

MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE®

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RENEWAL 10 POLITICS — 2012 PART 2

WE START THIS CHAPTER WITH TWO VERY DIFFERENT POLITICAL ATTITUDES. THE FIRST CONSISTS OF THE CLOSING WORDS OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE,

“... WE MUTUALLY PLEDGE TO EACH OTHER OUR LIVES, OUR FORTUNES AND OUR SACRED HONOR.”

AND THE SECOND COMES FROM REP. TIMOTHY JOHNSON (R-IL) WHO SIGNED A PLEDGE IN 2002 NOT TO RAISE TAXES, THEN EARLIER THIS YEAR DENIED IT AND, WHEN THE DOCUMENT WAS SHOWN TO HIM, SAID “HIS WORD WAS NO LONGER BINDING.”¹

TIME PASSES; CHANGE IS CONSTANT. AND IN A LITTLE OVER TWO CENTURIES THE WORDS OF OUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES TELL A TALE OF STARTLINGLY DIFFERENT MORALITY AND A REVERSAL OF VALUES.

DOES THIS CHANGE REPRESENT PROGRESS OR DECLINE? IS IT A SIDE-BAR COMMENT ON OUR BEING A NATION OF LAWS? HAVE WE ACCOMPLISHED WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN UNIMAGINABLE IN 1776 — THE ABANDONMENT OF HONOR AND RESPONSIBILITY TO EACH OTHER IN OUR GOVERNMENT? AND, FINALLY, FACING THE GAP BETWEEN THESE TWO DEFINING STATEMENTS, IS THIS A NATIONAL TRANSIT WE WISH TO CONTINUE? AND WHAT IS ITS SIGNIFICANCE AS WE FACE PRESIDENTIAL AND CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS NEXT MONTH?

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POLITICS IN OUR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IS A PROCESS WHEREBY ONE’S INDIVIDUAL VOTE AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL SHAPES OUR LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. IN THIS PROCESS THE ONE-MAN, ONE-VOTE POPULAR TALLY IS USED FOR LOCAL AND STATE ELECTIONS, BUT IS TRANSFORMED AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL BY THE ADDITION OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE WHICH PERMITS SOME MATHEMATICAL LEEWAY, BUT GENERALLY HAS CONFIRMED THE POPULAR VOTE.

OVER THE YEARS, OUR POLITICAL LIFE AND PROCESS HAS REGULARLY BEEN FORMED BY CHANGE IN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, NEEDS AND, TO INCREASING RECENT EXTENT, IDENTITY. WE HAVE CHANGED FROM THIRTEEN COLONIES TO A NATION; FROM BEING CENTERED ON THE EAST COAST TO A TRANSCONTINENTAL PRESENCE; FROM AN AGRICULTURAL TO AN INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY; FROM LITTLE TO UNTOLD WEALTH; FROM NON-UNION TO UNION LABOR; FROM STRUGGLING, NEWLY INDEPENDENT NATION TO WORLD SUPERPOWER; FROM A LOCAL AND STATE BANKING SYSTEM TO LARGE INTERNATIONAL BANKS AND THE FEDERAL RESERVE; FROM LOCAL, FAMILY-OWNED MEDIA TO OUR PRESENT, UBIQUITOUS MAINSTREAM MEDIA (MSM). WE HAVE ALSO EXPERIENCED A VARIETY OF CONSTITUTIONAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES THAT HAVE WORKED THEIR WAY THROUGH MANY AREAS OF OUR NATIONAL LIFE/THOUGHT AND HAVE MOVED US FROM A COHESIVE TO A FRACTIONALIZED SOCIETY.

THESE CHANGES COMBINE TO TELL MUCH OF OUR NATIONAL HISTORY. THEY HAVE HAD POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES,

IN THIS ISSUE: WE CONTINUE THE EXPLORATION OF OUR CURRENT POLITICAL CONDITION.

OUR NEXT ISSUE WILL DEAL WITH RELIGION AS A WORLD FORCE IN THE MESSY MIX OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURES.

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SOME MINOR AND SOME MAJOR, BUT IT IS NOT THEIR INDIVIDUAL IMPACT THAT CONCERNS US NOW. IT IS TOO LATE FOR THAT.

RATHER, IT IS THEIR CUMULATIVE IMPACT — BOTH THEIR TOTAL COMBINED FORCE AND THEIR RATE OF GROWTH THAT WE MUST FACE. OUR POLITICAL LANDSCAPE HAS DRASTICALLY CHANGED. BECAUSE THE NATURE OF THE GOVERNMENT/CITIZEN RELATIONSHIP HAS BEEN ALTERED, WE HAVE COME TO THINK AND ACT DIFFERENTLY. WE ACCEPT FAILURE, CORRUPTION AND ARROGANCE IN WASHINGTON, AND REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS ALIKE PUSH THE NOTION THAT ONLY ONE PARTY CAN OFFER GOOD GOVERNMENT.

NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. TAKE THE QUARTER CENTURY OF BUSH I THRU OBAMA WITH TWO DEMOCRATIC AND TWO REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATIONS. HAS OUR GOVERNMENT, OR OUR INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES, OR OUR INTERNATIONAL OR NATIONAL STATUS IMPROVED? WE HAVE HAD AMPLE EVIDENCE OF ERROR IN OUR POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. IT IMBEDS ITSELF IN OUR POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND GROWS STRONGER WITH TIME AND PRACTICE. THIS YEAR WE WILL HOLD OUR SEVENTH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SINCE THAT OF BUSH I IN 1988. ITS MOST DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTIC IS THAT BOTH PARTIES ARE EXPECTED TO SPEND A RECORD TOTAL OF ABOUT \$6 BILLION AND THAT OUR NATIONAL DEBT HAS ALSO SET A NEW RECORD OF CLOSE TO \$16 TRILLION.

BOTH PARTIES WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE THAT THEY PROVIDE US WITH A STEADY STREAM OF NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS. THE RECORD IS SOMETHING ELSE.

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WE HAVE BURDENED OUR CONTEMPORARY POLITICS WITH SO MANY CONTRADICTIONS AND FALSEHOODS THAT THE PROSPECT FOR NATIONAL DEBATE ALONG LINES OF PRINCIPLE HAS ALL BUT DISAPPEARED IN OUR MEDIA, POLITICAL PARTIES AND CONGRESS.

