

“THE MAN WHOSE PUBLIC SPIRIT IS PROMPTED ALTOGETHER BY HUMANITY AND BENEVOLENCE, WILL RESPECT THE ESTABLISHED POWERS AND PRIVILEGES EVEN OF INDIVIDUALS, AND STILL MORE THOSE OF THE GREAT ORDERS AND SOCIETIES, INTO WHICH THE STATE IS DIVIDED. THOUGH HE SHOULD CONSIDER SOME OF THEM AS IN SOME MEASURE ABUSIVE, HE WILL CONTENT HIMSELF WITH MODERATING WHAT HE OFTEN CANNOT ANNIHILATE WITHOUT GREAT VIOLENCE. WHEN HE CANNOT CONQUER THE ROOTED PREJUDICES OF THE PEOPLE BY REASON AND PERSUASION, HE WILL NOT ATTEMPT TO SUBDUE THEM BY FORCE; BUT WILL RELIGIOUSLY OBSERVE WHAT, BY CICERO, IS JUSTLY CALLED THE DIVINE MAXIM OF PLATO, NEVER TO USE VIOLENCE TO HIS COUNTRY NO MORE THAN TO HIS PARENTS. HE WILL ACCOMMODATE, AS WELL AS HE CAN, HIS PUBLIC ARRANGEMENTS TO THE CONFIRMED HABITS AND PREJUDICES OF THE PEOPLE; AND WILL REMEDY, AS WELL AS HE CAN, THE INCONVENIENCIES WHICH MAY FLOW FROM THE WANT OF THOSE REGULATIONS WHICH THE PEOPLE ARE AVERSE TO SUBMIT TO. WHEN HE CANNOT ESTABLISH THE RIGHT, HE WILL NOT DISDAIN TO AMELIORATE THE WRONG; BUT LIKE SOLON, WHEN HE CANNOT ESTABLISH THE BEST SYSTEM OF LAWS, HE WILL TRY TO ESTABLISH THE BEST THAT THE PEOPLE CAN BEAR.”

Can you state in plain language what Smith is saying a person like this ought to do when faced with a difficult public policy problem?

How common are “men whose public spirit is prompted...by humanity and benevolence”, as Smith describes them here, in government and public policy?

Do you agree that this is the right approach? When might there be exceptions?



**ADAM
SMITH
WORKS**