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Subsidiarity, Localism, and You

By James M. Decker

I'm taking a slightly abstract turn today, so buckle in. I am going to get philosophical with you, but I'm not merely pondering big words for the sake of it. There's a method to the madness, at least this time. Today, I want to introduce the idea of "subsidiarity" with you.

This philosophical principle states that social and political decisions should be handled at the most local level possible, because people closest to a situation are best-suited to make informed decisions about the situation and solve problems. Fundamentally, this makes a lot of sense. Given my personal interests and role in the community, here's a simple illustration of subsidiarity:

If you have a pothole in town, who should be in charge of fixing the pothole, the local mayor or the federal government?

A person who sees the pothole every day is far more equipped to understand its impacts than a bureaucracy that cannot find the town on a map, much less track down the pothole itself. Subsidiarity is not merely a defense of local government, although that's certainly a byproduct. These principles date back centuries, into the writings of the likes of 13th century Catholic philosopher Thomas Aquinas and writers from the Middle Ages. The Tenth

Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which defaults power to the states and their people in the absence of a delegation to the federal government, is an expression of subsidiarity.

Alexis de Tocqueville observed that decentralization of government by subsidiarity is valuable *"since it increases the opportunities for citizens to take interest in public affairs...and from the accumulation of these local, active, persnickety freedoms, is born the most efficient counterweights against the claims of the central government, even if it were supported by an impersonal, collective will."*

I believed in the idea of subsidiarity long before I even knew the word itself. Over the last couple of years, studying the ideas that underpin rural revitalization have led me to a course of understanding these philosophies. As I have previously written, we cannot merely throw unlimited sums of money at rural communities and expect it to solve 75 years of rural decline. Too much prosperity is being sucked out of our rural communities, hence the rural decline, so adding another big pile of money would only make the problem worse, not better, and serve as a gigantic transfer of wealth to those enriching themselves at the

expense of rural America. In a powerful scholarly study entitled "The Principle of Subsidiarity and the Agrarian Ideal," Professor Joshua P. Hochschild observes that the fundamental notions of subsidiarity are essential to the foundations of America and the ideals proposed by Thomas Jefferson himself. In Jefferson's autobiography, Jefferson writes:

But it is not by the consolidation, or concentration of powers, but by their distribution, that good government is effected. Were not this great country already divided into states, that division must be made, that each might do for itself what concerns itself directly, and what it can so much better do than a distant authority. Every state again is divided into counties, each to take care of what lies within its local bounds; each county again into townships or wards, to manage minute details; and every ward into farms, to be governed each by its individual proprietor. Were we directed from Washington when to sow, and when to reap, we should soon want bread. It is by this partition of cares, descending in gradation from general to particular; that the mass of human affairs may be best managed for the good and prosperity of all.

Jefferson wisely saw the dangers of centralizing powers.

Death Notices

Waldrop

David Barton (Barty) Waldrop, age 81, of Bronte, passed away on Thursday, January 18, 2024, at Bronte Health and Rehab Center.

He leaves behind a legacy of love, survived by his wife of 61 years, Doris Waldrop; daughter, Stacy Schwartz and husband Edward; brother, Dick Waldrop and wife Anna; brother, Keith Waldrop and wife Marilyn; brother, Riley Waldrop and wife Donna; several nieces and nephews, other loving family members, and a few four-legged companions.

Friends were invited to visit the family from 1 pm to 2 pm on Saturday, January 27, 2024,

at Pecan Baptist Church in Robert Lee. Funeral services were held at 2 pm with Bill (Pistol) Hood and Dale Patterson officiating. Burial and committal followed immediately at Hayrick Mountain Cemetery.

Carter

Bobby Charles Carter, 87, of Clyde passed away Wednesday, January 31, 2024, at his home.

A visitation was held from 2 pm until 4 pm on Saturday, February 3, at Bailey Howard Funeral Home in Clyde.