SOME ARGUE THAT OUR SOCIETY HAS BECOME SO STRATIFIED THAT IT HAS BECOME A DETERMINANT OF POLITICAL CHOICE AND, THEREFORE, THE NATIONAL DEBATE. THAT IS A POSSIBILITY. ENGLAND IN THE 19TH CENTURY, HOWEVER, PROVIDES A CONTRARY EXAMPLE. IT WAS AS ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY STRATIFIED AS ANY FREE, PUBLICLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT THEN KNOWN, AND YET ACHIEVED A LEVEL OF SPIRITED AND INFORMED POLITICAL DEBATE WAY BEYOND OUR CURRENT CAPABILITY.

WHY? THE ANSWER IS EVIDENT IN OUR PRESENT STRUCTURE. WE HAVE EXPERIENCED (AND ENCOURAGED) A TREMENDOUS GROWTH IN THE CONSTITUENCIES TO WHICH GOVERNMENT FEELS IT MUST RESPOND AND SUPPORT. THIS DIVISION OF OUR NATIONAL SELF INTO COMPETING CONSTITUENCIES, WHICH NOW SEEKS ACCEPTANCE UNDER THE BANNER OF MULTICULTURALISM, IS AT THE CENTER OF OUR FAILING POLITICS, FOR, LEAVING OUT WHATEVER ECONOMIC, SOCIAL OR POLITICAL RESULTS WERE INTENDED, ITS EMBRACE UNDER BOTH REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS HAS BEEN A DISMAL FAILURE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST.

AS MORE CONSTITUENCIES ARE FORMED AND SERVED BY SPECIAL INTERESTS AND CONGRESS, WE ARE INCREASINGLY SUBDIVIDED INTO A MASS OF MANY GROUPS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, IDENTITIES. OUR RESEMBLANCE TO AND RECOLLECTION OF WHAT WE WERE HAS BEEN SUBVERTED BY OUR POLITICS OF THE MOMENT.

OUR CONSTITUTION WAS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A GOVERNMENT THAT COULD SERVE THE PEOPLE OF ITS TIME AND FUTURE GENERATIONS. IT WAS A SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE DOCUMENT OF UNITY AND INDEPENDENCE.

TODAY, OUR GOVERNMENT REJECTS UNITY IN FAVOR OF ATTEMPTING TO SERVE/ SATISFY MULTIPLE ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, ETHNIC, NATIONAL AND RACIAL IDENTITIES. FROM A SOCIETAL POINT OF VIEW, THERE IS AN ENORMOUS DISCONNECT BETWEEN THESE GROUPS' PROGRESS TOWARDS THEIR GOALS AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST. THIS IS ALSO TRUE OF THEIR POLITICAL STATUS WHICH IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE COMPETITION BETWEEN THEM.

AS A MATTER OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY, THIS IS A SAD REVERSAL FROM "FROM THE MANY, ONE" (E PLURIBUS UNUM) TO "FROM THE ONE, MANY". FOR EXAMPLE, E PLURIBUS UNUM, WHICH HAD GUIDED OUR IMMIGRATION POLICY FOR OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS, WAS PUT ON SEEMINGLY PERMANENT "HOLD" BY LYNDON JOHNSON'S GREAT SOCIETY AND A COMPLIANT CONGRESS IN 1965, AS OUR HISTORIC AND SUCCESSFUL GOAL OF ASSIMILATION WAS ABANDONED.

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KING CORN

THE PRICE OF CORN HAS RECENTLY REACHED A RECORD OF OVER \$8/BUSHEL, AND PRES. OBAMA HAS PUSHED FOR

ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO FARMERS UNDER PROPOSED FARM RELIEF LEGISLATION. WHAT GOES ON HERE — INCREASING GOVERNMENT CROP SUPPORT IN TIMES OF RECORD HIGH PRICES?

CORN IS THE WORLD’S LARGEST GRAIN CROP REPRESENTING ALMOST 40% OF THE GLOBAL HARVEST. IT CURRENTLY STANDS AT 900 MILLION TONS FOLLOWED BY 700 MILLION FOR WHEAT AND 460 MILLION FOR RICE. ITS DOMINANCE OF THE WORLD GRAIN MARKET IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT IT IS THE KEY ELEMENT IN BEEF, POULTRY AND PORK DIETS AND THE FOOD PRODUCTS THEY PRODUCE².

AFTER SUNLIGHT AND WATER, U.S. GOVERNMENT FUNDING IS PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN DETERMINING THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF OUR FARM ECONOMY WHICH HAS EXPERIENCED ACTIVE GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN PRICING, PRODUCTION, MARKETING AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OVER MANY YEARS. OUR FARM ECONOMY IS ANYTHING BUT A FREE MARKET, BUT THERE IS LITTLE POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR LETTING NATURE’S WAY PREVAIL.

WE WOULD ORDINARILY ASSOCIATE RECORD PEACETIME PRICES WITH INCREASING DEMAND AND, INDEED, AS THE WORLD’S POPULATION HAS EXPLODED IN THE LAST HALF CENTURY, GLOBAL FOOD PRICES HAVE MOVED STEADILY UPWARDS. BUT SHARP RECENT PRICE RISES BOTH HERE AND ABROAD ARE ALSO DUE TO REDUCED SUPPLY CAUSED BY DESTRUCTIVE WEATHER FACTORS SUCH AS DROUGHT/FLOODING AND THE EXTENSIVE FOREST FIRES THAT HAVE RAVAGED OUR WESTERN STATES.

FOR AN ECONOMIC SECTOR FOR WHICH NATURE IS A LIFE OR DEATH PROVIDER, OUT OF CONTROL CLIMATE CHANGE IS A KILLER. IN AN ELECTION YEAR SUCH AS THIS, PRES. OBAMA’S ADDED BILLIONS FOR FARM SUPPORT PROGRAMS MAY BE GOOD POLITICS AND BUY SOME VOTES, BUT THEY WILL HAVE NO EFFECT UPON THE UNDERLYING PROBLEM OF EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS.

OUR PRESENT WORLD POPULATION IS NOW 7.6 BILLION AND GROWING AT THE RATE OF 80 MILLION A YEAR. IF WE MAKE THE UNLIKELY ASSUMPTION THAT IT WILL CONTINUE AT THAT PACE WITHOUT ANY INCREASE FOR 40 YEARS, THEN AROUND MID-CENTURY WE WILL HAVE ADDED 3.2 BILLION AND REACHED 10.8 BILLION. AS THE US CANNOT ESCAPE THIS RELENTLESS FORCE, OUR PRESENT 320 MILLION COULD EASILY GROW TO 435, AND PERHAPS 450, MILLION.

