PS for 5/31/90

Conservatism is Alive and Innovative

Some reporters have been gleefully writing about what they call the coming conservative crack-up because, with the falling apart of Eastern Europe, conservatives have allegedly lost Communism as their number-one issue. This is just an example of the liberals' seeking pie in the sky.

It's not conservatives who have an identity crisis but liberals. Liberalism is a proven failure, and government as an institution to solve our problems and spend our money has no credibility any more.

The Heritage Foundation recently asked 39 conservative leaders to address the question: What should be the most important priorities for the conservative movement in the 1990s? Their answers reveal so many innovative approaches to current problems that it is clear that conservatives are very much alive and still young in heart.

Senator Phil Gramm wants to promote an American perestroika. The lessons from the collapse of Communism, he says, reaffirm the American ideology that only individual freedom can produce extraordinary results (i.e., prosperity) from ordinary people. Therefore, we must press ahead with a cutback of government and give the coming "peace dividend" back to the American people in tax cuts.

Congressman Dick Armey present the answer for the problem of rising health care costs: bring the free market to health care be transferring tax deductions for medical expenses from employers to individuals. This is the only way to build in incentives to keep costs down.

Thomas J. Bray, editorial page editor of the *Detroit News*, calls for a flat income tax rate of 15 percent. He points out that the several recent income tax "reforms" have only made the code more complex, and a flat rate is the best route to equity.

Tom Bethell, Washington editor of *The American Spectator*, urges us to discard our World War II weapons and move the military into the era of modern technology by deploying SDI. With nuclear and rocket technology proliferating to so many countries, our strategic defense should be deployed as soon as possible regardless of whether the Kremlin approves.

Donald J. Devine, former director of the Office for Personnel Management, expresses a popular demand: that we reform Congress to become a citizen-legislature instead of a Washington bureaucracy with lifetime tenure, high salaries, and exorbitant pensions. He calls on us to restrict the terms members may serve, limit the length of sessions, require Congressional redistricting to follow local geographic boundaries, and force a Congressional election before any pay raise can go into effect.

Pete du Pont, former Delaware Governor, proposes a tough and specific anti-drug agenda: employers should test for drug use on every job; no driver's licenses, student loans or varsity sports for first-time drug users; no government contracts for firms without drug-testing programs; and no federal funds for colleges without drug-free campus programs for students and faculty.

Governor Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, calls on us to implement and utilize Supreme Court decision that very few Americans know about. The *Beck* decision allows union members to demand a refund for all their union dues used for politics. Making this right a reality would reduce money available to leftwing causes by some $3 billion a year.

Karl Zinsmeister, the well-known writer on social issues, wants the conservative movement to achieve cultural as well as political influence in the coming decade. He makes the case that it's just as important to have conservative university presidents, novelists, and TV sitcom writers as Congressmen. He reminds us that the core of conservatism is the idea that the world ought to be ruled by the individual actions of free people rather than by collective design.

David Boaz, president of the Cato Institute, calls for us to privatize education as the only way to reform stagnant education monopoly. He says this is not a "religious right" issue; it is an issue of freedom and diversity, of saving the underclass, and of international competitiveness.

Russell Kirk, author of *The Conservative Mind*, urges that our foreign policy be based on American interests and that we let foreign countries handle their own domestic concerns, NOT try to buy allies or seek an American Empire to succeed the Soviet Empire.

This is only a sampling of the splendid suggestions listed in the Heritage Foundation compilation. For the most part, these conservative leaders restrained themselves from the temptation to think that they might embark on a new spending

program initiated and controlled by conservatives, because that is the one thing that would really bring about the crack-up of the conservative movement.