

## EDITOR'S PAGE

With Volume I, Number 1 of *The Houston Review*, the Houston Metropolitan Research Center launches another of its efforts to encourage systematic study and enhanced appreciation of the history and culture of the city of Houston and the wider Gulf Coast region of which it is the metropolitan center. We seek to produce a journal that will, through the presentation of serious analysis and lively writing, appeal to scholars and educated citizens of many sorts.

This first issue establishes the format to which we will hew. We have in it a spritely and thoughtful attempt to place the current mythology centering on the label "Sunbelt" into a historical and analytical perspective. The author of the article, George Brown Tindall, is Kenan Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and perhaps the most distinguished historian of the South in our generation. His works include the massive volume in the History of the South series entitled *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945*.

Having viewed a problem which encompasses not only Houston (the "Golden Buckle of the Sunbelt" as some are tempted to call it), but the larger region of which it is a part, we narrow the focus in the second article. In this article we consider the vexing problem of occupational status for black Houstonians from 1920 to 1940. The author of this article is James M. SoRelle, a doctoral candidate in history at Kent State University who is preparing a dissertation dealing with blacks in Houston in the twentieth century under the direction of August Meier.

We then present two "documents." One is in the form of a reminiscence by Martin Dreyer. A long-time newspaperman in Houston and an active observer and participant in the cultural history of the city, he recreates what it was like to be an "artist" in Houston in the 1940s. His recollections suggest both the parochialism and the excitement of the era. There is also a selection from the Milsaps Diaries which present quite a different Houston, though only a few years separate the periods. Houston just after the turn of the century now seems so distant that we have included a photographic essay to accompany Milsaps's impressions. Finally, we have a section that will, in each issue, report news of the Research Center's activities and describe its holdings.

In future issues this pattern will continue. We will provide for our readers articles that view the traditional political and economic history of this city and region, but we will make a conscious effort to go beyond those limits and include literary, artistic and architectural studies that are a part of history in its broadest and most liberal sense. We welcome the submission of articles on any of these subjects from academic scholars, industrious graduate students and informed citizens.

## THE SUNBELT SNOW JOB

BY GEORGE BROWN TINDALL

Judging by the glowing reports in the newspapers for the past three years, we must conclude that the South is enjoying a veritable deluge of prosperity, and that both individually and as states it is surpassing even the Eastern states, those petted children of legislation since the foundation of the Union. Judging by these sheets, one would naturally imagine that the South is a region where poverty is unknown and where everybody is industriously and successfully laying up wealth . . . Seen through newspaper lenses, the South is indeed a happy Arcadia.

Lewis Harvie Blair (1889)<sup>1</sup>

It can hardly have escaped the notice of anybody out there that for better than two years the South has been where it's at, the current fad, the latest agony. When Jimmy Carter emerged from obscurity to claim the White House, it was all of a sudden time to rediscover the South once again, and the craze for things Southern began to proliferate like five-string guitars in Nashville.

On a slow day in the world of media hype, for a while all one had to do was reach for the nearest bag of peanut jokes, pick up one of those half-baked books on how to "tawk redneck" and — right away — one had an instant feature, a column, an editorial, a cartoon, a skit.

Southern fried chic was served up by the box or the bucketful. It came plain or barbecued, and sometimes downright crisp. But a lot of it was still awfully high in grease and cholesterol. The result has been that a lot of people are about to founder on what my friend and colleague Louis Rubin called "the hoked-up diet of cliché and truism . . . mass-produced to commemorate the accession of Carter to the White House."<sup>2</sup>

The chefs who prepared that zestful menu had ingredients to spare, of course. For few parts of the modern world have bred so great a variety of styles or so diverse a cast of characters as the American South. We Southerners, Johnathan Daniels once said, are "a mythological people, created half out of

<sup>1</sup> Lewis H. Blair. *A Southern Prophecy: The Prosperity of the South Dependent Upon the Elevation of the Negro* (1889), ed. by C. Vann Woodward (Boston, 1964), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Decimus Rubin, Jr., book review in *New Republic*, 176 (January 22, 1977), p. 81.

dream and half out of slander, who live in a still legendary land."<sup>3</sup>

What Daniels had reference to was the fact that the main burden of Southern mythology still rests on two images ordained by the sectional conflict of the nineteenth century: The romantic myth of gentility on the one hand and the reverse, if in many ways similar, abolitionist myth of barbarism on the other. The Sunny South versus the Benighted South, as it were. Or, to cite the cultural events of an earlier day which fixed them in the public mind: *The Birth of a Nation* versus *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Or, more recently, *Gone With the Wind* versus *Roots*.