IN BOTH CASES GROWING DEMAND WILL FACE DIMINISHING SUPPLY. TWENTY-FIVE TO FORTY PERCENT OF THIS YEAR’S DOMESTIC CORN CROP MAY BE LOST OR DAMAGED ENOUGH TO RENDER IT INSUFFICIENT TO FEED THE ANIMALS AND HUMANS THAT RELY UPON IT FOR THEIR PRIMARY SOURCE OF NUTRITION.

CORN GOES INTO EVERYTHING — LIVESTOCK, DAIRY, POULTRY, SWEETENERS, BEVERAGES. IN FEEDING LOTS AND SUPERMARKETS CORN IS KING AND CLOSE BEHIND COME WHEAT, RICE AND SOY BEANS.

OUT OF CONTROL INCREASES IN THESE PRICES WOULD HAVE AN UNIMAGINABLY DESTRUCTIVE IMPACT ON OUR CONSUMER ECONOMY WHICH ACCOUNTS FOR ABOUT 70% OF OUR GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP). WE HAVE SEEN IN

OTHER NATIONS CONSEQUENCES OF FOOD PRICE INFLATION THAT INCLUDE MASS PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS AND CIVIL UNREST. HOW WOULD WE REACT? OUR PEOPLE? THE POLICE? OUR GOVERNMENT?

SOMETHING AS BASIC AS THE COST OF OUR FOOD EQUATES IN SERIOUSNESS TO THE COST OF OUR LIFESTYLE— I.E. OUR NATIONAL DEFICITS AND DEBT. OUR POLITICAL LEADERS AND LEADERS-IN-WAITING SHOULD HAVE POLICIES AND POSITIONS AT THE READY TO OFFER TO THE VOTING PUBLIC BY DEBATE, SPEECH OR PRESS RELEASE.

FARM POLICY IS SECOND TO NONE IN IMPORTANCE AND SHOULD BE AT THE FRONT IN THIS YEAR OF PRESIDENTIAL AND CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS, BUT IT IS AMONG THE MISSING. WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HEARD A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE GIVE A SPEECH ON FARM POLICY?

AND IT WON’T HAPPEN NOW. WE’RE SO EMBROILED IN “GOTCHA” POLITICS THAT BOTH PARTIES AND THEIR CANDIDATES WILL STAY CLEAR OF ANY STATEMENT THAT WILL PROVIDE THEIR OPPONENTS WITH ATTACK MOMENTS OR MECHANISMS. SPECIFIC POLICY STATEMENTS ARE IDEAL TARGETS.

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STAGNATION

OUR POLITICAL AND EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS ARE SEEN TO BE TWO OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT AND CHARACTERISTIC INSTITUTIONS. FOR THE MOST PART, THEY UNFORTUNATELY SEEM TO RUN ON SEPARATE TRACKS, BUT OCCASIONALLY THEY APPEAR TO COME TOGETHER. FOR EXAMPLE, AT THIS YEAR’S MISS USA PAGEANT ONLY SIX OF THE ELEVEN FINALISTS WERE ABLE TO IDENTIFY JOE BIDEN AS OUR VICE-PRESIDENT³. WE MUST BEAR IN MIND THAT THE PROMOTIONAL LITERATURE FOR THIS CONTEST MAKES FREQUENT AND STRONG REFERENCES TO THE WINNER’S ROLE IN REPRESENTING AMERICA.

AS SHOCKING AND TRAGIC AS THIS REVELATION IS, IT EXPOSES A VERY UGLY TRUTH, WHICH IS THAT THESE TWO HISTORIC AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS NOW SHARE A MOSTLY STAGNANT EXISTENCE WHICH PREVENTS THEM FROM FULFILLING ROLES THAT IN THEIR PAST WERE CAPABLE OF PROVIDING THE ENERGY, INFORMATION AND GRAVITAS NECESSARY FOR LEADERSHIP.

“ . . . IT HAS FAILED IN BOTH VISION AND DUTY.”

INSTITUTIONS ARE NO MORE PERFECT THAN THEIR FOUNDERS AND MUST ACCUMULATE AND BEAR THE SCARS OF CHANGE. IN PAST TIMES AMERICA HAS RANKED WITH THE BEST, WITH ENGLAND AND FRANCE, IN ENCOURAGING AND MAINTAINING THE STRENGTH OF ITS INSTITUTIONS, BUT IN RECENT YEARS HAS BEEN LESS SUCCESSFUL AND, AS REGARDS EDUCATION AND POLITICS, IT HAS FAILED IN BOTH VISION AND DUTY. BOTH ARE NOW STAGNANT MASSES THAT LACK THE INTEGRITY, THE IDENTITY AND THE PURPOSE OF FORMER TIMES, AS WELL AS THE POWER OF SELF-CORRECTION.

OUR EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE IS BESET BY MANY PROBLEMS WHICH WE WILL EXPLORE IN A LATER, SEPARATE CHAPTER, BUT WHAT WE MUST FACE TODAY IS THAT IT CONTINUES TO TURN OUT A GROWING MASS OF UNDEREDUCATED AND UNEDUCATED GRADUATES ILL EQUIPPED TO MEET THE DEMANDS THAT COLLEGE OR POST GRADUATE LIFE WILL PUT TO THEM.

UNLESS OUR K-12 EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IS VASTLY IMPROVED, THIS ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY INDIGESTIBLE MASS WILL CONTINUE TO GROW. WHEN AND WHERE POLITICAL FORCE IS APPLIED, IT WILL REQUIRE MORE EFFORT, MORE MONEY, MORE LEGISLATIVE MANIPULATION, MORE SPEECHES/ PHOTO-OPS WITH LITTLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS UNLESS THE CORE, UNDERLYING ISSUES ARE ADDRESSED.

SIMILARLY, OUR POLITICAL INSTITUTION HAS REACHED A POINT OF STAGNATION CHARACTERIZED BY PROLONGED BICKERING AND ACCUSATIONS BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES AND THEIR CANDIDATES.

“BUT WHERE IS THE SENSE OF COMMON PURPOSE, THE VISION OF OUR NATION’S INTEREST?”

OUR “MOMENT AT THE BARRICADES” WAS OUR REVOLUTION AGAINST ENGLAND UNDER THE DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP OF OUR FOUNDERS. IT WAS A CRITICAL ELEMENT IN OUR TRANSITION FROM SEPARATE COLONIES TO UNCONTESTED WORLD POWER, BUT IT HAS DEGRADED OVER THE YEARS, ESPECIALLY THE LAST FIFTY, AND IS NOW A REMNANT RATHER THAN A DRIVING FORCE. TODAY OUR POLITICAL PARTIES HAGGLE AND HECKLE, AND THEIR MEMBERS PREEN BEFORE THE MEDIA’S CAMERAS AND DOMINATE THE NEWS CYCLE. BUT WHERE IS THE SENSE OF COMMON PURPOSE, THE VISION OF OUR NATION’S INTEREST?

