

All In The Family

by Charles Whitaker

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The dictionary defines *nepotism* as "favoritism shown to a relative (as by giving an appointive job) on the basis of relationship." One of the much-touted reforms of America's Progressive Era during the early twentieth century was the overthrow of nepotism. Progressives replaced the "spoils system" with a civil service system. Under the spoils system, the winner of an election installed his friends and family in appointed positions. The civil service system attempted to avoid the abuse inherent in the spoils system by allocating government jobs based on merit, not kinship. The idea was to use open examinations to identify the best person for every position, through fair competition. One gained his position by *what* he knew, not *who* he knew. So, nepotism, and the dynastic power structures (the political machines) it built, faded away in America.

Well, not quite, says Steve Sailer in his article "Revolutionary Nepotism" (*The National Interest*, Winter 2003, page 149). George W. Bush is the son of a president, the grandson of a senator, and brother of a governor. Once elected, he ensured that Colin Powell's son, Michael, became Chairman of the FCC, and that Senator Mitch McConnell's wife, Elaine, became Secretary of Labor. "The children of Antonin Scalia, Dick Cheney and Strom Thurmond also benefited" from nepotistic appointments.

The other side of the aisle knows all about nepotism too. The Kennedy clan's dynasty is too extensive to rehearse here. Its most recent addition is Arnold Schwarzenegger of California. Or, consider Chicago's major, Richard M. Daley. He has enjoyed five terms in office, one shy of his father's six.

Writes Sailer:

Powerful men's sons and, increasingly their wives and daughters, are succeeding to political leadership with a regularity reminiscent of the feudal days of old Europe. In 2002, for instance, Senator Frank Murkowski was elected governor of Alaska and promptly named his daughter Lisa to take over his seat in the U.S. Senate.

In this regard, Nancy Pelosi (House Democratic leader); Elizabeth Dole (North Carolina Senator); Mitt Romney (Massachusetts Governor); and John E. Sununu (New Hampshire Senator) have all benefited from relatives in high places.

Nepotism is common around the world. North Korea, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Morocco, the Congo, and the Philippines are all "led by the children of former heads of state." Then, of course, there is Iraq's infamous—and now liquidated—Qusay and Uday, sons of Saddam. Gamal Mubarak will probably succeed his father, Hosni, in Egypt.

At lower echelons as well, kinship plays a key role in governments, especially in failed or failing states. These lands are filled with organized criminals and terrorists who tend to be organized "around blood ties, because the highest level of trust is found within families." Family-mafias flourish in the former client states of "the Soviet Union, the Balkans and now Iraq." Normal police activities are particularly ineffective against such kinship organizations; the chance of planting a spy in them is slim indeed.

These people are often immigrants, who organize around family lines for protection in a foreign, and often hostile, environment. That is why America experienced Italian and Irish mafias in the past. Particularly predatory today is the Kosovo-Albanian mafia.

Americans have buried their heads ostrich-like in the sand, pretending that nepotism does not exist at home and is not much of a factor in the world at large. Wrong. Sailer explains:

Cousin marriage is remarkably common from Morocco to parts of India. . . . Half the married people in Iraq are wed to either a first or second cousin (versus under 1 percent in the United States). These "consanguineous" marriages strengthen family loyalty. If you arrange for your daughter to marry your brother's son, your grandson and heir will also be your brother's grandson and heir, so there is no need to fight over who inherits the family land or herd. On the other hand, cousin marriage undermines loyalty to the state and society, which is one reason why Middle Eastern countries teeter between anarchy and tyranny.

Internet commentator Randall Parker agrees:

Consanguinity is the biggest underappreciated factor in Western analyses of Middle Eastern politics. . . . Extended families that are incredibly tightly bound are really the enemy of civil society because the alliances of family override any consideration of fairness to people in the larger society. Yet, this obvious fact is missing from 99 percent of the discussion about what is wrong with the Middle East. (www.parapundit.com)

Whether Americans want to admit it or not, family counts! Blood is thicker than water. While Americans alternately forget the importance of family and bluster over the evils of nepotism, we in God's church should remember that God's Kingdom will be ruled by one and only one Family. God will bring "many sons into glory" (Hebrews 2:10), where they will rule the universe. Then, government will forever be "all in the family!"