The infinite variety of myths about the South encompasses more than that, of course. Now it seems that we are present at the creation of a new myth, the latest entry in a long catalog of images of the South, and one that is an ambivalent mixture of extremes: the Sunny South and the Benighted South rolled into one. New mythmakers profess to see on the Southern horizon an extended "Sunbelt" reaching from coast to coast, its economy battering on agribusiness, defense, technology, oil, real estate, tourism, and leisure. The migratory Americans, they note, have begun to follow the sun in search of profits, jobs, retirement havens, and general jollification. Suddenly the South has become a region rolling in riches, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Something about all this has a seductive appeal to Southerners, so long consigned to the role of underdogs, and many of them have rushed to embrace the idea. Houston, for instance, vies with Arkansas for the title of "Buckle of the Sunbelt." The Frisco railroad now serves the "Sunbelt Central." And a ship named the "Sunbelt-Dixie" went on its maiden voyage to Japan last year. But insofar as I can make out, the "Sunbelt," like many older images of the regional identity, is the invention less of Southerners than of Yankees. It first surfaced, so far as I know, in a book by Kevin P. Phillips, published in 1969 under the quaint title, *The Emerging Republican Majority*. From coast to coast, Phillips wrote, "the conservative 'Sun Belt' of the United States is undergoing a massive infusion of people and prosperity."<sup>4</sup> Together with a vast heartland of Mid-western and Rocky Mountain states, in the political scenario of Phillips, the Sunbelt would be the foundation of a new party alignment.

The idea lay dormant until late in 1975, when it came back to life in a book by Kirkpatrick Sale, *Power Shift: The Rise of the Southern Rim and Its Challenge to the Eastern Establishment*. Sale argued, in summary, that wealth and political power were shifting from the traditional centers of the Northeast toward rising new centers in the South and Southwest. The book was an exercise in sensationalism, replete with a curious and intemperate terminology, peopled with "Rimster Cowboys," a rapacious crew who personified what Sale called "the aggressive, flamboyant, restless, swaggering, new-fangled, open-collar, can-do, Southern rooted Baptist culture of the Southern Rim."<sup>5</sup> H. L. Mencken could

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Daniels, "Seeing the South," *Harpers*, 183 (November, 1941), p. 598.

<sup>4</sup> Kevin P. Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New York, 1969), p. 436.

<sup>5</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale, *Power Shift: The Rise of the Southern Rim and Its Challenge to the Eastern Establishment* (New York, 1975), p. 13.

hardly have said it better in the heyday of his Bible Belt, for an update on which one might keep an eye peeled for the forthcoming "cultural and social study of America's Sun Belt ethic" recently announced in the *Saturday Review*.<sup>6</sup>

Phillips and Sale both emphasized the burgeoning population and prosperity of the Southern Rim, but both of their books were mainly political tracts, highly polemical in character. They differed in that Phillips stood far to the right and Sale far to the left. They saw much the same thing, but while Phillips pointed with pride to the conservative Sunbelt, Sale viewed with alarm what he deemed a bastion of the Three R's: Rightism, Racism, and Repression. The Sunbelt South (with Las Vegas and Marin County thrown in to round out the regional symmetry) was the root of all evil. "For Sale," as one reviewer put it, "the Southern Rim has reached a stage of total degradation."<sup>7</sup> Sale, the reviewer suggested, ought to take a ride on the New York subway and look around for comparative purposes.

Of course as political tracts both of these manifestoes proved to be nine-day wonders, wildly off-target. Jimmy Carter's coalition of Yankees, ethnics, blacks, and rednecks was undreamed of in the philosophy of either writer. On the electoral map of 1976 one would be hard put to find either an emerging Republican majority or a Southern Rim. The most clearcut dividing line separates East and West.

