studied the rise of new governing majorities in American history and has discovered that they have some common elements. First, they focus on the future and figure out how to nudge the present toward it. Second, they focus on the grassroots and are able to change government by constant appeals to the people. Third, they are long-term movements, in which many local leaders rally to fundamental values because of a dedication to principles rather than the authority of any one man.

Gingrich preaches a vision of the future in which "high technology combines with traditional values to provide hope for all." He advocates greater freedom in the market place to invent new ideas and to develop new products and services, while at the same time being willing to use the government, where needed, for large-scale investments such as the transcontinental railroad, the Panama Canal, and the interstate highway system.

Gingrich preaches the right of people of all religions and races to freedom and justice under the law. Gingrich's platform seeks peace through realistic, honest negotiations, but always combined with "peace through strength adequate to intimidate any potential aggressor."

Newt Gingrich's goals for America are ambitious, but they are the stuff of which real progress is made. His "Conservative Opportunity Society" sounds like the kind of government for which the majority voted in the last four presidential elections.