

Recently I came across a striking illustration of the inability of individuals to plan wisely for the welfare of society, while reading a very stimulating book by the well-known publicist, Theodore H. White, entitled, In Search of History. In this book White described his observations in Europe at a crucial period in its history. In 1947, two years after the close of World War II, Europe still lay in ruins. England and France showed many results of destructive bombing raids, while Germany looked like the face of the moon, pock-marked with ruined buildings and devastated factories. If it were not for the goods and money provided by the Marshall Plan, thousands of people would have starved and centuries might have passed before western Europe would be fully restored. The Marshall Plan was an altruistic endeavor hardly paralleled in history. Billions of dollars were contributed, some of them given to the government of various democratic nations, some expended by the occupation forces in Germany.

White says that at that time the governments of these democratic nations were led by men who desired to use this money in such a way as to provide a better life for all their people, while Germany was controlled by the conquering armies. The Germans were eagerly devouring the few bits of food they could find, and many of them were spending the nights shivering in cellars of destroyed buildings. White says that the leaders of the occupation armies felt that the German people were responsible for all that had occurred and therefore had little desire to help them. They wished to give them only enough aid to enable them to survive with sufficient strength to rebuild their bridges and factories. The American commander ordered that every German should work 48 hours a week rebuilding their shattered industry before he could expect any provision for better living conditions.

Now occurred what White calls the Law of Unintended Consequences. He says that in 1947 the income of the average person in Great Britain was about three times that of the average person in West Germany. In the following years conditions in both areas improved, but the nation with leaders who sought the greatest good for the greatest number lagged far behind the nation that was simply told to work hard and build its own future. After thirty years the average income in Germany was more than three times that in England. The inability of planners to know what will work out best for their nation is strikingly illustrated in White's account of what happened in Europe. Improvement of the character of