But the Sunbelt lives on in countless newspapers and magazines, a testimonial to the tenacity of social myth, not to mention the reporters' penchant for repeating each other. Whatever else one might say about Kirkpatrick Sale's book, the selling of Sale was a triumph of promotion, a major event in the national press and on the tube. The *New York Times Book Review* ran a glowing endorsement on its front page when the book came out in November, 1975. In February, 1976, the *Times* followed up with a series of six front-page articles on the expanding business and population of the "Sunbelt."<sup>8</sup>

In May, 1976, *Business Week* devoted an issue to what it called "The Second War Between the States: A Bitter Struggle for Jobs, Capital and People." *Business Week* reported that the movement of population southward had become a "flood tide" and that the migration of industry had "burst beyond the bounds that can be accommodated by existing political institutions."<sup>9</sup> Then in June, *National Journal*, a weekly review of politics and government, ran a survey showing that the "Sunbelt" states were getting more from Washington in grants and spending than they were sending back in taxes. "Federal tax and spending policies," the *Journal* asserted, "are causing a massive flow of wealth from the Northeast and Midwest to the fast-growing Southern and Western regions of the nation."<sup>10</sup>

All these pieces were widely reprinted and quoted. Soon you could hardly

<sup>6</sup> *Saturday Review*, February 3, 1979, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> William C. Havard, "Power Is Where Power Goes," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 52 (Autumn, 1976), pp. 712-717.

<sup>8</sup> *New York Times Book Review*, November 30, 1975, p. 1; *New York Times*, February 8-13, 1976.

<sup>9</sup> *Business Week*, May 17, 1976, pp. 92, 95.

<sup>10</sup> "Federal Spending: The North's Loss Is the Sunbelt's Gain," *National Journal*, June 26, 1976, pp. 878-891.

pick up a current publication without finding something about the growing population, economic activity, and income of the South. The compulsive exaggeration of such pieces seemed to confirm the observation made by A. J. Cooper, the black mayor of Pritchard, Alabama. The North, Mayor Cooper said, is just not psychologically prepared for Southern success.<sup>11</sup> Inevitably the idea became the butt of a sardonic cartoon in the *New Yorker*, which may be the best capsule commentary on the subject yet. In the background of the cartoon stood a plain farmhouse, anything but the picture of affluence. Out to the side, the farm wife was hanging out the wash and the husband was bringing in the day's paper. "Guess where we've been living all our lives," he said. "The Sunbelt."<sup>12</sup>

It all seems so new, and yet, if you listen closely, you can hear some far-off echoes of the past. One hears distant sounds of sabers rattling and voices raised in the quarrels of the 1850s, when proslavery Southerners tried to push their peculiar institution on into California and a bizarre fraternal order called the Knights of the Golden Circle promoted the romantic dream of a sun-drenched empire which would embrace the entire Gulf and Caribbean.<sup>13</sup>

One hears, I think, a louder echo from the 1880s, when Henry Grady's idea of a New South turned the vision of his countrymen from a dead past toward a promised land of the future, a vision of economic parity with the nation. Paul M. Gaston, in his book *The New South Creed*, traced the evolution of Grady's doctrine into a genuine social myth. Like other belief systems, the New South creed became a motivating force in history, but it also carried the hazard of delusion. Because the prophets of a New South so desperately wanted it to be so, they persuaded themselves that the region "had acted upon the idea, followed the program, and achieved the goal."<sup>14</sup>

Such thinking has become an enduring habit, in fact. A few years ago historian Charles P. Roland, traced from the time of Sir Walter Raleigh to the present the perennial belief that the region is on the verge of economic fulfillment. The South, Roland asserted, "has persistently been the nation's greatest economic enigma — a region of want in the midst of boundless natural riches. It has been, and remains today, a land becoming and not a land become — a garden spot that beckons only to recede like a mirage when approached. It is America's will-o'-the-wisp Eden."<sup>15</sup>

Now the will-o'-the-wisp beckons again. Reincarnated as the imperial Sunbelt, the New South is once more on the verge of fulfillment, and the election of a Southern president adds credence to the notion. Now it is the Old North, recast as the declining Snowbelt, which is playing the unlikely role of the Nation's economic problem No. 1. And, to quote a headline from the *New York Times*, "The Northeast Vows That It Will Rise Again."<sup>16</sup> In an editorial the *Times* asserted defiantly: "The ascendancy of the South, though not yet over, is

<sup>11</sup> Interview with E. Blaine Limer, Director Southern Growth Policies Board, January 26, 1978.