He is survived by his son, Doyle Carter and wife Becky of Bronte; daughter, Bobbie Jane "BJ" Turner and husband Beau of Freeport, Florida; three grandchildren, Vanessa Jane Turner Quinlan and husband Shane, Victoria Jan Turner and Clancy Dean Carter; and one great-granddaughter, Anna Jane Quinlan.

UPCOMINGS!

Friends of the RLCC to meet February 26

The February meeting of the Friends of the Robert Lee Care Center will be held on Monday, February 26, at 10 am. The meeting will be held in the West Coke County Hospital District Board Room, located by the

Food Pantry. Anyone interested in helping to improve the quality of life for the RLCC residents and in learning more about this organization is encouraged to attend.

Area Churches Invite You to Worship

Bronte

Bronte Church of Christ
 PO Box 346
 118 S. Jefferson • Bronte
 Sun. 10 am & 6 pm, Wed. 7 pm

Central Baptist Church
 324 S. Franklin • Bronte
 (325) 473-4811

Dale Patterson, Pastor
 Sun. 10 am Sunday School
 11 am & 5 pm Worship

First Baptist Church
 424 S. Washington • Bronte
 (325) 473-2331
 firstbronte@gmail.com

Pastor George Cooper
 Sunday 9:45 am Sunday School,
 10:30 am Worship
 Wednesday 6 pm - 8 pm
 Children and Youth

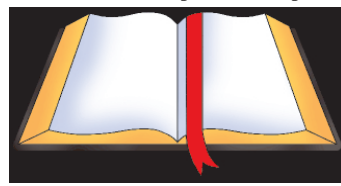
Bronte Methodist Church
 Corner of Washington & Holmes
 Bronte • (325) 650-4836
 Pastor Keith Fletcher
 Sun. 10:00 am Sunday School
 11:00 am Worship

St. James Catholic Church
 215 N. Washington, Bronte
 (325) 365-2687
 Rev. Timothy Hayter, Pastor
 Sunday Bilingual Mass 8 am

Bread of Life Church
 314 Fayette • Bronte
 (325) 227-0010
 Michael Crane, Pastor
 Sunday, 9 am
 Wednesday, 6 pm

Coke County

Pecan Baptist
 PO Box 542 • 12 miles West of
 Robert Lee on Sterling City Hwy
 (325) 453-2065, Bill Hood, Pastor
 www.pecanbaptistchurchrl.com
 Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
 11 am & 7 pm, Worship



Robert Lee

Bible Baptist Church
 PO Box 938 • 9th & Austin
 Sunday 10 am Sunday School,
 11 am and 5 pm Worship,
 Wed 5 pm Bible Study

Emmanuel Pentecostal
 PO Box 794 • 1004 Hillcrest
 Pastor Brantly Robertson
 (972) 841-2009

Sundays 10 am, Wednesdays 7 pm
First Methodist Church
 PO Box 144 • 9th & Chadbourne

Pastor Gary Karschner
 Robert Lee • (325) 453-2417
 Sun. 11 am Worship,

Iglesia Bautista Betel
 101 Houston • Robert Lee
 Sun. 9:45 am • Sunday School
 11 am Service • Bible Study Wed. 6 pm

Southside Church of Christ
 PO Box 698 • 8th & Houston
 Robert Lee (325) 453-2176
 Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
 11 am Worship

Wed. 6 pm, Worship
Northside Church of Christ
 PO Box 508

9th & Chadbourne • Robert Lee
 (325) 453-2685, (325) 763-2118
 or (325) 473-1053
 Services: Sun. 10 am

Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church
 601 W. 10th, Robert Lee
 (325) 365-2687

Rev. Timothy Hayter, Pastor
 Saturday Vigil Mass 6 pm

Robert Lee Baptist Church
 PO Box 493 • 22 W. 11th
 (325) 453-2724
 Chris Walls, Pastor

Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
 11 am Worship
 Wed. 6:30 pm, Prayer Meeting

Victory Assembly of God
 (325) 453-2208, PO Box 638
 202 E. 6th Street, Robert Lee
 Rev. Rocky Youngblood, Pastor
 Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
 10:45 am & 6 pm, Worship
 Wed. 6 pm, Bible Study

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