

## Ratcheting regulations into place Adding onto flawed policies threatens our freedom



MATT DICKERSON  
Columnist

Question: which is worse, the right or the left? Answer: whichever is in power. Arthur Schlesinger was wrong: American government does not in fact swing back and forth between left and right, like a pendulum about some fabled "vital center." The more apt mechanical metaphor, the ratchet, better describes the incorporation of the worst elements of the left and right into our social institutions. Take Democrats and Republicans, roughly representing liberals and conservatives respectively, and compare them on some critical issue, say drug prohibition.

tory — a service draft — we might have a real monster on our hands in ten or twenty years.

Speaking of monsters, Clinton's national health care plan is presently thumping up the stairway. Not only is the Clinton administration's "managed competition" oxymoronic balderdash that recoils from addressing the problems in the health care system — namely massive government subsidies — but it is a threat to our freedom. It is incredible that the government can foist this plan upon us without a constitutional fight.

Recall how another wonderful social insurance program, Social Security, was used to justify first mandatory seat belt laws and then mandatory motorcycle helmet laws, both victimless "crimes" by any stretch. Because some injuries attributable to not wearing safety equipment cost the Social Security program, Social Security payers demanded the right to regulate the behavior of those refusing to wear safety equipment. This was one of the leading arguments for the helmet law.

Likewise, why should you have to subsidize the costly, unhealthy behavior of smokers or heavy drinkers? You should not; smokers should pay for their behavior. That is why, even under the current perverse health care system we now have, being a smoker jacks up the costs of life or health insurance. Under the national health care plan concocted under czarina Hillary Rodham Clinton, it isn't "fair" for health care to cost some people more than others. In the case of a heavy smoker, paying the same costs for unhealthy behavior represents a subsidy of that behavior. But this isn't fair either, and there will be a hue and cry to regulate smoking and the like, especially when some 25 percent of health care costs are attributable to behavioral choices.

Some 50 years ago, economist Ludwig von Mises observed that "Princes, governors and generals are never spontaneously liberal. They become liberal only when forced by the citizens." What amazes one is the American facility to take Clinton's health care program, among other things, lying on their backs. Perhaps Americans need a backbone transplant more than Clinton does.

Nietzsche wrote of the "will to power." What characterizes Americans more than the "will to vege"? We will almost certainly die under some version Clinton's health care plan because of the ratchet like nature of government programs. Once enacted, the program will almost certainly outlive us, with all of its flaws. You can almost hear the ratchet clicking into place.

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The conservative fires bullets into the problem, jailing happenstance survivors. The liberal approach is more refined and sterile, genuflecting before "treatment." As psychiatrist Thomas Szasz put it, "Giving oneself addictive drugs is a crime. Accepting addictive drugs from a 'maintenance program' is a treatment." The teary-eyed liberal therapist caresses his victims.

These admittedly simplified approaches to the drug "problem" represent the the ratchet at work, as each party, upon coming to power, puts its own spin on policy, not so much by revoking the harmful policies of predecessors as juryrigging its own policies onto the existing edifice.

The Clinton administration looks as if it might give the ratchet a couple of turns:

I refer to Clinton's national service program and national health care plan, with the emphasis on "national." National service appears innocuous enough — especially given its small beginnings. But what constitutes national service? Does cleaning up my neighborhood constitute national service? Does passing out pamphlets for the Ku Klux Klan constitute national service? Obviously, what constitutes a service will be determined by whatever bureau has jurisdiction of the national service program.

Because the national service program would subsidize labor resources; there will be a struggle for those labor resources. Labor resources would be directed by politically astute operatives in much the same way the politically astute Robert Byrd, the West Virginia Senator and undisputed king of pork, directs tax revenues to his state.

Given the fact that a number of the people working on the Clinton service program would like to make it manda-



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## EDITORIAL Splitting logs Timber plan benefits both sides

In March, President Clinton predicted that his timber plan would "probably make everybody mad." Indeed Clinton was right; after he and his staff unveiled the plan on Thursday, both the loggers and the environmentalists quickly lashed out with criticism.

environmentalists are ensuring the protection of endangered species.

This is split right down the middle of the argument and is a positive step toward resolution of the conflict.

If people from both sides of the issue are mad at the Clinton administration, then the president, Vice President Gore and several cabinet members probably did something right.

On the economic side of the issue, the plan asks Congress to assist the Pacific Northwest region with \$1.2 billion over the next five years.

This money would be used to encourage the development of other industries already located in the region. For example, job training and small business grants would be funded with the money.

Clinton's plan is a good example of how a median can be found on an issue with two very separate sides that possess two very different needs.