<sup>12</sup> *The New Yorker*, March 8, 1976, p. 47.

<sup>13</sup> See Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire* (Baton Rouge, 1973).

<sup>14</sup> Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York, 1970), p. 198.

<sup>15</sup> Charles P. Roland, "The South: America's Will-o'-the-Wisp Eden," *Louisiana History*, 11 (Spring, 1970) pp. 118-119.

<sup>16</sup> *New York Times*, January 9, 1977, III, p. 1.

imperiled. . . ."<sup>17</sup> Which may be the neatest trick of the century. What is the nature of the ascendancy or when it began the *Times* does not say.

No sooner had the Sunbelt been conjured up than the "Snowbelt" began to mobilize for battle.<sup>18</sup> As early as 1973 a New England Congressional Caucus took shape. In 1976 three more Snowbelt coalitions sprang up. In June the governors of seven states formed the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG for short) as a regional lobby "to reactivate and rebuild the depressed economy of the Northeast." On September 1 Congressmen from sixteen states set up the Northeast-Midwest Economic Advancement Coalition lead by Michael Harrington of Massachusetts, who warned that unless action were taken "the entire industrialized Northeast and Midwest may soon become the sophisticated Appalachia of the Nation." Finally in October came the Council for Northeast Economic Action, headed by James M. Howell of the First National Bank of Boston. Working closely with Congressman Harrington, Howell urged a special look at formulas for federal programs that disburse grant allocations amounting to about \$80 billion.

These four coalitions hatched a whole clutch of ideas for changing federal programs to the advantage of the Snowbelt. On the eve of Carter's inauguration, James P. Gannon wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, "What is shaping up on Capitol Hill is the fiercest struggle over federal programs and dollars in years: a congressional confrontation of Sun Belt vs. Snow Belt."<sup>19</sup> Among the mind-boggling ideas brought forward then were a bill to require two years' notice and federal approval before moving or closing industrial plants, and another bill under which foreign banks could locate branches only in New York City. But the main focus has become the formulas for federal grants. Each of the Snowbelt coalitions has set up a research center, and computers have replaced cannon as the heavy artillery of the new sectional conflict.

The number of the grants and the nature of the formulas are such that the meaning of changes gets obscured in complexity, and further clouded by a cryptic jargon about targeting, labor surplus areas, growth lag, change rates, adjustment for the cost of living, and moving away from poverty. The last, being interpreted, means moving away from poverty as a yardstick for aid because poverty is no longer a test of need! But if the specific meaning is shrouded in jargon, the purpose is clearly visible: to find formulas that will channel federal grants toward the Snowbelt. This is done by redefining distress as growth lag rather than as poverty. Recently there has been a long-delayed trend toward economic convergence of the regions. The most rapid growth has tended to occur in the low-income regions while the rate of growth in richer regions has tended to lag. But while the economic gap between North and South has narrowed, it has yet to be closed.

The federal share of local spending has increased sharply since Lyndon

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, August 20, 1977, p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> Their origins are outlined in the newsletter of the Southern Growth Policies Board, *Southern Growth: Problems and Promise*, 4 (Winter, 1976-1977), pp. 3-4.

<sup>19</sup> *The Wall Street Journal*, January 17, 1977, p. 1.

