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Governor's Letter 4-11-89

Conservative George Will's moving description of the squalor and violence of Chicago's Cabrini Green public-housing project was the more significant for his recognition that poverty and hopelessness are the major culprits that thwart well-meant social programs. His refusal to "blame the victims" (or government) here is a repudiation of the laissez-faire style of government he himself has so often advocated ("The Rebarbarization of America," Op-Ed Page March 30).

In contrast, on the same day, Gov. George Deukmejian (letter) fairly spat out his own repudiation of 'The Times' excellent analysis of California's problems (which include a sizable homeless population). By implying that no present or future social problems can be serious enough to warrant government "spending increases," Deukmejian shows that he is one-dimensional on a grand scale.

But the governor should not be blamed for being who he is. Rather, we should ask ourselves whether we really intended his mean-spirited and callous brand of conservatism when we elected him (or when we enacted Prop. 13, for that matter).

Will's "rebarbarization of America" continues apace, and we have yet to show the wisdom needed for laying the groundwork for a healthy social and political climate for our posterity. Not much to be proud of, so far.

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