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**SOCIETY**


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dents before 1940, 15,500 districts serve 40 million students today. Schools, says Doyle, “began to look more and more like protected monopolies from which most consumers could not escape.”

Today’s graduates of these education factories are ill-equipped to succeed in industry, which “requires knowledge and sophistication greater than the unskilled jobs of yesteryear.” Doyle advocates abandoning the schools’ outmoded factory model in favor of a new “partnership” with modern business.

From successful “people-oriented” firms such as L.L. Bean, IBM, and the 3M Company, writes Doyle, public school authorities can learn to be competitive in the educational marketplace, to set and achieve goals, and to maintain high morale. Heeding these lessons will help public schools reduce “white flight” and “bright flight” to private schools. Ignoring “business’s most important lesson—that markets and competition work—is a fool’s paradise” that is bound to result in continued failure.

### *Roman Banquets*

“De Gustibus” by Lowell Edmunds, in *Johns Hopkins Magazine* (Dec. 1987), 203 Whitehead Hall, Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore, Md. 21218.

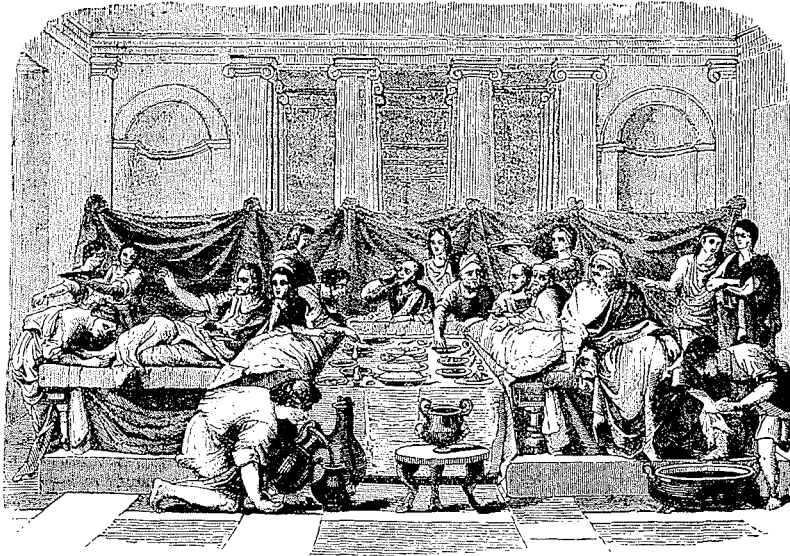
The dinner party, says Edmunds, a classics professor at Johns Hopkins University, “was a prime form of self-expression” for the Roman aristocracy. But what did hosts want their banquets to say about themselves? The answer, Edmunds believes, is that meals were a means to transmit and preserve traditional virtues.

Hosts usually invited nine men to dinner; guests reclined on three couches around a table. Dinner was served in three courses. The first course (*gustatio* or *gustus*) consisted of such hors d’oeuvres as leeks, olives, or eggs, accompanied by *mulsum*—wine sweetened with honey. This was followed by a main course of various meat dishes ranging from ham to hare to the occasional whole boar. Dessert was commonly “a selection of chickpeas, chestnuts, raisins, and various fruits—apples, pears, figs.” Meals were eaten with a spoon and the fingers; bones and other detritus were thrown on the floor. After dinner, a host would provide entertainment: poetry readings, recitations, and, for the licentious, “a troupe of the notorious dancing girls from Cadiz.”

Roman banquets were designed to show the host’s moderation and refinement. The offerings were meant to duplicate “the old-time . . . simplicity” of meals of an earlier, more heroic age. Hosts were obliged to practice “smart poverty,” serving such simple staples as greens and ham instead of more luxuriant fare. From 181 B.C. onward, “sumptuary laws” imposed restrictions on extravagance, limiting the amount that could be spent on a banquet, the number of guests invited, and the consumption of dormice and other delicacies.

The second goal of a banquet—to express refinement—frequently conflicted with the first. How could a host show sophistication and moderation at the same time? Some altered the meal for different classes of guests; author Pliny the Younger (circa A.D. 61–113) once attended a din-

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The most prestigious seat at a Roman banquet was at the host's left, known as the "consular" or "praetorian" place.

ner where the host served choice dishes to his close friends and *vilia et minuta* ("cheap dishes and scraps") to everyone else. Other hosts resolved the conflict between moderation and refinement by serving exquisite food brought from their simple country houses.

The Romans loved disguising food to express the distinction between appearance and reality. The poet Martial (circa A.D. 40–103), for example, once "knew of a chef who could make a whole banquet out of gourds." Edmunds concludes that culinary deception derives from the belief that a person's outward appearance masked his inner nature. "The Roman banqueter," he notes, dined "upon his world view."

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PRESS & TELEVISION

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*Reporting Sports*

"The Rise of the Sports Page" by John Stevens, in *Gannett Center Journal* (Fall 1987), 2950 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10027.

For over a century, newspaper readers have grown accustomed to a section of their papers devoted to coverage of sports. But where did the sports section originate? Stevens, professor of communications at the University of Michigan, attributes "the economic and editorial origins" of the sports pages to the changing demographics of 19th-century America.

Until the 1830s, most American newspapers were only bought by the