Johnson declared war on poverty in the 1960s. One of the major sources of this funding, and the target of the most successful Snowbelt attack to date, is the Community Development Block Grants which provide money for community services, housing, and economic development. Created in 1974, the Block Grant program consolidated or, to use the proper jargon, "folded in" urban renewal and six other categorical programs: model cities, water and sewer facilities, neighborhood facilities, loan for public facilities, open space and land grants, and rehabilitation loans.<sup>20</sup> The original formula gave considerable weight to a poverty count (50 per cent) and overcrowded housing (25 per cent), the remaining 25 per cent being population growth. A new formula, first adopted for the fiscal year 1978, shifts the weight toward population growth lag (20 per cent) and age of housing (pre-1940 housing, 50 per cent) — this, too, is of course related to growth lag since a growing community almost by definition has less old housing. Governor George Busbee of Georgia sarcastically proposed going back to 1864 and counting the houses burned in Sherman's march.<sup>21</sup> The poverty count was reduced to 30 per cent and overcrowding pushed out altogether as a test of need. The irony is compounded by the fact that pre-1940 housing correlates negatively with overcrowded housing, and very little with other need indicators such as lack of plumbing, percentage of non-white, percentage with poverty incomes, overall per capita income, or median educational level. What is more, the poverty rate is calculated by taking the number of poor in 1970 and dividing by the population in 1975. The result has been to shunt dollars toward the Snowbelt, and in some cases the windfall has gone to affluent suburban towns.

To add to the confusion, out of the \$3.4 billion Block Grant program, \$400 million has been set aside for what is called the Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG).<sup>22</sup> The program is similar to the previous Urban Renewal Program, but on a smaller scale. The main stated purpose is to revitalize neighborhoods and thus provide jobs and strengthen the local tax base. The formula here is an ingenious exercise in complexity, which moves yet further away from poverty. There are six criteria and a locality must meet four of the six — or three of the six if it qualifies under the poverty count. The six criteria are poverty count above 11.24 per cent, pre-1940 housing above 34.15 per cent, population growth below 15.52 per cent, unemployment rate above 7.69 per cent, employment growth below 7.08 per cent and per capita income increase below \$14.24.

What is the source of these puzzling figures? They seem to have been spewed out of computers artfully calculating down to the second decimal point the figures that will include a maximum of Northern communities and a minimum of Southern. The effect is reinforced by calculating rates instead of absolute numbers simply because Southern cities have more commonly annexed the affluent suburbs which bear part of the burden for the central cities, whereas

<sup>20</sup> The following explanations are taken from Patricia J. Dusenbury and Thad L. Beyle, *Southern Urban Trends, 1960-1977*, A Southern Growth Policies Board Research Report (Research Triangle Park, N.C., 1978), pp. 22-23, and Southern Growth Policies Board, Draft statement on grant programs, November 10, 1978, mimeographed.

<sup>21</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, August 31, 1977, p. 11-A.

<sup>22</sup> Patricia J. Dusenbury, "The Urban Development Action Grant," September 21, 1978, mimeographed. Southern Growth Policies Board.

older Northern metropolitan areas are more often hemmed in by suburban towns which bear no part of the municipal burden. In such a case, a given number of unemployed in the central city loom larger in proportion.

The trend toward getting away from poverty as a measure of distress may reach its completion in the Carter administration's new proposal for big-city problems, the National Development Bank.<sup>23</sup> If established, this agency would take the UDAG grants and Economic Development Administration grants. With some \$25.5 billion at its disposal, it would provide grants and guarantee loans to cover the capital costs of private projects designed to develop the economies of distressed central cities. In the eligibility standards proposed by the Treasury Department poverty vanishes altogether as a test. Instead a community would have to meet three of four measurements calculated for the last five years: above-average unemployment, below-average population growth, below-average employment growth, below-average per capita income growth.

What remains to be asked is whether the struggle over federal dollars is shaping up over real or false issues, on the basis of real or false assumptions. If the myth of the affluent Sunbelt is mostly a journalistic mirage, lifted by overheated growth in the Gulf Crescent and the Southwestern desert (or by fervent lucubrations on Madison Avenue), like other social myths it is rooted in reality. Of late the Southern economy has grown at a rapid pace and the income gap between South and North has narrowed. And many Northern communities are in trouble. But if myth *is* rooted in reality, like Grady's myth of the New South, it can also render one blind to things that do not fit the mental image. One fatal blind spot here is the hidden poverty in the rural and small-town South. Economic development is spotty, and the South, too, has its declining communities, with multitudes of people stranded in the backwaters of economic growth. Nor are the flourishing Southern cities immune to urban blight. To quote Mayor Cooper of Pritchard again: "There is a lot of shade in the Sunbelt."<sup>24</sup>

