

Murray said enjoy, reward.

Virginia Black

LAISSEZ-FAIRE RIDES AGAIN "THE QUOTA SYSTEM, IN SHORT, MUST BE REPUDIATED IMMEDIATELY"

Dear —: One of the most bizarre—and potentially dangerous—developments to emerge out of the ill-fated McGovernite movement was the recrudescence of the "quota system." We saw this system in full flower when the duly and freely elected Democratic delegates from Illinois were denied their seats because the composition of the delegation did not satisfy the new quota standards.

The quota theory is simplicity itself. One looks at any subset of the population and tries to determine whether any group within that aggregate—which may be defined in any way one wants: by age, sex or ethnic identity, for example—is less than proportionate to its percentage of the population as a whole. If the group has less than its share of representation, this becomes per se proof that the group is being "discriminated against" and a sign that corrective action must be taken to right the grievous wrong.

The spurious fairness of the quota theory is aided by focusing on the groups below "their" quotas and forgetting about the necessary other side of the coin: the groups above "theirs." There was a time when the quota theorists were not so reticent; the most notorious use of quotas was by the anti-Semite theorists in Germany and the United States around the 1930s. The litany went somewhat as follows: Jews constitute only 3 percent of the total population of the country. *And yet...* and yet, 50 percent of the physicians are Jews, and 60 percent of motion picture producers, 38 percent of journalists, etc. (I am making up the figures, but the principle is illustrated by them.) What is this? goes the theory: this is patently un-

THE DANGER IS, ARGUES A LIBERTARIAN, THAT WE WILL CREATE A HORROR STATE IN WHICH ALL MEN MUST BE RUINOUSLY EQUAL.



For ID, drawing by Herb Rogoff

fair; we must kick Jews out of these professions until they are down to 3 percent.

The point is that what is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander. If it is unfair for Albanian-Americans to have less than their share of representation in

any group, then it is equally unfair for Jews to have more than their share, and coercive pressure to right the wrong must be used in both cases.

Perhaps some might think it unfair or antiquarian of me to bring up the Jewish case (though it was not so long ago that Jewish quotas, on the same theory of fairness, were being imposed in American colleges and medical schools). But the point is that the Jewish case is still all too relevant; for if action is to be taken to raise the "oppressed" groups to their share of delegates, professors, physicians or whatever, then *some* group will have to be coercively *pushed down* to their share. But if we investigate *which* groups will directly suffer from the imposition of quotas, we will land inevitably on: adult male heterosexual WASPs...and Jews.

The fact that Jews will be major sufferers once again from the theory is not enough to throw it out completely. But it is enough to highlight one of its major theoretical errors: for if the fact that Albanian-Americans are "underrepresented" is enough to demonstrate their "oppression," then the fact that any group is "overrepresented" should equally be enough to show that its members are among the leading "oppressors." And while there are enough benighted people nowadays who believe that male heterosexual WASPs constitute a ruling class, there are few who will maintain that male Jews are a ruling class.

In fact, of course, it was not very long ago that Jews constituted a group who, on any objective criteria, were indeed discriminated against. How, then, did they so rapidly rise into the "overrepresented" category in so many desirable occupa-

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Next Month in ID

ENERGY 4: The Radiant Nucleus

Warned of excessive radioiodine (from nuclear testing) in Utah milk, the Federal Radiation Council simply raised the official "safe" level. Such tunnel-visioned bureaucratic commitment to atomic power plunges us toward genocide, argues biophysicist and Manhattan Project veteran Dr. John Gofman in the March chapter of ID's continuing exploration of the energy crisis.

FARTHER OUT: The Varieties of Postpsychedelic Experience

Robert Masters and Jean Houston's Foundation for Mind Research pioneered LSD research. Their new thrusts into mind expansion without drugs push us further out on the last frontier—the human psyche. Literally mind blowing.

A LICENSE TO STEAL

How can we protect potential crime victims from random violence? Simple—require strictly regulated professional standards for robbers. A modest (and droll) proposal.

