

EDWARD JOSEPH DODSON

206 PEARLCROFT ROAD
CHERRY HILL, NEW JERSEY 08034

April 2, 1985

Donald McDonald, Editor
The Center Magazine
Center for the Study of Democratic
Institutions
P.O. Box 4068
Santa Barbara, CA 93103

Re: The Future of Democracy

Dear Mr. McDonald:

I was struck by Samuel Huntington's observation that the presence of democratic institutions is, where they exist, in large part due to British and American influence. It has been my view of history that the extent to which the British society has remained democratic is owed to the conservative counterrevolutions of its primary formal colonies, particularly that of the United States. This argument was made in 1942 by Peter Drucker. In The Future Of Industrial Man, he concludes:

The American Revolution brought victory and power to a group which in Europe had been almost completely defeated and which was apparently dying out rapidly: the anticentralist, antitotalitarian conservatives with their hostility to absolute and centralized government and their distrust of any ruler claiming perfection. It saved the autonomous common law from submersion under perfect law codes; and it re-established independent law courts. Above all, it reasserted the belief in the imperfection of man as the basis of freedom.

The aristocratic and elitist makeup of Parliament found new expression in the North American provincial governments; participatory government was being nurtured by a growing individualism on free land. This second factor, the access to an unclaimed frontier, is also identified by Drucker as a requirement to the democratic experience. I have yet to hear a reasoned argument that disputes his observation that,

... the possibility of emigration to the free soil and the equal opportunities of the United States were the safety valves ... which kept the European social system from blowing up.

At least for England and its evolving constitutional-monarchy.

Access to free (or very cheap) land and the accompanying freedom of action available to the colonists in England's North American lands, in Australia, New Zealand and Southern Africa sparked the growth of the democratic process abroad and weakened the aristocratic hold at home.