IF GIVEN A CHOICE TODAY, MOST AMERICANS WOULD PREFER THE CALM AND FLEXIBILITY OF A CENTRIST GOVERNMENT CAPABLE OF MANAGING THE COUNTRY’S AFFAIRS EFFICIENTLY AND MAKING WHATEVER PROGRESS THE PUBLIC CONSENSUS DEEMS NECESSARY TOWARDS AGREED UPON SOCIAL, ECONOMIC OR HISTORICAL GOALS.

IDEOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES WOULD BE LEFT TO THE MORE EXTREME VOICES AT THE EDGES WHOSE MESSAGES WOULD SERVE TO INTRODUCE, NOT IMPOSE, THEIR IDEOLOGICAL CONCERNS FOR GOVERNMENT’S CONSIDERATION.

THE POLITICAL TURMOIL OF THE LAST HALF CENTURY HAS RESULTED, FIRST, FROM THE APPEARANCE OF THE NEW LEFT IN THE ‘60S AND, THEN, THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GOP CONSERVATIVE WING INTO TODAY’S FAR RIGHT. THE TIME, THE ENERGY, THE MONEY AND THE EFFORT REQUIRED TO WAGE THIS IDEOLOGICAL WARFARE HAS HAD A VERY VISIBLE AND NEGATIVE EFFECT UPON THE EFFICIENCY AND QUALITY OF OUR GOVERNMENT.

THE RESULT HAS BEEN FREQUENT CHANGES IN BOTH THE CONGRESS AND THE WHITE HOUSE THAT REARRANGE THE SEATS OF POWER ENOUGH TO PROVIDE A SENSE OF COSMETIC IMPROVEMENT, BUT HAVE NOT DISTURBED OUR LARGER PATTERN OF GOVERNMENTAL DETERIORATION.

THIS CHANGE IN THE EXERCISE OF POLITICAL POWER HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED, AND ENABLED, BY A SHIFT IN

POLITICAL PURPOSE. WITH POWERFUL ASSISTANCE FROM BOTH INCREASED FUNDING AND MEDIA EXPOSURE, OUR POLITICAL CLASS HAS ABANDONED ITS TRADITIONALLY COMPETITIVE, BUT OFTEN COOPERATIVE, ROLE FOR ONE OF OVERRIDING ENMITY.

IN POLITICS THERE ARE ALWAYS MOVEMENTS WITHIN MOVEMENTS, BUT OFTEN AT DIFFERENT TIMES AND PLACES, MAKING IT EASY FOR US TO MISTAKE ONE FOR THE OTHER AND TO FAIL TO DISTINGUISH THE SMALLER CYCLE FROM THE LARGER PATTERN.

IT WOULD DO THE COUNTRY A GREAT SERVICE IF BOTH PARTIES WOULD UNDERTAKE TO PRESENT THEMSELVES IN WAYS THAT WOULD REDUCE, OR EVEN ELIMINATE, THIS CONFUSION, BUT SUCH A STEP IS UNLIKELY.

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STAGNATION IS GENERALLY SEEN AS A PROCESS THAT TAKES TIME TO ESTABLISH AND, THEREFORE, IS FELT, IF AT ALL, ONLY GRADUALLY. THIS, AND BECAUSE IT ALSO USUALLY INVOLVES DIMINISHED MOVEMENT, LESSENS OUR AWARENESS OF IT. STILL, OUR CURRENT POLITICAL STAGNATION IS SO ADVANCED AND EVIDENT THAT WE CANNOT REASONABLY DENY IT.

IN THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL STAGNATION IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR ISSUES THAT ARE ONLY MILDLY POLITICAL, OR PERHAPS NOT EVEN POLITICAL, TO BECOME MAGNIFIED AND THEN RAISED TO “ALL OR NONE”, “LIFE OR DEATH” STATUS. ONCE SO ELEVATED, THEY MUST BE DEFENDED OR PROPAGATED AT ANY COST. THIS INVARIABLY CREATES PHILOSOPHICAL AND STRUCTURAL RIGIDITY WHICH MAKE THEM MORE EXPENSIVE AND LESS CREDIBLE ELEMENTS AROUND WHICH TO FASHION NATIONAL ELECTIONS.

AS WE APPROACH OUR POLITICAL ELECTIONS, THE TIME COMES WHEN BOTH PARTIES HAVE TO ANNOUNCE THEIR PLATFORMS. IN OUR SYSTEM THIS HAS RANGED FROM A MOMENT OF REAL IMPORTANCE TO ONE OF ALMOST LAUGHABLE AVOIDANCE. FOR AT THE CONVENTIONS THE CLAIMS, STATEMENTS, BOASTS, AND PROMISES OF EACH CANDIDATE SEEKING NOMINATION MUST BE MADE PALATABLE TO ALL IN ATTENDANCE AND THEN OFFERED AS THE MAGIC POTION THAT WILL INSPIRE AND ENERGIZE THE WHOLE PARTY THROUGH THE CAMPAIGN AHEAD AND TO VICTORY ON ELECTION DAY.

THE POLITICAL MENU IS POWERFUL MEDICINE. EACH ITEM IS PARSED, REVIEWED, MODIFIED AND TESTED MANY TIMES. THE PARTY PLATFORM STARTS OFF AS A MULTI-PAGE DOCUMENT DESIGNED TO PLEASE EVERYONE AND THEN IS EDITED DOWN TO A BRIEF (USUALLY ONE OR TWO PAGES) CONDENSATION OF MAJOR ISSUE POSITIONS. INEVITABLY, IT INCLUDES SOME OMISSION, SOME SHADING AND OTHER WAYS TO BRIDGE DEEP DIVIDES, BUT AT THE CONVENTIONS’ CONCLUSIONS BOTH NOMINEES HAVE A STATEMENT OF APPROVED PARTY DIRECTION AND POSITION TO WHICH THEIR CAMPAIGNS MUST GENERALLY CONFORM. STILL AND ALL, CANDIDATES OF BOTH PARTIES HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY ADEPT AT CREATING WIGGLE ROOM WHICH PERMITS THEM TO ROUND OFF THE PLATFORM’S SHARPEST POINTS.

