

Introduction to the Collection

Guido Calabresi

Charlie was one of those very rare people who for some reason are always slightly out of phase with the canonic view of their time. And, as a result, they see things everyone else misses. When one combines that fundamental difference of vision with great intelligence and superb writing skills, one has the rarest of things: a true visionary, a prophet. Rousseau was one. In an odd way, Hugo Black was too. Charlie was that again and again.

Understanding how certain welfare rights are the modern equivalent of land property in ancient days (which Charlie posited in his article *The New Property*) is one example of this. But the insight into young people's deep anguish and need for fundamental change, which underlay *The Greening of America*, is the most dramatic.

Most of us in the mid-1960s thought the world was fine and headed in a comfortably liberal and unified direction. This was the post-Kennedy canonic view. Charlie saw it differently and walked the halls of Yale Law School saying, in effect: repent, the end is near.

His book and the explosion of the early 1970s followed. The explosion scared "good thinking" people. His book both described it as inevitable and showed how unexpected good might flow from it.

No wonder it swept the nation. Was it completely correct? No; prophets rarely are. Did it see and enlighten what most of us had missed altogether? Absolutely!