

CALIFORNIA AFTER THE US

At the present time, with the United States sliding into destitution, owing the largest debt in the world and losing its two primary sources of export earnings, in agriculture and high-technology, and with the United States also about to collapse in ecological ruin, as long foreseen, new frontiers must be formed.

A cue was declared by two men, both candidates for the Presidency and both from California, in 1979. These men, Ronald Reagan and Jerry Brown, had suggested with their kickoff speeches that a compact throughout North America be established, with a merging of economies and ultimately of political administrations among Canada, Mexico, the United States and possibly some Caribbean or Central American states. After all, as they reasoned, how separately sovereign was Canada, and how much what was once half of Mexico, the southwest US, becoming Mexican again?

Eight years later, at the end of what has become a Last Hurrah Presidency, and with two technocrats vying for that allegedly highest office, the kickoff speeches of the two earlier candidates from California may become dicta.

The Japanese are on the verge of taking over the United States. They control the chip industry; they are moving into Wall Street; they own large chunks of prime real estate; they own a disproportionate share of the US Treasury bills; they replace the US as creditor for third-world countries which decide to default; they already supplant the big US TV companies in major news coverage; they outpace the US in education, patents, research and sales expansion; they even command a larger share of world capital, and find their stock market expanding while the US one shrinks: the United States, as now constituted, descends towards becoming a nation of serfs.

A way to avoid serfdom is to abandon the current United States, let the Japanese go down with their portion of its debt, and restructure. If they want to buy out the US they can have it, as a carcass. So much for a coveting of another culture.

What comes after? Adopt that idea of Jerry Brown and Ronald Reagan, an idea without political bias and born in California; and expand the administrative question, complete with traditions of the Constitution, to all of North America. Recognize that lineations of territory like North Dakota or Utah reflect neither economic nor demographic realities, or that the pollution off New York may well come from New Jersey while the drought in Montana entails river policies as far downstream as Mississippi. Recognize, further, that Manitoba has more in common with Minnesota than with British Columbia, and that the vast economic differences along the Rio Grandé will gradually crumble as US companies shift their plants south of that border. Recognize, at end, that an enterprise like the US is not a country but a constitution, and that its principles are universal, adaptable to any site. Therefore set out to define throughout North America altogether more cohesive units as States.

Each State could be a saltwater drainage basin, an oceanographic and ecological unit with the capacity for resource self-reliance. Each could be a relatively self-contained physical unit. Each could be oriented around a particular saltwater body, sloping into that body as a receiver of nutrients, freshwater and pollutants. The basins of North America could include the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Basin, the Gulf of Mexico Basin, the Hudson Bay Basin, the Alaska Current Slope, the Gulfstream Slope, the Northeast Seaboard and—shown here—the California Current Slope and the Gulf of California Basin, which might together be called "California."

Such a re-formation of California comes none too soon. The droughts of the '80s have brought home the necessity of comprehensive drainage basin management, of both soil and waters, for the Colorado River Basin as it drains into the Gulf of California, and for the California Current Slope, notably in the Central Valley. And the multiple environmental problems caused by combustion of fossil fuels—acid rain, smog, oil and refinery spills, fertilizer runoff, ozone depletion, and the 'greenhouse effect'—can bring on rapid development of an offshore biogas industry, pioneered in the 70s at Caltech, Union Oil and Southern California Edison; that industry requires comprehensive management and pollution control in coastal waters as they receive effluents from the basins slopes. Thus defined, as the California Current Slope and Gulf of California Basin, a new State within North America can develop a coherent and ecologically-sustainable economy.

The two parts, although oceanographically one, can be developed separately, or together. The decision on which way depends, as one can witness with these images, largely on inclination.