CORRUPTION

CORRUPTION IN OUR GOVERNMENT IS MORE EXTENSIVE AND ACCEPTED THAN AT ANY TIME IN OUR HISTORY. IT EQUALS THAT OF ROME AT ITS PEAK, THE PRE-LUTHERAN MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE PAPACY AND WHAT WE FIND TODAY THROUGHOUT THE THIRD WORLD IN AFRICA, THE NEAR EAST AND THE BANANA REPUBLICS OF LATIN AMERICA.

IN HOLLYWOOD'S GOLDEN DAYS CORRUPTION WAS OFTEN PORTRAYED BY SWEATY, OVERWEIGHT MEN IN RUMPLED WHITE SUITS AND NEEDING A SHAVE MOVING FURTIVELY THROUGH THE NARROW BACKSTREETS OF SOME TROPICAL CITY. THESE ROLES WERE OFTEN PLAYED BY SKILLFUL CHARACTER ACTORS SUCH AS PETER LORRE, AKIM TAMIROFF, SYDNEY GREENSTREET AND THEIR LIKE.

“. . . PROJECTING AN IMAGE OF INSTITUTIONAL POWER AND SELF-IMPORTANCE.”

TODAY, IN OUR CONGRESS, THE IMAGE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLY CLEANED AND POLISHED. OUR CURRENT CONGRESSIONAL CORRUPTERS APPEAR BEFORE THE MEDIA'S CAMERAS CLEAN-SHAVEN, IN CORPORATE GARB OF DARK SUITS, WHITE SHIRTS AND NECKTIES AND PROJECTING AN IMAGE OF INSTITUTIONAL POWER AND SELF-IMPORTANCE.

THEIR CORRUPTION IS TWO-FOLD. THEY ACCEPT MONEY FROM OUTSIDE INTERESTS IN RETURN FOR ALLOWING THEM TO INFLUENCE, AND EVEN CONTROL, THE CONTENT AND PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION. THEIR SECOND FORM OF CORRUPTION IS EVEN MORE DAMAGING, AS THEIR ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR HAVE DEFACED AND ALTERED OUR TRADITIONAL THOUGHT PROCESS, VALUE SYSTEM AND POLITICAL HERITAGE WHICH COMBINED TO ENABLE THE EXTRAORDINARY VIEW AND PRACTICE OF GOVERNMENT PUT FORTH BY OUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CONSTITUTION.

THE LATTER NO LONGER CALL FORTH THE GENUINE LOVE, RESPECT AND PATRIOTISM THAT SERVED AS A KIND OF NATIONAL GUIDANCE SYSTEM. GIVEN THE GROWTH, AND ITS ACCOMPANYING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION, THAT WE AND OUR WORLD HAVE EXPERIENCED, IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT TIME AND MOTION WOULD TRANSFORM US.

BUT WE HAVE SEVERELY COMPROMISED THE CORE CONCEPT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT THAT WAS SUCH A DISTINGUISHING FACTOR IN OUR NATION'S DEVELOPMENT. IN EFFECT, WE HAVE ALLOWED MONEY AND POWER OF PRIVATE INTERESTS TO NOT ONLY DETERMINE HOW OUR GOVERNMENT OPERATES, BUT ALSO TO DEFINE ITS MEANING, CHARACTER AND PRINCIPLES.

THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE TO ALLOW US TO CHARACTERIZE THIS EXCHANGE AS EITHER INTENTIONAL OR BY ACCIDENT. IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE. THE RESULT IS DISASTROUS, AND ITS REMEDY, IF POSSIBLE, WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT.

CORRUPTION IS ANOTHER FORM OF STAGNATION. IT WORKS BEST WHEN IT TAKES PLACE SLOWLY AND OUT OF SIGHT. IN THAT WAY IT CAN BUILD ITS BASE AND THEN EXTEND ITSELF IN AN EVER WIDENING PATTERN. IT USUALLY STARTS IN ANY AGENCY, BUREAUCRACY OR DEPARTMENT WHERE BIG MONEY CAN LOCATE AND ENTICE A WEAK EMPLOYEE, AND THEN, ONCE

HE/SHE IS BOUGHT, CAN SPREAD THE WORD AND THE MONEY TO OTHERS.

AS THE BASE WIDENS AND ENTRAPS MORE PARTICIPANTS, IT ALSO GROWS STRONGER. IT SUCCESSFULLY CHALLENGES MORE LEADERS, OPPORTUNITIES AND, FINALLY, THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF OUR REPUBLIC. THIS IS WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE LAST FIFTY YEARS IN AMERICA, AND WE ARE MUCH THE WORSE FOR IT.

A NEW ARRIVAL IN CONGRESS IS NOT LIKELY TO HAVE A BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL PURITY, AND YET EARLY ON HE/SHE BECOMES AWARE THAT LOBBYING IS BOTH INTENSE AND PERVASIVE. IT IS JUST "THE WAY THINGS WORK" AND, INDEED, ONE OF THE MOST WELL ATTENDED EVENTS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL ORIENTATION PROGRAM IS A COCKTAIL PARTY FOR NEW MEMBERS AND THE LOBBYIST COMMUNITY.

THE CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENT IS CARRIED OUT UNDER MANY GUISES BENEATH WHICH WEALTH AND POWER MINGLE AND ACT. THEIR CORRUPTION MOLDS GOVERNMENT TO THEIR OWN PURPOSES AND PARALYZES OUR LAWS AND METHODS. POLITICAL STAGNATION RESULTS.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE PROBLEMS WITHIN CONGRESS CAN ONLY BE FIXED BY CONGRESS, WHICH WILL REQUIRE THE ELECTION OF A NEW TYPE OF REPRESENTATIVE WHO CAN, FOR EXAMPLE, PUSH FOR LAWS THAT ESTABLISH FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITY AND TRANSPARENCY FOR ALL FINANCIAL SERVICES THAT MANAGE, MOVE AND INVEST MONEY.

AND THERE MUST BE REAL, STRONG AND PROMPT PENALTIES ATTACHED, INCLUDING FINES, SUSPENSIONS, BARRINGS, COMPENSATION CLAWBACKS AND LICENSE CANCELLATIONS FOR THOSE WHO SKIRT THE LAW. THIS WILL AMOUNT TO A CONGRESSIONAL DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE FROM THE FINANCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY. IT WILL NOT BE EASY, BUT WITHOUT IT LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED. WE CLAIM TO BE A "NATION OF LAWS". IF THE TWO THOUSAND PAGE DODD-FRANK ACT IS ONE OF THEM, WE ARE IN DEEP TROUBLE.

