P.S. to the NEWS
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SNOW AND CRIME

A favorite liberal dogma, oft repeated but never proved, is "poverty causes crime." The liberals insist on blaming criminal conduct on the economic and social environment instead of on moral failure.

After the New York City blackout of 1977, the liberals added another dimension to their analysis. Darkness causes crime. As UN Ambassador Andrew Young excused theft: "When the lights go out, everybody steals."

Those who believe in economic determinism and situation ethics now have a new cause of crime: snow. Or, to paraphrase Andrew Young, when too much snow falls, everybody steals.

One would think that, for normal children and teenagers, a big, unexpected snowfall would bring a day of good, clean (no pun intended) fun. What could be more exciting than a snow holiday with plenty of snowballs, snowmen, sledding, and similar delights!

When 20 inches of snow fell on Baltimore last month, looters broke into and vandalized more than a thousand stores. More than 330 looters were arrested and the city had to enforce a strict 7:00 p.m. curfew in order to avoid even more property destruction.

Our nation's capital, which was hit the same day with 19 inches of snow, was spared the same fate chiefly because the farmers (encamped in Washington, D.C. to protest low farm prices) used their tractors to clear streets and parking lots and to pull crowded buses and cars from snow banks. They more than repaid the city for the alleged damage their tractors had done to the Mall.

The snow did not break the store windows or carry off the merchandise. It was people -- mostly young people whose years in school came after the U.S. Supreme Court banished prayers and moral training from public schools. Probably nobody ever taught them that it is morally and legally wrong to take property that belongs to someone else.

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Society is necessary for human survival. Mutual consent and consensus on a system of thought and code of conduct are necessary to keep conflict to a manageable level and to develop a legal system which promotes the efficient functioning of a sophisticated society.

Force, represented by the police, can only protect us from a tiny percentage of criminals. In order for a society to function effectively, the overwhelming majority of its members must agree on fundamental rules of conduct. Among these rules, in the American system, is a respect for private property.

Justice John M. Harlan, in the U.S. Supreme Court case of Boddie v. Connecticut, wrote in 1971: "Perhaps no characteristic of an organized and cohesive society is more fundamental than its erection and enforcement of a system of rules defining the various rights and duties of its members, enabling them to govern their affairs and definitely settle their differences in an orderly, predictable manner. ... It is this injection of the rule of law that allows society to reap the benefits of rejecting what political theorists call the 'state of nature.'"

Our nation has developed one of the world's finest legal systems for the "enforcement of a system of rules." Its prerequisite, however, the "erection ... of a system of rules," is crumbling because it is not being effectively transmitted to the next generation in the schools. If the schools do not teach that it is wrong to steal and destroy other people's property, then the legal system will not be able to fulfill its part of the task.

The principal goal of the National Education Association this year is to persuade Congress to create a federal Department of Education. The NEA wants this new Department because it will channel more money into schools. The Department would be expected to open its doors with 16,000 employees and a $15 billion a year budget.

What our educational system needs today is more moral training, not more money. Unless a code of moral conduct is taught in the schools, we will lose the benefits of civilization and sink to that unenviable condition called "the state of nature" where everybody steals whatever he can get away with.

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