THE CREATOR AND THE COMMISSARS

East Germany's best-known novelist is currently unpublished in his own country. ID presents Stefan Heym from two angles of vision: Heym the man—how an official nonperson manages survival with honor (an exclusive interview)—and Heym the writer—a chilling short story, "Across the Fence," in print for the first time.

DAMNABLE PUZZLE 5

Damn!

A THEORY OF DEFENSIBLE SPACE

Urbanologist Oscar Newman analyzes why ghetto housing projects fail. For one thing, the buildings are too tall!

THE AESTHETICS OF THE KENTUCKY RIFLE

Graphic history of a native American art from bud to flower to baroque decline.

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tions? The answer to this question is enough to shoot down the whole theory of the quota system. They did it by hard work and ability—through drive, intelligence and perseverance. But that means that status and rank in occupations, whether high or low, are due to the presence or absence of these abilities and virtues. In short, if the high representation of Jews is due to the intense presence and application of these virtues, then the low representation of other groups must be due to their lack of these qualities.

The quota system, then, is at once anti-democratic and antiliberal in the classical sense of that much abused term. It is a direct assault on the theory that each individual may go as far as his talents and drive can carry him. The quota system is a despotic assault on the most able and talented among us: it is a compulsory egalitarian attempt to cripple individuals of ability, to discriminate against them in a truly oppressive way.

The quota theory is, in fact, all too reminiscent of the horror-fiction account of an egalitarian future by Kurt Vonnegut. Thus, Vonnegut begins his story, "Harrison Bergeron": "The year was 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the Law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the ... United States Handicapper General."

The "handicapping" worked like this: Hazel had a perfectly average intelligence, which meant she could think only in short bursts. George's intelligence was way above normal, so he had to wear a mental-handicap radio in his ear, tuned to a government transmitter. Every 20 seconds or so, the transmitter would send out a sharp noise to keep people like George from taking unfair advantage of their brains (Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., "Harrison Bergeron," *Welcome to the Monkey House*).

There are insuperable practical problems in any attempt to apply the quota theory consistently. For there is an almost infinite number of groups that we can conjure out of the population to demand their quota rights. Where, indeed, have Albanian-Americans been in the discussion? And how about a group in which I have a certain personal interest—short people? May we not maintain that "shorts" are the first to be fired and the last to be hired; and where are the short executives,

the short bankers, the short senators and presidents? Shall we not call upon short pride, short institutes, short-history courses? Shall we not demand short quotas? Professor Saul D. Feldman, a short sociologist at Case-Western Reserve, has quantified some of this short oppression and also points out the subtle corruption of our language: people are described as "shortsighted, shortchanged, shortcircuited and short of cash."

Of course, this "short-liberation movement" is not directed against the tall. We are out to liberate all people, short and tall alike; we welcome "consciousness-raising" groups for all guilt-ridden tall who sympathize with our movement.

In practice, of course, the new quota theorists do not attempt to apply their theory across the board. Indeed, where are the shorts and the Albanians? And where are the Poles, Irish, Italians, Czechs, etc? The exclusion of these "ethnics" from the pantheon of the "oppressed" has been criticized severely by the neglected groups and those who remain interested in logic and consistency. But the current quota theorists confine their agitation to women, blacks, Chicanos, youth and homosexuals, all of which fail to meet their quotas and are therefore "oppressed." The truly interesting statistic at the Democratic convention, by the way, is the fact that no less than 39 percent of the delegates had attended graduate school. Here is a real reflection of the "people." What we were seeing, in short, was a naked grab for power on the part of an eager new elite of graduate students and upper-middle-class liberals; a new mandarin class was to be fastened upon the country in the name of egalitarian rhetoric.

But the quota theory is infecting large areas of American life, especially the universities. In a leading college in New York City, it recently came time to hire someone to teach at the college's "women's institute." The leftists in control of the institute seriously decided that they had to hire a "Third World Lesbian." After scouring the city, they found a Third World Lesbian, but alas she had never acquired a bachelor's degree. In our new educational world, however, this was not allowed to stand in her—and their—way.

The quota system, in short, must be repudiated immediately and completely, before a new Nazi-like thinking is allowed to sweep away the individualism that made America a beacon for all people throughout the world.

Murray N. Rothbard [P]