

INSIGHTS

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"The advocates of a great principle should know no thought of compromise. They should proclaim it in its fullness, and point to its complete attainment as their goal." Henry George, *Protection and Free Trade*, 1885

GEORGE W.'S FIRST MONTHS A MIXED BAG OF PROGRESS AND REGRESSION

The bombing of Iraq's long range air defenses put a rest to fears that George W. would adopt an isolationist foreign affairs policy, based on "restraint." This project was a pleasant surprise to realistic observers who remembered the disastrous pullout of American forces at the end of the Gulf War one day from complete victory and consequent termination of Saddam Hussein's murderous, tyrannical reign. George W.'s father, Dick Cheney, and Clayton Powell were collectively responsible for the disastrous decision to withdraw, figuring that Saddam Hussein's domestic enemies would soon dispose of him on their own if the allied troops pulled out.

This did not stop television's Bob Novak from complaining that we should have "sat down and talked to Saddam Hussein" before taking any action. We have talked and talked and talked to Saddam Hussein trying to convince him to comply with the peace treaty he entered into, without any success. This reminds us of Neville Chamberlain's announcement, after returning from Munich in 1938, that he sat down and talked to Adolph Hitler and we would have "peace in our time."

George W.'s domestic policy is less encouraging. Not a single major cut in our prolific federal spending has been proposed by George W.'s Republicans or the loyal Democratic opposition. Both parties agree on huge subsidies for education without inquiry as to whether schools should be financed by Federal income taxes at all. Today my local newspaper's classified ads include references to "walking distance to schools," "excellent schools," etc. Evidently there are leaks in state school budgets. George W. proposes that if local schools do not meet Federal standards, parents should be given vouchers to allow them to enroll their children in private schools of their choosing.

The political maneuvering and bureaucratic confusion involved in such a program are obvious. The religious schools which would benefit the most from this program of doubtful constitutionality would be almost impossible to supervise.

Despite George W.'s campaign promises to cut Federal spending, it is highly questionable whether the administration will be able to withstand the demands of local special interests, particularly after he received so much in the way of campaign contributions from powerful groups who expect compensation. In our much cited *Triumph of Politics*, written by Reagan's Director of Management and Budget, David Stockman, he described the successful counterattack made by Republican congressmen when he suggested moderate cuts in the Federal budget. Stockman wrote: "The prospect of these cuts gave them the heebie-jeebies. Water projects would run dry. Amtrak would run out of diesel fuel. The Bureau of Land Management would have to increase cattle-grazing fees. Postal subsidies for rural newspapers would have to be cut. Local voters would have to pay for their own sewer treatment plants. Social workers would get laid off. Small businessmen would have to go to the bank rather than the SBA to get a loan and pay the market rate. Some of the 80 percent of U.S. counties declared "depressed areas" by EDA wouldn't get the money they needed to lure factories away from other depressed counties. People would have to pay a nickel more to ride local mass transit systems. These were but a smattering of the unspeakable horrors that would result from a 12 percent across the board appropriations cut." We doubt that George W will be able to withstand those same onslaughts against fiscal sanity that Ronald Reagan was unable to resist.