



Was de Tocqueville right?

In anticipation of California's March primary, *CPR* asked the top California representatives of six Republican presidential campaigns to consider the following warning laid down when our nation was young by a visitor from France, Alexis de Tocqueville, and to answer these questions: is de Tocqueville's prediction coming true? If so, why do you think so and what should be done? If not, what is America's most pressing political concern and how does your candidate propose to approach it if elected?

Their answers follow, in reverse alphabetical order. Except in Lamar Alexander's case, the words are *not* those of the candidate, but of the candidate's California representative expressing the candidate's message.

Writing in 1840, in a chapter of *Democracy in America* titled "What sort of despotism democratic nations have to fear," de Tocqueville observed:

[T]he old words despotism and tyranny are inappropriate: the thing itself is new; and since I cannot

name it, I must attempt to define it ... The species of oppression by which democratic nations are menaced is absolute, minute, regular, provident, and mild. It would be like the authority of a parent, if, like that authority, its object was to prepare men for manhood; but it seeks on the contrary to keep them in perpetual childhood

It covers the surface of society with a network of small complicated rules, minute and uniform, through which the most original minds and the most energetic characters cannot penetrate, to rise above the crowd. The will of man is not shattered, but softened, bent, and guided: men are seldom forced by it to act, but they are constantly restrained from acting: such a power does not destroy, but it prevents existence; it does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to be nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.

ALAN KEYES

By Norman Walker

Alexis de Tocqueville correctly observed that the tyranny of civil government absorbed in regulative minutia smothers our citizens and our society. As children of the framers and founders of our constitutional republic, we do not trust the rule of men. Like our forefathers before us, we prove that we believe that man is a fallen creature and though capable of good, left to his

own devices will inevitably choose his personal ends over the ends of the body as a whole. The Constitution was designed, in large measure, to balance the self-ingratiating tendencies of individual men or men acting in concert against the greater interests of the "people." The idea was that we would live under a rule of law. The Constitution, the supreme law of the land, would reflect in its principles the deeply-held beliefs of its framers. It would be a final and impregnable line of defense against the tyranny of despotic leaders.

What has happened over 200 years to bring us to our

present position? The moral consensus that was the nation's compass has virtually eroded away with time. The intellectual climate among the citizenry of the 18th and 19th centuries was considerably different from what we see today. One cannot read the papers and documents, public and private, of the time without concluding that theirs was a religious society that held almost universally to the truth: "There is a God and man is subservient to His will." Even legal briefs, pleadings, and rulings made reference to Biblical principles. The stranglehold of law results from a people unsure of themselves and of others, without a moral compass or consensus, but nonetheless agreeing with the founders that man's behavior needs regulating. Without effective self-government made efficacious by strong religious convictions, more laws, more rules, more regulations in greater detail are sought. Philip K. Howard told how law was suffocating America in his book: *The Death of Common Sense*. Common sense was common among previous generations because they shared values and beliefs. We can see ample proof of this by what they held to be self-evident. We might say that common sense tells us "...that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights..."

America needs a president who will use the office to exert courageous moral leadership, to propose a legislative and executive agenda that will lessen the burden of civil government on the citizenry, and who will restore the faith of ordinary Americans in themselves and their government.

Norman Walker is campaign manager of Californians for Keyes.

PHIL GRAMM

By Lorelei Kinder

IN THE same chapter de Tocqueville also writes: "above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratifications and watch over their fate ... it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides their inheritances." And he concludes: "what remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?"

Is there anyone among us who would deny the truth of

de Toqueville's insight?

What is to be done? Those of us who have been participating in the political process understand that only educated, informed, participating citizens can change the inexorable flow of power to centralized institutions. The problem is we no longer have such a citizenry. Education of our children has been relegated to those who would bury our freedoms in the web of security and false equality.

Senator Phil Gramm has stated his position in seven simple words: "I want more freedom and less government." Senator Gramm has long spoken about the need to stem the growth of government, to remove it from our private lives and to confine it to the role visualized in our Constitution.

He would like every child to have the same advantage he had when he was experiencing problems in school: an involved and loving family, and a caring teacher.

I believe Phil Gramm will, as president, stem growth of government and curtail its encroachment into our lives. Just as he did with the Clinton Health Plan, Gramm will say "no, no, no" and make the no stick. He will change the course of our children's lives, opening up vistas of opportunity by

providing them an education system that involves parents and provides them the basic tools to compete in the 21st century.

And, most important, Phil Gramm will honor the family and undo the tax laws that inhibit family formation and family growth such as the marriage tax penalty and the inheritance tax. Our future is with our children; our families are the nurturers of that future. De Toqueville's ominous vision will never be realized if we recognize, as Phil Gramm has, that our country, "one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all," needs our nurturing and our care just as our children do. The price of liberty has been and will be eternal vigilance That vigilance starts at home.

Lorelei Kinder is California co-director and Alaska and Washington director for Phil Gramm for president.

STEVE FORBES

By William E. Saracino

Our old friend de Tocqueville was as prescient as ever in this passage. He has described American liberalism in the last half of the 20th century with unerring accuracy.

The nanny state, in all its extremes, now exists in America,

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— Lorelei Kinder