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Subject: "Can America Survive Its Large Cities?"

"Can America Survive Its Large Cities?"

By Ron Ewart, *President*

National Association of Rural Landowners

and nationally recognized author on freedom and property rights issues.

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"When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become as corrupt as Europe." *Thomas Jefferson*

Many of Thomas Jefferson's quotes were prophetic in

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nature. Not because he could foretell the future, but because he could read the past very well. It seems that man is doomed to continuously repeat history, with pretty much the same results each time. Man is done in by his own habitual nature and the lack of sufficient long-term memory. He forgets easily. So much of what has happened to America today, was predicted very early on in its history, largely because of man's "herd" instinct. Someone whistles and the herd comes a runnin', like Lemmings over a cliff.

And so it was when the industrial revolution and assembly-line manufacturing came along. Early America was predominantly an agricultural nation, in the years leading up to the industrial revolution. An agricultural existence was subsistence on its raw edges for small farms all across the land. Thus, with the promise of steady wages in manufacturing, out of the weather, the people came off the farms in droves and swept into the ever-growing cities for a better life, or so they thought.

Manufacturers built factories in large cities for access to cheap and abundant labor. In the early days of the industrial revolution, the employers egregiously exploited that labor. From that exploitation came the unions and the adversarial relationship between employer and employee was born on a grand scale. Both employers and employees became powerful. Each used the government, local, state or federal, to gain the upper hand and the upper hand shifted back and forth on the winds of politics.

Big city governments got into the act in a big way, to answer the dependency of the big-city residents. They had to keep the rising poor from rioting, so they increased welfare handouts to the poor and un-employed, to keep them happy. Big-city budgets started to rapidly burgeon in the social sector. Police, fire and other essential government duties started to take a back seat to social promises. With the social burden came government employees to administer to that burden. With higher densities came more laws and with more laws came more enforcement and with more enforcement came more government employees. Government employees organized unions and started demanding greater wages and better benefits. With

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higher wages and better benefits, city tax revenue was burdened even more. Taxes were raised on everyone else to pay for the social welfare, higher government wages and better benefits. Government and unions got even stronger. Now we have dependent, dumbed-down poor and chronically un-employed, fully institutionalized in our big cities and a heavy, ever-growing tax burden to fund it all.

Unfortunately, all the farmer could see when he left the farm in the hopes of a more rewarding life, was a job that lasted in perpetuity. Oh, but the jobs didn't last forever, did they? In the fluid market place, fortunes were made and lost on the whim of the consumer, or a new invention. Overnight, manufacturing plants closed down when their product or products would no longer sell, or they invested too heavily into expansion by taking on more debt and the debt forced them into bankruptcy because income from the new market didn't amortize the debt. New inventions could wipe out an existing product, virtually in a heart beat. Thousands joined the ranks of the un-employed.

But what happened to the employee when his manufacturing plant closed down? He had to look for another job, along with the other people who were out of a job, in order to pay for his costs of living in the big city. Competition to find new jobs was fierce. And the costs to live in the big city could be relatively high, as compared to the sparse life on the farm. However, on the farm, they could grow things and at least eat. In the big city, the un-employed employee had no other choice but to turn to the government or charitable organizations for help. Thus, government welfare and slums were born. This trapped, big city resident now became hopelessly dependent on government. He could no longer be self-sufficient, if there was no job to be had. To reduce his living costs he was forced to live in crowded conditions (*slums*) he would have never considered when living on the farm.

The story doesn't end there. In steps the government again with more socially-driven policies that destroy American jobs. In order to be "fair" to the poorer nations, the Federal Government passed the North American Free Trade Agreement (*NAFTA*) and the Canadian

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Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs went off shore. American factories were idled and decaying. We were no longer a net producer and manufacturer of goods, we instead became a net consumer of goods. Slum living and welfare rose accordingly, into the trillions of taxpayer dollars, over several decades. Even with Johnson's War on Poverty, poverty became institutionalized because of the dependency of big-city residents. Today, over 43 million people subsist on food stamps.

Oh, but there is more to this story that will only make the saga of failing big cities even worse. The environmental movement has raised its ugly head and has instituted a policy into government urban planning, to drive more and more people into big cities in order to "protect" the rural environment. But is protection of the environment the only reason that government wants to force more people into big cities? Hardly! Anyone, with even the slightest knowledge of human behavior, will tell you that people in high-dense urban settings are much easier to control than those independent, self-reliant radicals who inhabit the rural lands. Big cities control the enforcement of laws with an armed police force and further control the land (*planning*), transportation, the water and the energy. The big-city resident is totally dependent on the big-city government to provide and plan for these keepers of the peace and the absolute necessities of life. Rural residents, on the other hand, can grow their own food, provide their own water and live with or without energy. Rural folk think and act as independent individuals, not as sheep in a herd, like those in big cities.

Big cities are not only very expensive to preserve and maintain, they are dangerous as well. In an article from July 2008 we wrote: "***Big cities are also dangerous places to be in times of war and natural disasters. Earthquakes, fires, floods and rapidly-spreading diseases find ready victims in big cities, that can produce large loss of life. Most of the deaths occurring from the Black Plague, during the era of the Dark Ages, occurred in the cities where the concentrated garbage attracted the rats that carried the fleas that carried the disease. During war, opposing enemies don't bomb the countryside, they bomb big cities where the manufacturing plants build the machines and weapons of war and where large populations of men, women and children can be killed***

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to bring the enemy to its knees. Need we mention Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Terrorists don't attack farms in rural America. They attack high-dense urban populations in big cities for the greatest possible loss of life and thus the greatest fear and intimidation on that population."

With the growth of big cities came a major shift in political ideologies as well. The dependent and trapped big-city resident voted for those politicians that provided the handouts they needed to survive in the ever-shifting quicksand of the big cities. Since Democrats learned early on they could buy votes with money from the public treasury, big-city Democrats grew like a cancer. Today, in the realm of power politics, big-city voters have a decided electoral advantage and their utter dependency overshadows their desire to be a free, or to join in and be a part of a Constitutional Republic. As long as they are fat, dumb and happy, they will not rattle the status quo, nor bite the hand that feeds them.

The cost to maintain big cities is so overwhelming, it is driving some of the more densely populated states into insolvency. Welfare, increasing regulations and union wage and pension demands drive these costs up, virtually by the day. Un-funded liabilities grow into the billions and even the trillions of dollars. Everyone with any intellect at all knows these costs are in fact, un-sustainable and will send the entire country into national bankruptcy in less than a decade.

The only solution to avoid national bankruptcy will be gut wrenching and painful. We either institute massive cuts in government spending and break the back of the government employee union strangle hold, or we wait until it all collapses at our feet. One other way is to let the big cities and those states that support big cities, fall into bankruptcy and let the chips fall where they may. However, if the FEDS step in and bail out the failing states and the big cities in those states, the condition that will eventually cause bankruptcy will just be propped up for short time, before the local city and state bankruptcies, precipitate a national domino collapse.

Unfortunately, making the hard decisions to scale back government programs and spending, by politicians whose political survival depends on the masses being fat, dumb and happy, is highly unlikely

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anytime soon. America will most probably go the way of a Europe that is now entering the forced "no mans land" of austerity because government ran out of other people's money to re-distribute and the accompanying riots and civil instability that go along with that austerity. Jefferson's prophecy about big cities will have come to pass in America and history will have repeated itself yet once again.

"It appears that after 234 years and the millions of men and women who were maimed or gave their lives to defend our freedom, we successfully became independent from a foreign power, England, only to become helplessly dependent on our own government. Ron Ewart

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