

## SERVICING THE GLOBAL CITY – PART TWO

**M**any thought-provoking comments have been made in these three days, and I believe that they can be summarized by five images:

The first image, a message to the entrepreneurs present, is of the Marquis de Lafayette in the early days of the French Revolution, having a drink in a Parisian café. Someone dashed in, shouting, “Where is that mob going?” Lafayette replied, “I don’t know; but I must get there first because I am their leader.”

*Following From the Front*, Lafayette’s goal, is what successful entrepreneurs do. The entrepreneur must understand and anticipate and fill the needs of his demanding and sophisticated clientele; if he does so effectively, he will be handsomely rewarded.

The second image is for local government planners who wish to attract and retain global city activities, with the jobs, tax revenues, purchasing power, etc., they bring. They must remember the picture of the 82-year-old multi-millionaire, questioning his 22-year-old chorus girl bride, ‘Honey, if I lost my money, would you still love me?’ She replied, “Of course I would still love you. *I would miss you but I would still love you!*”

Capital flows to where it is rewarded, global city types to where they are encouraged. When they do not feel nurtured, they will move elsewhere.

The third image is for those anti-city social scientists who are out of touch with the real world. That image is of a large *Mound of Horse Manure*. One hundred years ago, it was widely believed that great

cities could not function without horses, that horses deposit manure, and that the key factor limiting the size of great cities would be their ability to dispose of horse manure.

More recently, some of the world's most important social scientists met in 1968 in a group called The Club of Rome; they predicted the precise year in which the world would run out of each major non-renewable resource. Today, tungsten, molybdenum, etc., are still here but the Club of Rome is not. A similar group predicted that Calcutta, with an expected population of between fifty to sixty million people before the end of the 20th century, would be the first human settlement to collapse and stop functioning. Calcutta was not listening, and is still in business.

Finally, consider the social scientist who reasoned that because roses are prettier, roses would make a better soup than cabbages. That kind of thinking posits that, for ostensibly rational reasons, the world's great cities will fade.

The role of cities will change with time; yes, but bigger is not necessarily better. London and Paris will exist as long as social scientists on government grants seek the world's best theater or the world's best dinners.

A fourth image, relating to public education in our large cities, is of the event held in Stockholm each year when the *King of Sweden presents Nobel Prizes*. Picture 1937 when New York City's free public university, City College, won three Nobel Prizes, a feat never equalled by Oxford or Cambridge, by Harvard or Yale. That over-crowded, under-resourced free college educated the children of poverty-stricken, often non-English speaking foreign immigrants.

Fifty years later, City College was granting degrees to students even the college deans described as "functionally illiterate."

What had changed? Only the social and educational policies. In those days, public school served two functions: to inculcate the values of a civilized society and to teach children to write with precision and read with understanding.

A decade ago, conventional wisdom held that crime in large cities

was insoluble. Today, thanks to Rudolph Giuliani and others, we know that it can be solved. Perhaps when our social and educational policies revert to what they were, we may again produce literate and numerate students from the inner city (and Nobel laureates!). When that happens, the middle class families that have been fleeing our failing public schools may again choose to live in our cities.

The fifth image I suggest is that of *Aristotle and his Friends at a Party*.

Last night, one speaker had forebodings about the future of cities, citing the impact of modern electronic communication, terrorism, the failure of inner-city education, and so forth. He ended his talk by flashing on the screen a citation from Herodotus, who said, "Human prosperity does not long abide in the same place."

I treasure Herodotus for his imagination and his curiosity, but I prefer Aristotle for his wisdom and his accuracy. It was Aristotle who said, "Men first come to the city for safety; they stay on to earn a living; and they remain to pursue the good life."

Some may choose to retreat to a mountain top with their computers; others may choose to retire to places like Florida. But there will always be some of us who remain attached to the dynamism, the vibrancy, the excitement and the stimulus of great cities.

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx praised the bourgeoisie for creating cities that saved the world from "the idiocy of rural life," in which even a computer is of limited help.

Let us hope that those attending this conference on Global Cities share Aristotle's view; and that we all work toward the common goal of making global cities wonderful international centers where civilized people can pursue the good life.

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