

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

tively alter results: Sixty-nine percent of Americans surveyed in the spring of 1976 said that the United States should “not forbid” antidemocratic speeches, while only 46 percent said the U.S. should “allow” them. The uncertainty of polling data, in Mueller’s opinion, implies that specific questions about tolerance cannot be extrapolated to determine general attitudes toward free speech and other civil liberties.

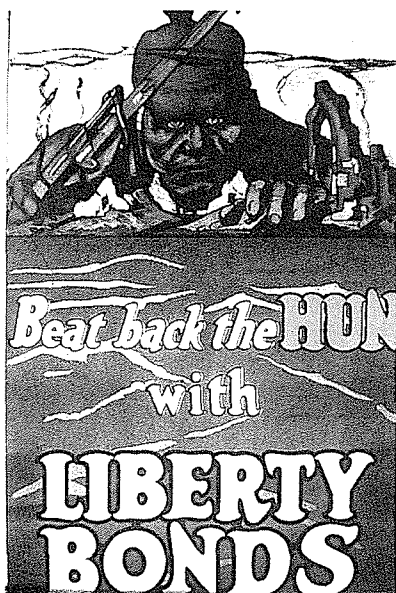
*The Quest for
Community*

“The Present Age and the State of Community”
by Robert Nisbet, in *Chronicles* (June 1988),
Rockford Institute, 934 North Main St., Rock-
ford, Ill. 61103.

When did the federal government begin to be the center of American life? The answer, says Nisbet, an emeritus professor at Columbia University: World War I. While the *economic* effects of the war were small in the United States, the resulting *intellectual* changes were vast.

Before 1917, the United States had the “most decentralized” government in the West. But upon America’s entry into the conflict, President Woodrow Wilson swiftly transformed the nation into “a highly centralized, collectivized war state.” Railroads, shipping lines, and munitions factories were nationalized; other corporations were severely regulated. Government propaganda was far more intense than in World War II: Seventy-five thousand “Four-Minute Men” were authorized to interrupt any gathering to speak for four minutes on the government’s war aims, and “Neighborhood Watchers” scoured the streets searching for German subversives.

Congress dismantled much of the “war state” in 1919. But American



*During World War I, gov-
ernment posters and slogans
urged Americans to make
the “War to End All Wars”
the focus of their activities.
Thrift was encouraged;
homemakers, for example,
saved the tinfoil from chew-
ing-gum wrappers to aid the
U.S. war effort.*

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

intellectuals, stirred by the Wilsonian moral crusade to "make the world safe for democracy," sought new domestic campaigns. Led by philosopher John Dewey, *New Republic* editor Herbert Croly, and *The Nation's* Oswald Garrison Villard, these thinkers each began what Dewey called a "search for the Great Community." If America could unite in war, they argued, why could it not become a *national* community in an era of peace?

The efforts of 1920s intellectuals and novelists dovetailed. While intellectuals invoked the vision of national unity, novelists (e.g., John Dos Passos and Sinclair Lewis) produced works depicting small towns as suffocating and large cities as soul-destroying. But if Americans were, like Lewis's George Babbitt, doomed by their families or neighborhoods to a meaningless life, intellectuals saw hope in "the Great Community" headed by the national government.

The ideas of 1920s pundits became the philosophy of Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Depression. Roosevelt revived Wilson's regulatory agencies, and also echoed his crusading spirit, as New Deal parades and posters repeatedly promised that victory in the war against want was imminent. He also called on the people to look beyond archaic local concerns: "We have been extending to our national life," he once noted, "the old principles of the local community."

Although many New Deal concepts have fallen into disfavor, the idea of national community remains potent: Nisbet suggests that New York governor Mario Cuomo's call at the 1984 Democratic National Convention for America to be a "national family" swiftly resulted in his becoming "a presidential candidate in all but declaration."

Myths About Campaigns

"Misunderstandings: Too Much, Too Little, Too Long" by James A. Barnes and Karlyn H. Keene, in *Public Opinion* (May-June 1988), American Enterprise Institute, 1150 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Every four years, columnists and academics revive familiar complaints about U.S. presidential campaigns. Barnes, political correspondent for the *National Journal*, and Keene, a *Public Opinion* editor, suggest that much of the "conventional wisdom" about campaign flaws is misleading.

Some examples:

- *Presidential campaigns last too long.* In fact, the current presidential race has been shorter than those in the past. During the 1984 contest, four Democrats had announced their candidacy for president by February 1983; in the current contest, only Republican Pierre S. Du Pont and Democrat Richard Gephardt had declared their intentions by February 1987. Surveys show that long campaigns *do* hold Americans' interest.

- *The U.S. should hold "snap" elections similar to those held by Britain and France.* The authors observe that the European nations are smaller and more homogeneous than America; the United States' size and diversity "make a long and arduous campaign a necessity."

- *Presidential races are too expensive.* In 1988 each candidate could spend up to \$23 million in primaries and caucuses. Corporate marketing experts spend much more; General Foods, for example, spent \$32 million