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(Federalismo Ja!)

Federalism Now!

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“If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace.” (Thomas Paine)

Brazilian political power is absurdly concentrated, and we all know that the more concentrated power is, the greater the risk of abuse and corruption. Brasilia, the JK's (?) biggest mistake, absorbs like a giant sponge, the private sector's resources. The greater the distance between political power and the people, the easier it is to trick and exploit them. The parasites, from afar, control every detail of the citizens' lives, and shamefully consolidate the wealth created by the private sector. This process needs to be changed urgently.

One of the mechanisms for reversing this perverse political model is federalism. Basically, it pegs a decentralized form of power ever closer to the general population. As it stands, the average person is preoccupied first with his family, then his condo, neighborhood, county, city, state, country and lastly, the world. It's in our nature. Furthermore, there is the clear feeling that we exert greater influence on things that are near us. The vote at a condominium meeting is infinitely more immediate than a national vote with millions of voters. People's focus is evermore centered in neighborhoods than in distant Brasilia; yet another reason to remove it from there and redistribute it between the states and municipalities.

This seems sufficiently logical and the efficiency of federalism has been empirically proved by examples in America and Switzerland. Frequently, there is competition between the states. The power of the individual can also increase with one's feet, by migrating to another area or opening a business in another state. This will press politicians for greater efficiency. The central government should be left with only the most general functions. At the beginning of the past century, the American federal government accounted for 1/3 of the total government budget. That is federalism. However, much to the dismay of Americans, the central government now absorbs 2/3 of the total budget, hindering management at the state level.

The picture is quite worse in Brazil. The central government collects the taxes to later redistribute among the states and municipalities. This concentrates the ruling power in few hands. To make matters worse, the political system makes it so that a vote in Acre is worth more than a vote in Sao Paulo. The north and north-east population, much like

Brasilia, consisting of a poor and uneducated population, are able to perpetuate an unjust scheme. Via this scheme, the government literally enslaves the tax payers of the south and southeast regions, a sector of the population that is forced to sustain the giant parasite in Brasilia and the other northern states.

Firjan's study concerning the federal collection of tax revenue and the subsequent use of these funds at the state level confirms what we expect. Sao Paulo alone accounts for 40% of the total revenue, followed by Rio de Janeiro at nearly 20%. Meanwhile only 7.5% of the funds are used in Sao Paulo and 5.8% in Rio de Janeiro. The source of the revenue is totally distinct from area of its use. The Federal District, possessing nowhere near the production capacity of Sao Paulo, receives nearly 10% of the revenue, which is already quite strange since Brasilia has a per capita income twice the national average. The State is a machine for income consolidation, independent from the meritocracy. It's a backwards Robin Hood, stealing from the worker and giving to the bureaucrat. Even the Federal District receives roughly 5% of the expenses, almost as much as Rio de Janeiro. This is preposterous!

When we evaluate the average investment per capita between 1995 and 2004, we see that the Federal District ranked third, receiving more than R\$140 per person. This compared to the R\$20 destined for Rio de Janeiro which isn't much more than the R\$15 for Sao Paulo. Brasilia takes the tax revenue from Rio and Sao Paulo and uses it to sustain the civil-service fat cats.

In sum, with the complete absence of federalism in Brazil; and the current perverse electoral and political model, the tax payers of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro carry the rest of the country on their back, especially the parasites of Brasilia. In other times and in other countries, a separatist movement would've emerged. However, violence is not the best solution, it is a tool of last resort; let's instead defend federalism, for yesterday! There has been enough exploitation at the hands of the central government. We should no longer have to front the bills of bureaucrats and coronels. Federalism Now!