



William Buckley

## The State of the Union

SANTIAGO, CHILE - - The text of President Nixon's message to Congress takes a little time getting down here, but the delay appears to harmonize with Congress's ho-hum reaction to it. In any event, a few observations.

(1) The address was over-publicized. Such was the build-up that one half expected that Mr. Nixon was going to propose repealing the Constitution, and adopting Robert Hutchins in its place. Instead, they got what the President called "six great goals." They turned out to be a congeries of substantive and formalistic "goals" which do not really appear to advance the diminution of central power which Mr. Nixon throughout refers to as desirable. The most conspicuous is the "great goal" of giving money to the states. It is hard to see just how, under the present program, that is truly to diminish the power of the federal government.

Look at it another way. If the federal government undertakes to give money to the individual states, why isn't that yet another accretion of power in the federal government? It isn't as if Mr. Nixon had

said that the federal government would reduce its taxes by 16 billion dollars. No, the 16 billion will be levied. And then the dollars will be dispatched to the states, which will spend them as the states choose. What's more it is pretty plain, at this point, that the 16 billion dollars Mr. Nixon proposes to give to the states are going to be raised in deficit financing, which we are nowadays pleased to call a "full employment budget." So that the individual citizen will now be taxed to support additional inflation, the proceeds of which will be distributed by lesser government officials. The only way to return power to the individual states is to decrease the federal budget, and permit the states to raise their own taxes, if that is what, in the dialogue between the state legislators and the people, it is decided should be done.

(2) The people. A remarkable, anaphoric insistence on the phrase "power to the people." Mr. Nixon desires to "start power and resources flowing back from Washington to the states and communities and more important, to the people." He desires us to remember "that the truly revered leaders in world history

are those who give power to the people."

The sentiment is balm for the conservative soul, inasmuch as that is the kind of thing we have been talking about for years. Only - and this is an important distinction - we use the word "individual." "Power to the people" is everywhere the phrase that is used by the collectivists in America: the Panthers, the SDS, the Weathermen, the Socialists. By "the people," they mean the central authority, or the mob; as in, "the people's courts," or "the people's justice."

Whether Mr. Nixon is trying suddenly to co-opt the rhetoric of the hard left, one cannot know. But unless one does know that his intentions are crafty, one is left despondent. One cannot forget the address that President Eisenhower gave at Dartmouth shortly after his inauguration, wherein he said amiably that all he wanted of government was that it should be the "big brother" to its citizens. But George Orwell, freshly dead, must have congratulated himself for leaving this vale of tears before 1984. The students are said to have giggled. Senators and

Congressmen don't giggle when the President is speaking, and shouldn't, but they must have broken out a case of refers at the Berkeley Barb.

(3) The Presidential rhetoric was out of trim. For one thing, it is positively unguarded, in one and the same speech, to say a) most Americans "will not - and should not - continue to tolerate the gap between promise and performance" of government; and b) "This" - i.e., Mr. Nixon's program - "can be a revolution as profound, as far-reaching, as exciting, as that first revolution almost 200 years ago," and c) the promise that the 92nd Congress can emerge "the greatest Congress in the history of this great and good nation." How? By doing Mr. Nixon's bidding.

And the language. Our beloved language. "American has long been the wealthiest nation in the world. Now it is time we became the healthiest nation in the world." One is only grateful to the speech-writer for forbearing to add, "and the wisest nation in the world." And if you think I quibble, watch Congress go to work on the President's proposals.