

King Barry And The Nation Of Decline

There once was a country called Decline. It was an immense land, blessed by many forests, lakes, and rivers, and overflowing with natural resources. But its most valuable resource was its people. They were generally hard-working, industrious, and innovative, but over the years many of them had grown lazy. Their laziness led to poverty, and that poverty led to envy and resentment of those who had remained productive and prosperous.

Many of the citizens of Decline were also naive and easily swayed by emotion, allowing rational thought to fall by the wayside. As the years passed, the people of Decline, who were susceptible to the charms of politicians skilled in the arts of manipulation and persuasion, elected leaders who had minimal knowledge of how anything functioned but who always made grand promises of how everything could be improved.

One day an exotic foreigner appeared out of nowhere. Although of unimpressive stature, Barry Little wore expensive, tailored clothes with sharply-creased pants, and he had an air of confidence that, in turn, gave others confidence. The visitor saw that the people of Decline were despondent and frightened and he told them he had the key to their happiness. "Make me your king!" said Barry Little. "I can solve your problems. I can clear the clouds from the skies. I can calm the storms of the seas and make your journeys safe! I can transform the land of Decline!"

Many in the land of Decline—especially the young people and those who shared Little's foreign ancestry—enthusiastically supported the mysterious man with no past but many promises. Even the older, wiser citizens, who certainly knew that the clouds and the seas could not be controlled, got caught up in the unbridled enthusiasm, and Barry Little was soon crowned King Barry.

Those who had most enthusiastically supported the ascension of King Barry were soon made powerful Czars, and the people of Decline smiled—for they knew that King Barry was a man of action who would not allow much-needed progress to be delayed by the foolishness of outdated laws and procedures. (Even the nation's Constitution was declared old and irrelevant by one of Decline's old and irrelevant Supreme Judges.)

Immediately King Barry and his new Czar of Carriages set about addressing the issue of the rising cost of carriage repair. Their First Decree was to declare that carriage repair shops could not raise their prices without the permission of Czar Kathleen. Their Second Decree required those shops to repair the carriages of the poor for free. Their Third Decree required carriage-less citizens to pay a carriage tax. Their Fourth Decree declared that carriage service would henceforth require neither shoes nor shirt.

As time passed, increasing numbers of carriage repair shops closed, and few of Decline's citizens wanted to enter the carriage repair business. King Barry hired many of his strongest supporters to work at the new Royal Carriage Repair Shops that were funded by

the new carriage tax, but most of them were unskilled and capable only of managing the long queues of broken carriages.

It was, however, the Fifth Decree of King Barry and Czar Kathleen that enraged many of the citizens of Decline, especially the members of the Goose Protection Society. The Fifth Decree required that, in addition to providing tar for the greasing of wheels, carriage repair shops must also provide goose grease for that purpose. Although some shops had long provided both lubricants, those shops owned by members of the Goose Protection Society naturally did not. The Fifth Decree, to the surprise of few, caused feathers to fly.

Across the land of Decline there was outrage! Even those who rarely thought of geese wondered why King Barry would so foolishly cause so much dander to be raised over ganders. The citizens of Decline began to wonder about King Barry's wisdom. They looked back at his promises and realized he had kept none. In fact, across the land there was much dissatisfaction—even though the King's Newspaper proclaimed on a daily basis that the clouds would soon disappear and the seas were on the verge of calming.

Then one day, when King Barry was least expecting it, the citizens of Decline marched on the Pearl Palace, arrested Barry Little and his wife Neigh, and deported them to a far-off land called Indonesia.

After Barry's decrees were discarded, the nation of Decline rapidly returned to normal. Soon the older, wiser citizens of the land began to instruct the younger citizens on the ways of the past. Although they were skeptical at first, the young citizens of Decline soon realized that their future was in their hands, not in the hands of a king.

And that is how the land of Decline became the land of Prosperity...

Don Fredrick
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