Nor is the overall picture as bright as the gurus of the Sunbelt would have us believe. Unlike most social myths, this one is subject to a statistical test. The myth of the affluent Sunbelt is, in fact, subject to a number of statistical tests, and it flunks them all. In the commentaries about the Sunbelt and Southern Rim there is an element of contrivance in combining South and West, regions with rather different histories, traditions, and economies — and with rather different current statistics. All across the affluent Southern Rim to which Kirkpatrick Sale and his successors ascribe such power and wealth, one finds only two states which in 1977 rose above the national per capita income. The two were California and Nevada, only parts of which qualified for Rimster status. In the remainder Virginia (omitted from Sale's Southern Rim) came closest with 97.8 per cent of the national average of \$7019, and Texas (96.9) and Florida (95) followed closely behind. From there the averages tapered off with Georgia coming in fifth at 85.7 per cent, and my native state of South

<sup>23</sup> Patricia J. Dusenbury, "National Development Bank," Issue Paper #8, August 15, 1978, Southern Growth Policies Board.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with E. Blaine Limer, Director Southern Growth Policies Board, January 26, 1978.

Carolina lagging well behind with 80.2 per cent. We can still say "Thank God for Mississippi," lowest of all at 71.6 per cent or \$5030, nearly \$2000 behind the national average.<sup>25</sup> But taking joy at the greater misfortune of Mississippi is rather a cold comfort.

In November, 1976, the Office of Economic Research in the Department of Commerce issued the first extensive critique of the Sunbelt idea, a lengthy report entitled "A Myth in the Making: The Southern Economic Challenge and Northern Economic Decline." The report's credibility is heightened by the fact that it was prepared by two economists from universities in Ohio: Carol L. Jusenius of Ohio State and Larry C. Ledebuhr of Dennison.<sup>26</sup> It has been little noticed in the press. Jusenius and Ledebuhr noted among other things, the continuing gap in personal incomes. Real poverty, moreover, was found to be still more common in the South than in the North. Even the "flood tide" of migration was somewhat illusory, since most of the South's population growth was the result of natural increase: babies. Until the 1970s, at least. Still, by a recent estimate, natural increase still accounted for nearly half the growth from 1970 to 1975.<sup>27</sup> In conclusion, Jusenius and Ledebuhr's report suggested that the relative improvement in the South was, in part, a cyclical phenomenon. "Policy decisions based on the assumption that the experience of 1970 through 1975 represents a new trend may be ill-considered and counter-productive in the longer run."<sup>28</sup>

To those who lament the drain of tax dollars from North to South, the most surprising point may be this: "While the Southern States are among the poorest in the country, they receive less than the national average in per capita federal government expenditures.<sup>29</sup> The South thus ranks below average in income, in federal taxes paid, and in federal expenditures received — even when the Pentagon payroll is counted as income to Virginia.

The argument often heard nowadays that tax dollars should be spent where they are collected challenges the basic principle of a progressive income tax, which is to tax the wealth where it is. Of course that principle has been somewhat eroded of late, but one is reminded of the argument once heard in some quarters down South that schools for blacks should get only taxes paid by blacks, a good formula for keeping the underdog down. The point is not untimely, since one item on the Snowbelt agenda is an attempt to move away from poverty as a touchstone for federal aid to education.

There is yet another echo of the past in the sectional debate over taxes and spending. One of the more recent animadversions on the wicked Sunbelt is

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Survey of Current Business* (October, 1978), pp. 32-41.

<sup>26</sup> Carol L. Jusenius and Larry C. Ledebuhr, "A Myth in the Making: The Southern Economic Challenge and Northern Economic Decline," in E. Blaine Liner and Lawrence K. Lynch (eds.), *The Economics of Southern Growth* (Research Triangle Park, N.C., 1977), pp. 131-173.

<sup>27</sup> Bernard L. Weinstein and Robert E. Firestone, Jr., *Regional Growth and Decline in the United States: The Rise of the Sunbelt and the Decline of the Northeast* (New York, 1978), pp. 5-10.