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SUCH A STRONG CORRELATION EXISTS BETWEEN STAGNATION AND CORRUPTION THAT THEY ARE OFTEN FOUND TO COEXIST. THE TREASURY DEPARTMENT REVEALED IN AUGUST THAT IT MAY HAVE SENT OVER \$5 BILLION IN REFUND CHECKS TO IDENTITY THIEVES WHO FILED FRAUDULENT RETURNS FOR 2011.⁴ AND IT ESTIMATED THAT ANOTHER \$21B COULD BE OBTAINED IN THE SAME WAY OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS⁵.

NEW TECHNOLOGY HAS GREATLY BENEFITED IDENTITY THEFT AND HAS CAUSED THE IRS TO FALL BEHIND IN ITS ABILITY TO ROOT OUT CRIMINAL TAX FRAUD IN ITS MANY FORMS. LAST YEAR IT EXPOSED ABOUT 940,000 FRAUDULENT RETURNS INVOLVING FAKE OR FALSE IDENTITY AND ESTIMATED THAT ANOTHER 1.5 MILLION MIGHT GO UNDETECTED⁶.

MANY CRIMES ARE REVEALED BY THE PATTERNS OF THOSE WHO COMMIT THEM, AND ID THEFT IS NO EXCEPTION. ONE ADDRESS IN LANSING, MI WAS THE SOURCE OF OVER 2,000 SEPARATE TAX RETURNS AND RECEIVED MORE THAN \$3.3 MILLION IN REFUNDS. AND THREE FLORIDA ADDRESSES WERE HOME TO OVER 500 RETURNS WITH REFUNDS OF OVER \$1

MILLION SENT TO EACH⁷.

SIMILARLY, WHERE MULTIPLE REFUNDS ARE DEPOSITED IN THE SAME ACCOUNT, THE IRS SHOULD BE ALERTED TO POSSIBLE FRAUD AS WAS THE CASE WHEN 590 REFUNDS TOTALING OVER \$900,000 WERE DEPOSITED IN ONE ACCOUNT⁸. IDENTIFYING THESE PATTERNS IS WELL WITHIN THE CAPABILITY OF OUR PRESENT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

THERE IS ANOTHER TYPE OF ID FRAUD THAT HAS COME TO THE IRS'S ATTENTION RECENTLY, ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN IN COMMON PRACTICE FOR SOME YEARS. IT INVOLVES THE ISSUANCE OF TAX CREDITS FOR CHILDREN WHICH, IN THE CASE OF LOW INCOME FAMILIES, ARE CONVERTED INTO CASH PAYMENTS AND CHECKS ISSUED.

THIS INVITATION TO FRAUD WAS SEIZED UPON BY MEMBERS OF THE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY WHO LISTED MULTIPLE NAMES OF FICTITIOUS CHILDREN ON THEIR RETURNS AND RECEIVED PAYMENTS THAT RAN UP TO \$50,000/YR. TO GIVE AN ACCURATE IMAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY FOR FRAUD OFFERED BY THIS PARTICULAR IRS REGULATION, MANY CLAIMANTS LISTED DEPENDENTS WITH MEXICAN ADDRESSES AND WERE STILL PAID.

THIS SCAM WAS KNOWN TO THE IRS, MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, IMMIGRATION LAWYERS AND, OF COURSE, LEGAL AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS WITHOUT ANY EFFORT BEING MADE TO SHUT IT DOWN. IT ONLY CAME TO PUBLIC NOTICE BECAUSE A MID-WESTERN TELEVISION STATION DID SOME FIRST CLASS RESEARCH BY CONDUCTING VIDEO INTERVIEWS WITH SOME OF ITS ACTUAL PERPETRATORS. ONCE THESE INTERVIEWS WERE BROADCAST IN THEIR FRANK AND COMPLETE DETAILS, OUR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES ROUSED THEMSELVES ENOUGH TO MAKE NOISES ABOUT REFORM.

IN ORDER TO GAUGE THE TRUE EXTENT OF COMPLICITY IN THIS MATTER, WE MUST REPEAT THAT THIS ABUSE WAS NO SECRET IN WASHINGTON AND COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS ABOUT IT ADDRESSED TO THE IRS WERE IGNORED OR DEFLECTED.

THE IRS, WHILE ADMITTING THAT ID THEFT HAS GROWN IN FREQUENCY AND AMOUNT OVER RECENT YEARS, CITES THAT THIS TYPE OF THEFT HAS BEEN GREATLY AIDED BY NEW TECHNOLOGIES, AND OFFERS FOR THE FUTURE A PROGRAM OF INCREASED SECURITY MEASURES. SOMEWHAT LATE; BUT WE CAN HOPE. AS FOR CREDIBILITY, THE IRS HAS ALSO BEEN TARNISHED BY WASHINGTON'S IDEOLOGICAL WARFARE AND WILL HAVE TO BACK UP ITS PROMISES WITH PERFORMANCE. THERE IS ANOTHER ASPECT OF THIS ID SCAM BESIDES ITS BRAZEN AND CONSIDERABLE THEFT OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS. IT IS A CLASSIC BY-PRODUCT OF THE SELECTIVE, OR LACK OF, ENFORCEMENT OF OUR LAWS, MOST NOTABLY IMMIGRATION, THAT HAVE COME TO BE ACCEPTED IN WASHINGTON. SADLY, FAILURE OF ENFORCEMENT IS EVIDENT AT THE DEPARTMENTS OF JUSTICE, STATE AND HOMELAND SECURITY AS WELL AS THE IRS AND OUR CONGRESS. IT IS A VERY SPECIAL FORM OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION, BUT IT IS CORRUPTION NEVERTHELESS. IT IS WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE REFER TO OUR GOVERNMENT AS "DETERIORATING".

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STAGNATION AND CORRUPTION OFTEN GO HAND IN HAND. STAGNATION IS A CORRUPTING PROCESS WHICH DIVERTS ENERGY, PURPOSE, INFORMATION AND ETHICS TO OTHER CAUSES WITHOUT REPLACING THEM WITH NEW VALUES; AND CORRUPTION IS LIKELY TO LEAVE STAGNATION IN ITS WAKE. IN OUR POLITICS, UNFORTUNATELY, THEY HAVE BECOME SOMEWHAT OF A PERMANENT PRESENCE.

