

Former Colorado Governor Richard D. Lamm spoke in April 1990 on "The Ten Commandments of Federal-State Relations in the West" at the Burton K. Wheeler Center of Montana State University. We have selected his Commandment VII to reprint and do so with his kind permission. Copies of the complete keynote address are available from the Wheeler Center at MSU, Bozeman, Montana 59717, (406) 994-4371.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT OF FEDERAL-STATE RELATIONS IN THE WEST

By Richard D. Lamm

The West must work particularly hard at developing a sense of community. The West is becoming ethnically more diverse. We must make sure diversity does not overwhelm community. We must spend more time developing our sense of community.

A community is much more than a place on a map. It is a state of mind, a shared vision, a common fate. A community is not a state of nature. A "herd" is a state of nature, a "flock," a "covey," a "gaggle," is a state of nature but, alas, not a community. A community of different religions, races and nationalities is against most of the lessons of history, as we are seeing daily on our TV sets. Humans bond to families, but not necessarily with their neighbors. A community requires a social architecture: bridge builders, structural engineers and build bonds, bridges; who remove barriers.

We have not recently tested community. It is easy to keep a community when we are dividing up the spoils of a rich continent and a growing economy. It is adversity, not success, that tests community. Do we cooperate during times of adversity — to solve, soothe and mitigate, or do we form tribes and, like ravenous dogs, fight over a static pie? Community — like friendship — is never really tested until it *jointly* faces adversity. A rising tide not only raises all ships — it keeps them from bumping into each other.

In light of these new economic and social realities, we must ask: How do we build a quality community?

I believe this to be an immensely important question. We daily see the results of *not* building a community — in Lebanon, in Sri Lanka, in Eastern Europe, in the Soviet Union.

What is going on today in Azerbaijan and Yugoslavia is not a failure of communism. It is a failure of community. The Armenians and Azerbaijanis, the Serbs and the Slovenians were killed each other before Marx was born. The people in Lebanon are no more diverse than in the West — the secret is that we formed a community (*e pluribus*

unum) and Lebanon didn't.

People that share a geographic area must become a *community* — or they become balkanized, fragmented, factionalized. We all bond not only to our families but to our geographic location. But we don't bond easily to our *neighbors*. We seem to instinctively view them as competitors.

A community needs a shared stake in the future. It needs shared language, shared culture, shared norms and values. To say my fate is not tied to your fate is like saying "your end of the boat is sinking."

Emmanuel Kant said: "Religion and language are the world's great dividers." Not totally true, as we see in the religious diversity of the United States — but sobering to our Baskin-Robbins 31-flavor society.

We must give more thought to those things that build community — that hold us together as a community — and how to minimize those factors that separate us — like race, religion and ethnicity. Melting pots that don't melt become pressure cookers. Diversity carried too far is divisiveness.

John Gardner says:

If the community is lucky, and fewer and fewer are, it will have a shared history and tradition. It will have its `story,' its legends and heroes, and will retell that story often. It will have symbols of group identity — a name, a flag, a location, songs and stories...which it will use to heighten its members' sense of belonging. To maintain the sense of belonging and the dedication and commitment so essential to community life, members need inspiring reminders of shared goals and values.

I am convinced that one of the shared values we must have is a shared language. Seymour Martin Lipset put it this way:

The histories of bilingual and bicultural societies that do not assimilate are histories of turmoil, tension and tragedy.

Canada, Belgium, Malaysia, Lebanon — all face crises of national existence in which minorities press for autonomy, if not independence. Pakistan and Cyprus were divided. Nigeria suppressed an ethnic rebellion. France faces difficulties with its Basques, Bretons and Corsicans. In Spain, Basques and Catalans demand linguistic rights and greater autonomy.

The United States, in my opinion, is at a crossroads. It must move toward greater integration or toward more fragmentation. It will either have to assimilate much better all of the peoples within its boundaries, or it will see an increasing alienation and fragmentation. Bilingual and bicultural nations are inherently unstable. We found in the '50s that "separate was inherently unequal." But we must also find that separate is also inherently divisive.

America *can* accept additional immigrants, but we must be sure that they become American. We can be a 'Joseph's coat' of many nations, but we must be unified. We must have English as one of the common glues that hold us together. We should be color-blind, but not linguistically deaf. We should be a rainbow, but not a cacophony. We should welcome different people, but not adopt different languages. We can teach English via bilingual education, but we should take great care not to become a bilingual society because they don't work — anywhere. ■