<sup>28</sup> Jusenius and Ledebuhr, "A Myth in the Making," p. 173.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166; Clyde Browning, "The Role of the South in the Sun Belt - Snow Belt Struggle for Federal Funds," typescript in possession of author, shows a greater East-West than North-South differential in federal expenditures, with the advantage going to the West.

a book entitled *Bum Rap on America's Cities* by Richard S. Morris who says, "How ironic that a liberal notion — progressively graduated income taxes — should be turned against the liberal Northeast."<sup>30</sup> And how ironic that Richard S. Morris is so blissfully unaware that his remark is but a distant echo from 1913, when an opinion was abroad in the Northeast that the first income tax was nothing more or less than a Southern raid on Northern wealth. Cordell Hull of Tennessee, who guided the first income tax through the House, responded that Northern wealth was derived from all parts of the country. "It would be monstrous," he said, "to say that the receivers of great incomes which are drawn from every section of the country may segregate themselves and upon the plea of segregation or sectionalism successfully exempt their entire wealth from taxation. They should invoke the plea of segregation and not sectionalism."<sup>31</sup>

Today there is a clear and present danger that because sectionalism is so ingrained we shall wind up asking fallacious questions and getting mistaken answers. "There's always an easy solution to every human problem," H. L. Mencken once said, "neat, plausible, and wrong."<sup>32</sup> Sectional conflict clearly fits the bill. Southern spokesmen, by and large, have avoided provocation so far. The Southern Growth Policies Board, from its headquarters in North Carolina's Research Triangle Park, has been monitoring developments, but with far smaller resources than the Northern coalitions. The Board, created by interstate compact in 1971, had at first the function of helping the South achieve orderly growth without spoiling the environment. Its purpose, according to former North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford, was to avoid repeating Northern mistakes in a Southern setting.<sup>33</sup> More recently the Sunbelt-Snowbelt debate has drawn the Board's attention away from its original purpose. Now the Board has a Washington office from which to follow events and keep Congressmen informed.

Concern has increased as the congressional coalitions have pressed the Snowbelt cause — and Southern congressional delegations have floundered in uncertainty and disarray. "The South has been asleep at the switch," Georgia's Governor Busbee warned over a year ago. "We in the South are going to be eaten alive if we don't wake up and react."<sup>34</sup> In January, 1978, the issue got an airing in the White House Conference on Balanced National Growth and Economic Development, one of several such love-feasts over the last two years which have failed to stop the regional confrontation. Both Governor Busbee as chairman of the Southern Growth Policies Board and New York Senator Daniel P. Moynihan, one of the Snowbelt's cleverest operatives, agreed then that they did not want to "politicize" the issue but preferred to leave it mainly in the congressional committees where it has so far elicited little public excitement — or even notice.<sup>35</sup>

Formulas for sectional compromise may be harder to find than formulas

<sup>30</sup> Richard S. Morris, *Bum Rap on America's Cities: The Real Causes of Urban Decay* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1978), p. 127.

<sup>31</sup> *Congressional Record*, 63 Cong., 1 Sess., p. 505.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Laurence J. Peters (ed.), *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time* (New York, 1977), p. 410.

<sup>33</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, December 17, 1971, p. 17-B.

<sup>34</sup> *New York Times*, August 31, 1977, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, February 3, 1978, p. 11.

to shunt dollars in one direction or another. But a basic principle is not far to seek. Secretary of Labor F. Ray Marshall, a good old boy from Mississippi by way of Texas, is an economist who has specialized in the study of rural poverty. "If you want to find poverty in this country," he has said, "look at the urban North and the rural South."<sup>36</sup> At last year's White House Conference, the group dealing with "the geography of growth" called for the federal government to give high priority to both declining central cities and poor rural areas. Even more to the point would be to shift the focus away from geography to people and human need wherever it is found.

Caught in the middle of all this is that sophisticated country boy from South Georgia who now lives in the White House. Elected with the crucial help of big-city votes in the North, he has communications open to both sides. Given some margin of goodwill, an administration swept into office by a coalition of North and South ought to be strategically placed to head off a civil cold war. Surely the statesmen of the 1970s can explore the prospects of sectional compromise with more success than the statesmen of the 1850s. This country can do without another Civil War, even if it is only the moral equivalent of Civil War.

