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RELEASE: July 28

NEW YORK BLACKOUT

Many of the postmortems on the Great New York Blackout of 1977 have tried to target Consolidated Edison as the villain and the Federal Government as the hero who can ride to the rescue to shield us from such catastrophes in the future.

Of course there is no evidence that a federally-run electric energy system would be any more efficient or sensitive to consumer comfort than the federally-run post office, but that doesn't stop Senator Lee Metcalf and others who remain convinced that Uncle Sam is omniscient and all-efficient.

The tremendous economic loss from the blackout, however, was not caused by the electric power failure but by the moral failure of New York's teenagers and young adults. The damages from the looting and fires greatly exceed the losses from the lack of electricity.

It is much more important to find out the cause of the criminal looting and arson during the blackout because that is a problem of far more probable reoccurrence than a major power failure.

The 10,000 New York policemen could not stop the orgy of stealing. Firemen could not prevent the 900 fires from being started. One policeman said, "People are sweeping through like locusts down here and wiping out complete thoroughfares." Television cameras filmed hundreds of criminals breaking store windows and carrying out stolen goods. They were so brazen that they had no fear of being photographed and used the TV lights to select their stolen merchandise.

During World War II, most European cities had blackouts every night. There was no looting. In the last year of the War, Japanese cities were regularly blacked out without looting. In the United States, we had four years of brownouts during the War without any looting.

During the 1965 New York City blackout, fewer than 100 persons were arrested.

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This time, 3,000 persons were arrested and most of the arsonists were not caught. As one policeman explained, "in 1965 you were dealing with human beings; now you're dealing with animals."

The blame for the night of robbing, looting and arson should not be placed on those who let the electric lights go out (inadvertently or even negligently), but on those responsible for driving morality out of our public schools.

From the beginning of our country until· about fifteen years ago, American schoolchildren were taught obedience to God's laws as well as the three R's. In the early 1960s, the U.S. Supreme Court suddenly invented a new interpretation of the First Amendment and used it to drive every mention of God or His laws out of the public school system.

The pictures of the New York blackout looters show that they were young enough to have received most of their schooling after the Supreme Court chased God, prayer, Bible reading, and reference to His Commandments out of the schools. These criminal teenagers and young adults have grown up in a permissive school system which failed to teach them what is right and wrong.

Moral education is a basic necessity for civilized living. To abdicate this obligation is to resign our cities to the law of the jungle, and to allow people to be terrorized and property to be destroyed by young savages who feel no guilt when they commit crimes, and whose only remorse is in being caught.

It is even more important that children know and obey the Ten Commandments than the alphabet or the multiplication tables. Children should have instruction and examinations in morality. When judges are questioned by the Senate before appointment to the Federal courts, they should be asked: "Do you agree or disagree with the Warren Court decisions that drove God and His Commandments out of our public schools?"

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