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Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

Some thoughts on Vermont

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

Our state has seemed to be struggling for decades. How
might we make it a better place to live and work?

####END SUBHED####

TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

MY WIFE AND I moved to South Newfane in 1995
because we had some ties from childhood to Vermont and
wanted to grow old in a small Vermont village.

Hermine was a Dutch citizen, our children are dual
citizens of Holland and the United States, and we have also lived
in Alaska, Holland, Switzerland and Seattle.

11 I am an architect, and since coming here I have had a
12 chance to build some good buildings; I have also renovated four
13 buildings on my property.

14 I am also pleased that in our village that Peter Lilienthal
15 renovated Village House; a few of us renovated The Old
16 Schoolhouse; Tom Concannon and Ravi Shimpi continue to
17 improve the inn, and builder Matt Ewald is converting the former
18 church to residences.

19 But we need some business and residential growth.

20 * * *

21 AS A CHILD, I recall that Vermont was a rather
22 conservative state politically, and that has certainly changed; it is
23 now considered a left-of-center state.

24 Vermont has seemed to be struggling since we moved
25 here, and there are many characteristics that are not healthy.

26 • The state population, now around 645,000, has been
27 declining.

28 • The public-school population, now about 79,990, has
29 been declining.

30 • The workforce has declined.

31 • At least six colleges have closed.

32 • Vermont is generally perceived as an “anti-business
33 state.”

34 Amanda Janoo, who is running for governor, put it well
35 by describing the political leadership as merely “managing
36 decline.”

37 * * *

38 I WOULD LIKE to offer a few thoughts on how we might
39 solve some of Vermont’s problems and make it an even-better
40 place to live and work.

41 My personal wish list for Vermont includes that the
42 following could occur:

43 1. Modify the tax system by eliminating the property tax
44 and the sales tax and relying only on a personal income tax.

45 The property tax is expensive to enforce and not a
46 reliable judge of value or how much money one might have. The
47 sales tax is a nuisance for business to collect, hurts sales, and
48 drives business to New Hampshire.

49 We all have to file income taxes, and it is a reliable
50 gauge of how much money a person might have, including
51 available for government. Out-of-state property owners could pay
52 a reduced income tax.

53 2. Convert Act 250 to a brief, clearly articulated building
54 code applicable only to very large projects. At present, it is a
55 vaguely worded “opinion piece” that is poorly and very slowly
56 administered, resulting in years to get even a simple permit. With
57 few exceptions, let towns handle the permit process.

58 3. Encourage growth in the villages by funding water
59 and/or wastewater systems in the villages. Move highway funding
60 to support a sense of village, including street trees, sidewalks,
61 and parking. Move utility lines underground.

62 4. Reduce the influence of state government in the public
63 school system, and provide vouchers for all students to allow
64 school choice. This will not hurt good public schools.

65 5. It is fair that all citizens be required to have medical
66 insurance, but work toward a medical insurance system where
67 people purchase private insurance from a host of choices rather
68 than our government-run system, which is failing. For those who
69 are unable to afford medical insurance, provide vouchers.

70 This is the way the very effective Dutch system evolved
71 and works. They abandoned a more socialist agenda because it
72 was not sustainable.

73 6. It is necessary that all citizens have disability and
74 retirement insurance, but work toward a system where people
75 purchase private insurance from a host of choices rather than our
76 government-run system, which is failing.

77 This is the way the very effective Dutch system evolved
78 and works. They abandoned a more socialist agenda because it
79 was not sustainable.

80 7. Rather than the state spending money on terribly
81 expensive, so-called affordable housing projects, provide low-
82 interest vouchers, secured by the real estate, directly to home
83 buyers to assist in obtaining a home.

84 8. Reduce the size of the Legislature and impose term
85 limits of, say, 12 years.

86 * * *

87 WHEN I SEE our politicians of different parties so angry at
88 each other and so unable to find common ground, I am reminded
89 that Vermont left-of-center pundit, John Kenneth Galbraith, once
90 told me that one of his two best friends in the world was the
91 right-of-center conservative, William F. Buckley Jr.

92 Politics is only a part of life, and we could use more of
93 that attitude toward dealing with others with whom we might not
94 agree.

95 "Socialism works until you run out of other people's
96 money," and democratic socialism works in, say, Norway
97 because the country has a strong work ethic but also receives
98 large oil revenues.

99 We all want Vermont to be a beautiful and prosperous
100 state with a good life for as many as possible.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

101 **CHARLES BERGMANN** is an architect from South
102 Newfane.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

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####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

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VIDEO:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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