THIS COMBINATION OF STAGNATION AND CORRUPTION IS CHARACTERISTIC OF BUREAUCRATIC GOVERNMENT THAT HAS FLOWERED IN EUROPE IN RESPONSE TO THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE BETWEEN SOCIALISM, FASCISM, COMMUNISM AND DEMOCRACY. NOT TO BE OUTDONE, AND BECAUSE WE PRIDE OURSELVES IN DOING THINGS BETTER THAN OTHERS, WE HAVE LAYERED UP WITH BUREAUCRATIC TRAPPINGS THAT HAVE GREATLY CHANGED THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF OUR GOVERNMENT.

WE ENGAGE IN A RUNNING DIALOGUE AMONG OURSELVES OVER THE SIZE OF GOVERNMENT WHICH WAXES AND WANES IN INTENSITY, BUT NEVER FALLS SO FAR BENEATH THE POLITICS OF THE MOMENT THAT IT CANNOT BE RENEWED. FOR DECADES, NOW, IT HAS ACTED AS A KIND POLITICAL BACKGROUND MUSIC WHICH WE CAN TUNE UP OR DOWN AT OUR PLEASURE, BUT NEVER COMPLETELY ELIMINATE.

BUT IT IS NOT THE SIZE OF GOVERNMENT THAT IS CRITICAL. IT IS ITS QUALITY, AND IN THE COURSE OF OUR GROWTH IN POPULATION, PRESTIGE, WEALTH AND POWER OVER THE PAST TWO GENERATIONS, AND EVEN BEFORE, WE HAVE COMPROMISED OUR FORMER IDEALS OF GOVERNMENT IN FAVOR OF SOMETHING LARGER, SLICKER AND MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE DEMANDS OF IDEOLOGICAL WARFARE WAGED BY MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCIES.

DO WE WONDER WHY POLITICAL UNITY IS HARD TO COME BY? KEY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO IDEOLOGICAL ENCLAVES THAT ACT AS POLITICAL LEVERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION IN POWER. THEY BOTH DRIVE AND ARE DRIVEN BY ITS AGENDA AND ARE ABLE TO BRING TO BEAR THEIR CONSIDERABLE BUREAUCRATIC POWERS OF FEDERAL ENFORCEMENT, FUNDING, PR, PERSONNEL AND AUTHORITY.

THIS HAS BECOME A WAY OF LIFE AND ITS CRITICS ARE EASILY DISMISSED, MOST READILY WITH THE REPLY THAT "EVERYONE DOES IT" OR "THAT'S THE WAY THE SYSTEM WORKS". MOST PROMINENT AMONG THE AGENCIES THAT HAVE ALLOWED THEIR AREA OF GOVERNMENT TO BE JOINED TO POLITICAL PURPOSE ARE THE DEPTS. OF AGRICULTURE, HOMELAND SECURITY, INTERIOR, JUSTICE, TREASURY AND DEFENSE.

AMONG THE INCREASINGLY LONG LIST OF ENTITIES THAT COMPRISE OUR BUREAUCRACY MOST ARE OF FAIRLY RECENT ORIGIN. BUT SOME HAVE BEEN WITH US EITHER IN THEIR ORIGINAL OR MODIFIED FORM SINCE THE BEGINNING. THEY ARE OUR NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS WHICH IN THE PAST WE HAVE INVESTED WITH THE SAME STATUS AND RESPECT WITH WHICH WE VIEWED OUR NATIONAL INTEREST.

"CAN WE NOT ACT TO PRESERVE THEIR ORIGINAL INTENT AND VALUE?"

CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ALLOWED US TO BUILD THESE INSTITUTIONS AND HAVE THEM SURVIVE THEIR MANY CHALLENGES FOR OVER TWO CENTURIES. ARE WE TO DESERT THEM NOW? CAN WE NOT ACT TO PRESERVE THEIR ORIGINAL INTENT AND VALUE?

THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, AS DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ATTEMPT TO CHANGE FROM TRIBAL OR AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT TO DEMOCRACY, THEY FIND THEIR TRANSFORMATION IMPEDED AND OFTEN DENIED BECAUSE THEY LACK INSTITUTIONS WITH SUFFICIENT STRENGTH TO FORESTALL AND REPLACE CONFLICT, WHETHER SECULAR OR RELIGIOUS.

THESE COUNTRIES, WITH NO EXPERIENCE OF OUR POLITICAL BIRTH OR THE THINKING THAT BROUGHT IT ABOUT, REGARD US WITH WONDER AND ENVY. OUR CRITICAL PERIOD FOR FORMING AND TESTING OUR INSTITUTIONS COVERED A LITTLE OVER A HUNDRED YEARS FROM THE SIGNING OF THE CONSTITUTION TO THE ADMISSION OF THE LAST CONTIGUOUS STATE (AZ-1912)

TODAY, THERE IS NO POLITICAL ENTITY IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD THAT CAN ANTICIPATE A CENTURY OF THE KIND OF PROTECTED CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH WE DEVELOPED. INDEED, DUE LARGELY TO THE REEMERGENCE OF MILITANT ISLAM (MI) WITH ITS EXPANDING PRESENCE IN ASIA, AFRICA AND EUROPE, THE PROSPECT OF PROTECTION FOR ANY NEW POLITICAL CONSCIENCE IS REMOTE. THE GROWING SEASON FOR DEMOCRACY HAS BEEN GREATLY SHORTENED BY PREDATORY NEIGHBORS.

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THE REAL AMERICAN DREAM

OUR MAINSTREAM MEDIA (MSM) AND OUR POLITICAL CLASS ARE GIVEN TO ENDLESS REFERENCES TO “THE AMERICAN DREAM”. MOSTLY IT IS NOT DEFINED, BUT BY ASSOCIATION WITH THE TOPIC OF DISCUSSION IT IS USUALLY REVEALED TO CONSIST OF TWO PRIMARY COMPONENTS — POLITICAL FREEDOM AND THE PROCESS OF ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT. THE FIRST IS SIMPLE AND STRAIGHTFORWARD, INVOLVING THE RIGHTS TO FREE SPEECH, TO VOTE, TO WORSHIP, ETC. THE LATTER IS MORE OFTEN THAN NOT ASSOCIATED WITH BETTERING ONE’S ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES THROUGH EDUCATION, HOME/ CAR OWNERSHIP, EMPLOYMENT AND TAKING ONE’S PART IN CAPITALISTIC AMERICA AS AN ACTIVE WORKER AND CONSUMER.