In addition, Clinton's plan urges Congress to promote domestic milling of timber by eliminating tax subsidies on companies that export raw logs.

On the environmental side, the plan allows for limited logging of some federally protected lands.

Again, this is a gain for both sides of the fight. The environmentalists get protected lands and the region stands to gain exactly what it wants — money.

However, logging on these lands is dependent on the impact it would have on wildlife in that specific area. For example, buffer zones would be established around certain streams that are vital to the survival of certain species of fish.

Spokespersons for the loggers have said time and time again that they are not pro-tree cutting, they are pro-economy. If that is the case, then money is the root of the problem and emphasis should be placed upon it.

As far as the spotted owl is concerned, there are to be designated areas where timber cutting is only allowed for dead or sick growth, and the thinning of live growth.

Clinton's plan is good example of how an answer to a heated debate can be found.

For loggers and environmentalists alike, this is a drastic cut from initial requests to either open or close all lands from logging.

Though on the surface neither side appears to be excited by Clinton's plan, they need to realize that neither side can get 100 percent of what they ask for.

Neither side should view this as capitulation. The loggers are gaining the use of some lands and the

## Diversity appears in any A&M neighborhood — if you look

Although Texas A&M is often referred to as a small city, I have always taken the simile a step further. Even as a freshman, the campus seemed clearly divided into "neighborhoods" to me.



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Columnist

on the north side of "town" appeared to be enjoying one long, non-stop dorm party the entire year. Davis-Gary — a male dorm at the time — was always chock full of drunks, creative vandals, and drop-out cadets. They were constantly in trouble with the university and frequently in the news. It was so unfair. Girls' dorms up north had their own distinct personalities as well, particularly those with balconies. They appeared to promote wildness in women. Balconies facilitate dumping water and hurling blunt objects at would-be party raiders (I still have a knot on my head).

As a member of the Corps, my subdivision was extremely defined — either as an overtly oppressive prison compound (with time off for class) or a glorious kingdom of earned power and reverence, depending on my rank at the time. I always considered the adjoining Commons to be sort of a Miami-esque retirement community for college students. I could just picture them playing canasta on the patio, bitching about arthritis and having to live on the same street as the Quad and those nutty CTS. However, friends of mine residing

Cain Hall on the other hand, is something of a live-in country club. If it's not on the A&M guided tour, it certainly should be. Large paintings, nice furniture and a fireplace in the living room reiterate the notion that these residents are the university's bread and butter (rumor has it the butlers and valets hide when visitors are around). I find it difficult to begrudge those guys such luxuries however, as I've never risked my knees or pulled a hamstring for Aggie-land. Although I did untie a hamstring for Easter dinner once.

Awareness of conduct-specific segregation doesn't just end with student residences though; our burg breeds scholastic separatism also. I realize, of course, that most students are concentrating on academic concerns while cruising campus between classes, but have you ever noticed that semester after semester you walk the same paths — that classes tend to be in the same buildings — in the same departmental districts? After five years as an undergraduate, the one class I had on the west side was in a building I never knew existed. "How recently was construction completed on this place?" I asked my professor, assuming it must have been within the last month. "1978 I think," he said.

My point is that we rarely — if ever — have the opportunity or desire to wander outside of our academic arena and experience the other "cultures" on campus. Just the other day I entered one of the buildings in the techno-engineering sector (home of x-acto knives, autocad, calculators and all that other math stuff), and being a liberal arts type, I felt like a tourist in another

country. Not just because of a large number of non-native students, but I was also aware of a scarcity of male purses, male pony-tails, male earrings, and sadly, non-males. The architecture building was even more interesting, displaying fascinating drawings, intricate models and planar sculptures. As long as you're not into architecture, every project looks like a masterpiece. Take your lunch sometime.

Inter-departmental vacations aren't limited to right-brained students only however; I encourage trips for "foreigners" over to Liberal Arts Land as well. After all, the zoo in San Antonio is so very far away. Speaking of zoos, how many of you in Elementary Education have actually stuck your entire arm up a cow's tail-end and tickled it's tonsils? Pack a bag, grab some sunscreen and slide film, and head on over across the tracks to Animal Science World. Uh ... don't take your lunch this time.

Even with many on-campus Spring Break possibilities, Texas A&M is always taking criticism for not being multicultural or diverse enough, even from

me. And that may well be true, depending upon who defines "enough." But with campus housing paralleling that of a small city, academics ranging from understanding Descartes to advertising a golf cart, and students from many countries of the world, I'd say that a great deal of diversity and multiculturalism is right in front of our eyes. Just take off your sunglasses.

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