

ners. I believe that the conduct of government is not just devoid of common sense; it is too frequently immoral; it is too frequently destructive to the very society it is supposed to strengthen.

Another moral question for the government: health care. Now, you say, either people are sick or they are not sick, what does morality have to do with it? Well, what I'm talking about is behavior. For example, I've slimmed down quite a bit in recent months. It had reached the point that my wife finally said to me, "Ed, you should get in shape." I said, "Round is a shape." But I then made a behavioral choice to change my dietary habits and get on that instrument of modern torture known as the treadmill.

Dr. Kenneth Prager, a pulmonary physician at the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York, has written recently on the topic of a mother's moral behavior as it affects the infant mortality rate. He says that the further you get from the ivory towers the more you realize that quality and access of medical care matter less to health than does individual behavior. He draws upon a study reported in the recent issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that found that between 1978 and 1985 the infants of immigrant women in California had significantly lower mortality rates than did those of nonimmigrant women. The immigrants, however, had higher indexes of poverty, unemployment, welfare dependency, and late prenatal care than did their American counterparts.

Why then did the American mothers have a higher infant mortality rate? Because the American mothers had more sexually transmitted disease and more alcohol and drug abuse than did the foreign-born mothers. The authors of the study found that the infants were harmed more by the unhealthy *behavior* of the American mothers than by the poverty and late prenatal care of the immigrant women.

Ladies and gentlemen, we cannot paper over immoral behavior with federal dollars. We cannot spend our way to healthy lives, educational excellence, equal opportunity, stable families, economic prosperity, or any other worthy goals of our society. Yet this has been the basis of liberal government for the past 30 years.

Personal Responsibility versus Government Responsibility

Don Eberly, who has edited a book called, *Building a Community of Citizens*, makes a very interesting point. He says that the mistake of the Democratic majority in the Congress was believing that it could create the good society by merely building government up. He says the danger for the current Republican majority may be in believing it can recreate the good society by merely tearing government down. Now I guarantee you political reality and the special interests will prevent that. But his main point is, "If we are to recover as a society, the 21st Century will have to recover a vision of man bearing inherent moral value and moral agency."

I believe this in part depends on government allowing—which in some situations means forcing—people to redevelop a sense of personal responsibility for their own behavior.

Dennis Prager, the talk show host, recently gave a lecture at Heritage on personal responsibility and told a revealing story about his son. When the boy was two years old, a five-year-old bully walked over and threw him on the ground. The bully's mother frantically ran over to her son, held him and said, "What's troubling you, darling?"

Prager said, "I know nothing about this woman, but of one thing I'm certain—that she attended graduate school. I am certain of this because hers was a learned response. Most human beings would have yelled at their child 'What are you doing?' and probably would

have punished the child. You need many years of an American liberal arts education to learn the proper response to a bully is to ask the bully what is troubling him."

Ladies and gentlemen, the way our government responds to social problems is a learned response based on liberal theories totally unconnected to common sense and traditional morality. Morality becomes based on vague feelings and compassions rather than on standards of behavior. This is why the role of victim has reached cult status in our country.

Just last month in the Washington area a man was released from prison. Seventeen years ago when he was 15, he killed two police officers. He became a local cause célèbre and a political symbol. The liberal establishment in effect put their arms around him and said, "What's troubling you, darling?" At his release, although fortunately expressing his remorse to the families of the slain officers, he went on to say in the perfect diction of victimology, "Yes, I killed, but I have also been killed within."

The national press, the regulatory bureaucracy, and the congressional apologists for the special interests have furthered such nonsense. Every special interest group in the capital has its own special pain or burden. Criminals are the victims of the socio-economic-legal system. Unwed teenage mothers are the victim of sexual ignorance or a lack of condoms. Small farmers are the victims of the large agribusinesses that happen to provide us with the most inexpensive food prices in the world. Consumers who scald themselves on hot coffee or choke on french fries are the victims of McDonald's cruel negligence.

The victims of choice in recent weeks have been Big Bird and Barney, behind whom the public broadcasting welfare artists are hiding. Big Bird and Barney are in danger of having their free ride derailed by that mean Republican Congress. Unfortunately it's hard to be a victim when you've generated billions of dollars in private profits and your nest has been well-feathered at the taxpayer's expense.

About the only group left that hasn't reached victimhood status is the white male, and he may be next. The January 13 edition of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* has an article entitled, "Coping with the Alienation of White Male Students." The female author writes, "Despite limited resources, colleges...have a responsibility to determine whether white men, like women and members of minority groups, require special support services." She also recommends symposia, lectures, and discussions addressing the white-male experience and grievance procedures for white men who complain about sexual harassment or racial discrimination. Now I would bet, if you asked the average white, male college student what kind of special support services he desired, he would reply, "A six-pack."

An appropriate response.

The tragedy of Washington turning everyone into victims is that it demeans those who truly do suffer. It trivializes genuine human need and I believe in the long run destroys compassion for our fellow man. It distracts government from those areas where needs are real. All this to me is immoral.

Morality's New Respectability

Why am I optimistic? Because, I am delighted to say, morality is gaining a new respectability in our nation's capital. I'm talking about the growing recognition by opinion leaders in the Congress and the press that government programs should require certain standards of moral behavior from those who benefit. This is a concept in opposition to the prevailing operating principle known as entitlement. And I predict most entitlements eventually will go the way of a previous entitlement—the divine right of kings.

I can also see a growing recognition in Washington that the human condition is influenced by elements beyond the flow of tax dollars. Columnist William Raspberry even wrote last month that he was increasingly struck by the discovery that the most successful social programs are those that are driven—even if only tacitly—by moral or religious values.

I don't think that surprises Father Sirico.

But these attitudes are getting much more attention and press coverage than they did just one year ago. In the past, even questioning the moral basis of welfare entitlements or those racial entitlements known as affirmative action and minority set-asides would have been deemed right wing heresy or worse. But things are being discussed in the papers, on the airwaves, and in the hearing rooms of the Capitol that were politically taboo only a few years ago. Today, the press can ignore conservative, moral arguments only at the risk of being journalistically inept.

If you don't mind my saying so, a lot of the credit should go to Heritage scholars like Robert Rector, whose work has done much to advance the current welfare debate. Credit should go to organizations like the Acton Institute that have sprung up to promote the free exchange of ideas. Credit, of course, must be given to a new majority in the Congress that is not afraid to reexamine the very fundamentals of the way government operates. And needless to say, credit must be given to the frustrated American people who voted for change last November.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am truly optimistic.

In the 18th century, we experienced a religious revival in the colonies known as the Great Awakening. It was a reaction against the secularization of society. I am not here to report that Washington is experiencing a Great Awakening, but I do believe an awakening *is* underway inside the Beltway. This awakening also is a reaction against the secularization of society in that it focuses on the abandonment of moral standards by its institutions and its people. This is a debate that can change the current moral premises of government itself. It is a debate that can bring the actions of the government back into line with the values of the American people.

Conclusion

I want to close by quoting one of the architects of the Great Society, John Gardner, who was LBJ's Secretary of what was then called the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. I want to quote him because this time I agree with what he says. He wrote, "A nation is never finished. You can't build it and leave it standing as the pharaohs did the pyramids. It has to be recreated for each new generation."

I believe we *can* recreate our nation for each generation so that we can meet the changing world. But we must remain grounded in our founding values and in their abiding morality. That is what the American people demanded last November. That is the meaning of the great moral debate currently raging in Washington.

And so, as someone who spends his life *inside* the Beltway toiling for a return to conservative values, I say thank you to all of you *outside* the Beltway who have made this debate possible.