

The Republican Revolution

PRIMARY SOURCE READING

Cutting Government Down to Size

On January 20, 1981, Ronald Reagan was inaugurated as the president of the United States. Discontent with the weak economy and disillusionment with the apparent powerlessness of the United States to free hostages in Iran had resulted in a backlash against Democratic President Carter. The electorate had swept Reagan and a Republican Senate into power in the 1980 election. In his inaugural address, Reagan offered a broad outline of his plan for economic recovery (based largely on tax reduction and limitations on government regulation of business) and strengthening America as a “beacon of hope” for democracy.

Inaugural Address

—Ronald Reagan

The business of our nation goes forward. These United States are confronted with an economic affliction of great proportions. We suffer from the longest and one of the worst sustained inflations in our national history. It distorts our economic decisions, penalizes thrift, and crushes the struggling young and the fixed-income elderly alike. It threatens to shatter the lives of millions of our people.

Idle industries have cast workers into unemployment, causing human misery and personal indignity. Those who do work are denied a fair return for their labor by a tax system which penalizes successful achievement and keeps us from maintaining full productivity.

But great as our tax burden is, it has not kept pace with public spending. For decades, we have piled deficit upon deficit, mortgaging our future and our children’s future for the

temporary convenience of the present. To continue this long trend is to guarantee tremendous social, cultural, political, and economic upheavals.

You and I, as individuals, can, by borrowing, live beyond our means, but for only a limited period of time. Why, then, should we think that collectively, as a nation, we are not bound by that same limitation? . . .

[T]his administration’s objective will be a healthy, vigorous, growing economy that provides equal opportunity for all Americans, with no barriers born of bigotry or discrimination. Putting America back to work means putting all Americans back to work. Ending inflation means freeing all Americans from the terror of runaway living costs. All must share in the productive work of this “new beginning” and all must share in the bounty of a revived economy. With the idealism and fair play which are the core of our system and our strength, we can have a strong and prosperous America at peace with itself and the world.

So, as we begin, let us take inventory. We are a nation that has a government—not the other way around. And this makes us special among the nations of the Earth. Our Government has no power except that granted it by the people. It is time to check and reverse the growth of government which shows signs of having grown beyond the consent of the governed.

It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the Federal establishment and to demand recognition of the distinction between the powers granted to the Federal Government and those reserved to the States or to the people. All of us need to be reminded that the Federal Government did not create the States; the States created the Federal Government.

Now, so there will be no misunderstanding, it is not my intention to do away with the

government. It is, rather, to make it work—work with us, not over us; to stand by our side, not ride on our back. Government can and must provide opportunity, not smother it; foster productivity, not stifle it. . . .

In the days ahead I will propose removing the roadblocks that have slowed our economy and reduced productivity. Steps will be taken aimed at restoring the balance between the various levels of government. Progress may be

slow—measured in inches and feet, not miles—but we will progress. It is time to reawaken this industrial giant, to get government back within its means, and to lighten our punitive tax burden. And these will be our first priorities, and on these principles, there will be no compromise.

From “First Inaugural Address,” January 20, 1981.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ After you have finished reading the selection, answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. What has been the relationship between public spending and taxes? How does Reagan propose to change this relationship?

2. What does Reagan assume will happen upon “putting America back to work”?

3. What historic truth does Reagan cite to justify cutting back on the federal government?

4. How does Reagan propose to remove the roadblocks causing inflation, unemployment, and lost productivity?

5. What do you think is the greatest strength in Reagan’s plan? What weakness do you see?

ACTIVITY

Work with a small group to plan a political talk show segment in which a Democrat and a Republican respond to the ideas about government and taxation set forth in this inaugural address. A third person, the talk show host, should interview the party spokespersons. Script the questions and answers and prepare the interviews for a class presentation.

CHAPTER 35

LITERATURE

1. ballads; tell the history and the spirit of Mexican Americans
2. to work
3. her blessing and his safe return
4. They are shoved around and have to beg their way.
5. work is very difficult; have to work on the track or with shovel or a pick.
6. that they deserve what they get when they return to Mexico

ACTIVITY

Students' oral histories might include such issues as conflicts with parents over being too American and feelings of isolation from American culture as well as their native culture.

PRIMARY SOURCE

1. Taxes have increased unfairly, especially for the successful, yet taxes have still failed to keep pace with government spending, which has led to an enormous budget deficit.
2. Inflation will slow and become manageable; the economy will revive. The "idealism and fair play which are the core of our system" will apparently assure that everyone shares in the prosperity.
3. He reminds the American people that they created the federal government to serve their needs, and that government should not grow beyond their consent.
4. presumably by striking federal restrictions and regulations limiting industry and business, and by reducing taxes that discourage the successful business from expanding
5. Answers will vary but may mention the logic of making government conform to good budgeting principles and the naiveté of believing that those who benefit immediately from economic relief will pass on the bounty to those less fortunate.

ACTIVITY

Presentations will vary but should cover party ideology and logic regarding three issues: the

size and role of federal government, the causes of economic woes, and the kind and amount of taxation government should impose on businesses and individuals. The Democratic representative might point to history and socio-economic realities that suggest how Reagan's plan might fail. The Republican representative might support Reagan's ideas by pointing to failures of the preceding Democratic administration.

BIOGRAPHY

1. Ride was greatly influenced by Dr. Elizabeth Mommaerts.
2. She was looking for postdoctoral work in astrophysics and saw a NASA advertisement for applicants for its space program. She applied and was one of 35 people selected from the 8,000 applicants.
3. Answer should include some of the following information: Ride was a distinguished scientist who had already flown on *Challenger* twice. She had direct experience with the craft itself and might have a unique perspective on the possible causes of the explosion. Because of her experience, she would have credibility with the public and with her fellow committee members.
4. First, she became a Science Fellow at the Center for International Security and Arms Control at Stanford University. After two years she went to the University of California as the Director of the California Space Institute. She is also a professor of physics at the university.

ACTIVITY

Students' letters should demonstrate an understanding of the role of a mentor as a positive role model, a resource for answers to questions, a sounding board for ideas, a person who provides consistent positive reinforcement to help the student achieve academic goals, and a potential source for opportunities in a person's chosen field. Students' answers should reflect an understanding that both Mommaert as mentor and Ride as student benefited from the relationship.