

The Age of Entitlement – America Since the Sixties

Christopher Caldwell

This series of quotes from the first chapter of the book gives its essence.

"Civil rights ideology, especially when hardened into a body of legislation, became, most unexpectedly, the model for an entirely new system of constantly churning political reform. Definitions of what was required in the name of justice and humanity broadened. Racial integration turned into the all embracing ideology of diversity."

"Reforms of the sixties, however, even the ones Americans love best, came to draw part of their national identity from, came with costs that proved staggeringly high – in money, freedom, rights, and social stability."

"The changes of the 1960s, with civil rights at their core, were not just a major new element in the Constitution. They were a rival Constitution, with which the original one was frequently incompatible – and the incompatibility would worsen as a civil rights regime was built out."

"... Disagreement over which of the two Constitution shall prevail: the de jure Constitution of 1788, with all the traditional forms of jurisprudential legitimacy and centuries of American culture behind it; or the de facto Constitution of 1964, which lacks this traditional kind of legitimacy but commands a near unanimous endorsement of judicial elites and civic educators and the passionate allegiance of those who received it as a liberation. The increasing necessity that citizens choose between these two orders, and the poisonous conflict into which it ultimately drove the country, is what this book describes."

"What made the modern modern framers of civil rights different from the nineteenth century ones was a conception of power and their genius for wielding it. They succeeded where their forebears had failed because they were confident in resorting to coercion, indifferent to imposing financial burdens on future generations, and willing to put existing constitutional freedoms at risk in order to secure new ones."

"To set oneself against civil rights was to set oneself against the whole moral thrust of American government."

The "heart of the matter" with segregation was not the quality, but the conflicts it created with the implicit First Amendment right of freedom of association. These conflicts were not easily solved, Wechsler showed: if the freedom of association is denied by segregation, integration forces in association upon those for whom it is unpleasant or repugnant... Given a situation where the state must practically choose between denying the association to those individuals who wish it or imposing it on those who would avoid it. Is there a basis in neutral principles for holding that the Constitution demands that the claims for association should prevail? "

"... Desegregation implied a revocation of the old freedom of association altogether."

It was hard to dissent. "I am old-fashioned enough to read the development, not as political pressure on the court, which then as a political institution responded, but rather as a strategy to trap democracy in its own decencies." In his own esoteric way, Kalven invited us to view the civil rights revolution as a potential constitutional catastrophe. "In what healthy society and what healthy society is an "almost military assault on the Constitution" worthy of praise?"

It is important what this book is not. It does not lay blame for the changes in American society on any particular group, but rather explain some as a natural outworking of evolutionary forces and the differences of interest inherent in a multicultural society. There is no mention of cultural Marxism, the Frankfurt School or any of that.

It does not delve into the natural inequalities among the different populations in the multicultural society. It is not another Bell Curve. It turns out that Charles Murray has done that in his book released the same week, [[ASIN: B07Y8K5FX8 Human Diversity: The Biology of Gender, Race, and Class]].

It observes that the black civil rights movement developed the tools for enforcing diversity. Other racial minorities, feminists, gays and transsexuals picked up quickly on what had worked. In privileging everybody else, the elites automatically disadvantaged white people.

The book does not offer any prescription. It's final paragraph describes the catcalls and mockery that ensued when Ann Coulter said in 2015 that the Republican nominee for 2016 would be none of the above. It would be a real estate developer from New York.