Having challenged the Sunbelt idea, having suggested the hazards in it, having pointed to parallels in the past, when the South seemed to be at the threshold of affluence, maybe I should just say, "Don't buy the success myth too soon," and let it go at that. But while we need to preserve a healthy skepticism, perhaps we should pay deference to the element of truth which it holds. The regional economic gap has narrowed, and it is time to say that Southerners finally sense a coming release from the curse of what British historian Denis Brogan once called the *damnosa hereditas* of the South, and suspect that they have begun to lay down the burden of Southern history: the poverty, the habits of defeat and failure, the guilt of racial oppression that bound white and black in a common tragedy. Like Moses we seem to have reached the mountain from which we see the Promised Land. Maybe this time we shall cross over and enter in. The question is: what then?

Clearly the drive to develop is here, along with the energy and the quality of optimism — the quality that Professor Nash Boney calls the South's peculiar intuition.<sup>37</sup> The mind of the South long since seized upon the vision of Henry Grady, and the New South may be coming to pass after all. Grady's creed served its day, but can the New South creed be warmed over to speak to the needs of another century?

The South has surmounted a host of troubles, to be sure, but one of the everlasting ironies of history is that in surmounting old troubles we encounter new problems. The supreme problem, and the supreme opportunity, now facing this region is how to reconcile economic development with the "good life." It remains to be seen whether Southerners can avoid the kind of progress that will turn one of nature's masterpieces, the South, into a modern wasteland.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted by Brandt Ayers in *Anniston (Alabama) Star*, January 2, 1977.

<sup>37</sup> F. Nash Boney, "The South's Peculiar Intuition," *Louisiana Studies*, 12 (Winter, 1973), pp. 565-577.

The signs are not altogether encouraging.

So far as I can see, the public imagination has yet to be supplied with a new purpose, a new vision of the South-to-be. The South is still in search of a philosophy, but I would suggest that my friend Rupert Vance, the eminent sociologist, pointed the way fourteen years ago, in one of his last essays.<sup>38</sup> Vance, along with Howard Odom, was one of the pioneers of regional sociology. He began his scholarly career in the late 1920s with *Human Factors in Cotton Culture*, an exhaustive description and analysis of the one-crop culture complex which had held millions in bondage to poverty and ignorance.<sup>39</sup>

"As one of Howard Odom's boys," he said, "I was accustomed to delivering occasional homilies throughout the South advocating economic development. Invariably, I was asked by someone in the audience if . . . materialism was enough. What should the South seek to do with its economic achievement? Invariably I tried to shrug off the question. Sometimes . . . I countered with the old African proverb: 'Full-belly child says to hungry-belly child, 'Be of good cheer.'" What to do with abundance, he said, "was a decision we would make at a later date — after we had the cash in hand."<sup>40</sup>

But in 1965, on the eve of his retirement, Vance pronounced the Mason-Dixon line "no longer . . . an iron curtain against the Affluent Society," and expressed worry about the subtler aspects of the South's quality of life. He summoned his native region to "turn from pre-occupation with its peculiar navel — the Southern way of life — to the pursuit of high culture."<sup>41</sup>

Vance observed that "authentic reasons can be listed for the hope that a Southern culture of the future will come into being: talent, a basic commitment to democratic society — once it is admitted that Negroes, too, have rights [Vance was writing in 1965] — sufficient wealth to provide patronage and economic support, and an emphasis on excellence in education that might some day be extended so far as to include appreciation of the arts."<sup>42</sup>

I concede that many Southerners have heard this sermon before and I am engaged in preaching to the converted. But perhaps out there somewhere is a new and improved Henry — or Henrietta — Grady who can speak to the needs of our own time, whose genius might put before Southerners a new vision of the South-to-be, who can turn our faces to new vistas that beckon at last, who can summon us to the pursuit of excellence. In summary, to coin a phrase: Why *not* the best?

<sup>38</sup> Rupert B. Vance, "Beyond the Fleshpots: The Coming Culture Crisis in the South," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 41 (Spring, 1965), pp. 217-230.

<sup>39</sup> Rupert B. Vance, *Human Factors in Cotton Culture: A Study in the Social Geography of the American South* (Chapel Hill, 1929).

<sup>40</sup> Vance, "Beyond the Fleshpots," p. 219.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 217, 224-225.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.