

Wanted:

By Robert Moses

We are in a fiscal mess. We invited with Federal and state acquiescence and support too many blacks and Puerto Ricans when we manifestly had neither room nor jobs for them. The effects were not merely regional but nationwide. We induced cheap labor to come here to glut a full-up market. We created a huge relief program only part of which should on any reasonable theory fall on New York. We have had little sympathy and aid from Washington.

Locally, we refused to be honest about threatening clouds. We pretended not to see them. Where were the statesmen, bankers, industrial leaders, philosophers, pundits and the news media and advertisers? It is late for wailing, amateur pontificating, the confessional, *mea culpa*, finance miracles and promises henceforth to be good.

Next year will be a tough year for political honesty and 1980 is going to be worse. Where are the leaders? Are we even looking for them? Where are the inducements to enter the dangerous, unprotected public service? Where are the martyrs aching to be burned at the stake? The Joan of Arcs? The Savanarolas?

Where were the wise men of Gotham when our vaunted financial system began visibly to fall apart? Where were the pundits who boasted that you can't build anything too big for New York? Why all the astonishment when we woke one morning forced to extreme remedies such as firing thousands of surplus employes?

They say it's simple. They tossed out 100,000 at \$10,000 a head. Presto. It adds up to a billion. Easy as rolling off a log. Most of them must now in one way or another resort to relief.

How did we so suddenly learn that we must choose between meekness and megalomania, parsimony and extravagance, the low and the strident keys?

We must manifestly reconcile conflicting claims of energy, power, oil and Arabs, demands of women to achieve equality with men by constitutional amendment, executive privilege as against honest government, industry and ecology, science and the arts, youth and age, rural, suburban, urban and state agencies competing for Federal money.

Leaders

The state of chaos is not confined to any one region. We were much worse off between 1930 and 1940. Any competent historian can prove that depressions and inflations are chronic, periodic and cyclical. The times at the moment are out of joint everywhere. The question is simply whose job it is to set them right.

We are in a money dilemma. Bankruptcy is a bad word. So is receivership. Who wants to be a receiver? The banks can't afford to make and operate day-to-day city budgets. Can they, having in their ads established an image of open-handed friendships, suddenly switch to nasty, old Scrooges sitting on their moneybags? Are they now to become cashiers and liquidators mournfully telling the little guy with the empty pockets there's nothing left in the kitty?

Can bonds of a rescue authority be sold without government guarantee and exorbitant interest rates? Have the rescue squads brought anything but a respite of a year or two?

Mayor Beame suffers from having himself been a leading fiscal officer while John Lindsay was flying high, wide and handsome with the city money. Bob Wagner too must bear some responsibility. If you elect an executive because he is agreeable, charismatic and folksy, you can't be heard to complain if incidentally he turns out to be inefficient.

I don't believe the public will stand for naked, outright banker government. Many political leaders have lost public confidence. The media announce that they are untterrified, and detect bright gleams of gold at the end of rainbows. The man in the street is not yet deep enough in the doldrums to accept genuine, forthright, abrasive, self-confident leadership. He still wants peace, not a sword. He is looking for boldness and strength but at the same time practices diplomacy and backslapping. He is mortally afraid of the rough labor leaders.

Administrators are ambivalent. They want to be diplomats. They don't want to fight. They want to reconcile, pacify, softsoap, wangle and trade. When decisions can't be postponed, they seek to share them with the little fellow at home or on the streets interviewed by the pollcats.

All we need is firm, reliable leadership.

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