

NEW YEAR: SOMETHING TO HOPE FOR

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The start of a New Year finds us overwhelmed by an accumulation of anxieties. The economy is staggering, inflation continues, recession deepens and an old-fashioned depression looms ahead. Our authorities and experts are confused, our leaders uncertain and even congenial Pollyannas are hard-pressed to come up with any rosy predictions for the future. Amid all of the turmoil and trouble of our times, the new disease of Naderism continues its malignant spread.

In November, we learned that our traditional Thanksgiving turkey was not safe to eat; in December, we discovered toxins in our drinking water supply and, once again, that Christmas toys could kill children. Through efforts of puritans in the Food, and Drug Administration, zealots of the Consumer Protection Agency, meddlers in Health, Education and Welfare, and fanatics of the Environmental Protection Agency, our nursemaids in Big Government seem determined to control and regulate all normal activity and drain the few remaining joys of living to the bitter dregs.

A year or so ago, columnist James Kilpatrick, annoyed by the insanities of the Consumer Product Protection Commission, wrote a lovely column titled, "Farewell to Kooky." He was particularly upset at the thought of so much time, money and energy expended by still another bureaucratic agency whose studies produced such brilliant wisdom as that beginning skiers are hurt more frequently than experienced ones, that ice skaters should not skate near open water, and that hitting bumps while snow sledding may cause accidents. "Kooky Eyes" was one of a 1300-item listing of dangerous and banned toys, because its "squeaker" could be removed and might be swallowed. "Bloopy Dog's" sharp edges and the "Cheerful Dachshund's" pointed nose condemned them also.

It used to be, a half-century ago, that parents and children alike accepted broken bones, swallowed marbles, nasty cuts and green apple bellyaches in stride. The public endured its illnesses, injuries and infirmities with equanimity and as the accidental but inevitable consequences of growing up and just existing. But that was before the nursemaid nannies of Government insisted that perfection, total safety and enduring life were attainable goals and before we became insurance and litigation conscious. One of the curses of modern society in the advanced nations is that once it has reached a level of satisfactory equilibrium where all seems to be going reasonably well and the common man has adjusted and learned to live with its inequities, the intellectuals and sophisticates move in to improve things. They come with moral certitude to investigate, study and apply behavioral science and sociologic law and theory. They come with impressive titles, with directives and guidelines, with rules and regulations, and they begin to

educate, instruct and plan the people's lives, but always spreading the wastelands of bureaucracy and the briar patches of red tape behind them. The swamplands where Naders breed.

If the year ahead proves to be as bad as predicted and our downhill progress accelerates, perhaps it will carry some of our redundant commissions and agencies down with it and the disease of Naderism will burn itself out, a victim of its own fevers. It might be something to hope for.

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