LIKE SO MUCH THAT IS SPOKEN OR WRITTEN ABOUT AMERICA BY OUR MSM, THIS IMAGE OF AMERICA AS THE PROMISED LAND FOR “SHOP ‘TIL YOU DROP”, DETERMINED CONSUMERS MISSES THE POINT OF THE ORIGINAL “AMERICAN DREAM” AND YET HAS BECOME SOMEWHAT OF A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY. CERTAINLY NO MENTION OF IT IN THE CONTEXT OF IMMIGRATION FAILS TO SUGGEST, OR EVEN POINT OUT, THAT THE POT AT THE END OF THE AMERICAN RAINBOW IS FILLED WITH GOLD, OR DOLLARS OR MORE PESOS THAN YOU CAN COUNT.

THE REAL AMERICAN DREAM WAS NOT ABOUT MONEY. IT WAS ABOUT GOVERNMENT, AS WHEN OUR GOVERNMENT WAS FORMED, IT HAD LITTLE MONEY AND HAD ASSUMED THE DEBT OBLIGATION OF ALL OF THE THIRTEEN NEW STATES.

FOLLOWING YEARS OF BRITISH REPRESSION AND

THEN THE RELEASE PROVIDED BY THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, FREEDOM BECAME THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE FOUNDERS’ MINDS AND IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT. BUT THERE WAS ANOTHER STRAIN THAT WORKED ITS WAY THROUGH THE MANY DELIBERATIONS LEADING UP TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION AND THE CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENT THEREAFTER. IT WAS THE CONCEPT THAT GOVERNMENT IN A FREE SOCIETY SHOULD ALSO BE RESPONSIVE TO ITS CITIZENS’ NEEDS AND CONCERNS.

THE THIRTEEN ORIGINAL STATES REPRESENTED A MIX OF MANY RELIGIONS, NATIONALITIES, ECONOMIC INTERESTS AND POLITICAL BELIEFS. TO RESPOND TO ALL WAS NO EASY TASK, BUT THE FOUNDERS WERE ABLE TO PICK THEIR WAY THRU THIS MINEFIELD BY IDENTIFYING AND FOLLOWING WHAT THEY VIEWED AS THE NATIONAL INTEREST. WITHOUT THIS MECHANISM FOR ESCAPING FROM THE TRAP LAID BY THE INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS OF EACH STATE, OUR EARLY GOVERNMENT MIGHT EASILY HAVE BEEN CONSUMED BY QUIBBLING AND HAVE FOUNDERED UNDER THE WEIGHT OF ITS DIFFERENCES.

THE ACCOUNTS OF HOW OUR NATION WAS FORMED ARE BOTH SPELLBINDING AND UPLIFTING, AND OFFER SHARP CONTRASTS TO THE TONE AND PRACTICE OF OUR GOVERNMENT OVER THE LAST CENTURY. THE BASIC CONCEPT OF A RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN CHANGED FROM IDENTIFYING A NATIONAL INTEREST TO A MAMMOTH, CONTINUING COMPETITION FOR FUNDS BY STATES, LOCALITIES, INDIVIDUALS AND THE CORPORATE SECTOR.

THE LATTER OFFERS A TELLING EXAMPLE OF THE CONTRADICTORY THINKING THAT IS WIDESPREAD IN OUR SOCIETY. MOST BUSINESSES, LARGE AND SMALL, PREFER LESS GOVERNMENT REGULATION AND PARTICIPATION BECAUSE DEALING WITH BUREAUCRACY IN EVEN ITS SIMPLEST FORMS AND ON ITS SIMPLEST TERMS COSTS TIME AND MONEY.

THE GOP HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY VOCAL ON THIS POINT AND GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE IS A CONSTANT CAMPAIGN TOPIC THAT REFLECTS THE CORPORATE SECTOR’S PRIORITY. THE CONTRADICTION ARISES FROM THE FACT THAT, ALTHOUGH THE CORPORATE SECTOR RAILS AGAINST GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE, IT ENGAGES WITH GOVERNMENT AT EVERY STEP IN THE LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY SETTING PROCESSES ON A SCALE UNEQUALLED BY ANY OTHER CONSTITUENCY WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF ORGANIZED LABOR.

THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCE OF THIS DUAL IDENTITY IS THAT WE HAVE A 40,000 PAGE TAX CODE FILLED WITH QUALIFICATIONS THAT BENEFIT A WIDE VARIETY OF INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, INTERESTS, CORPORATIONS, ETC. AND AMONG WHICH CAN BE FOUND MANY MORE CONTRADICTIONS.

FOR MOST PEOPLE THE TAX CODE IS A POWERFUL, INCOMPREHENSIBLE INSTRUMENT WIELDED BY THE IRS WITH ITS SPECIAL POWERS THAT REQUIRES THE PAYMENT OF ONE KIND OF TAX OR ANOTHER. FOR THE MORE WEALTHY PERSON OR CORPORATION THE TAX CODE ACTS AS A MEANS BY WHICH ITS LANGUAGE CAN BE USED TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE TAX LIABILITY.

THERE IS A VERY EVIDENT TAX AND POLITICAL TRUTH AT WORK HERE. A POPULAR VOTE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BRING ABOUT A REVISION AND SIMPLIFICATION OF OUR IRS CODE, BUT THAT CAN ONLY BE ACCOMPLISHED BY CONGRESS. IT,

HOWEVER, IS WELL PAID BY THE SPONSORS OF THE CODE'S MANY EXCLUSIONS, DEDUCTIONS, SUBSIDIES AND OTHER LOOPHOLES, AND HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO SUMMON THE STRENGTH OR PURPOSE NEEDED TO ACT IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST.

TAX REFORM IS ONE OF OUR MOST ENDEARING AND ENDURING POLITICAL FANTASIES. BOTH PARTIES REGULARLY EXPRESS THEIR SUPPORT OF IT, BUT, OF COURSE, ACTUALLY ADDRESSING THE TASK OF SIMPLIFICATION IMMEDIATELY CALLS FOR SURRENDERING THE BENEFITS OF LOOPHOLES. AND, WHO WANTS TO GO FIRST?

YOU MAY RECALL THAT IN 1986 DURING PRES. REAGAN'S SECOND TERM THE ECONOMIC PREFERENCES AND CONTRADICTIONS THAT HAD ACCUMULATED IN THE TAX CODE WERE SO APPARENT THAT REFORM LEGISLATION WAS PASSED, AND WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A SENSE OF TAXPAYER EUPHORIA FOR THIS SIGNAL ACCOMPLISHMENT. BUT, WHILE TRIUMPH WAS SWEET, VICTORY WAS SHORT. THE LOOPHOLE CROWD JOINED FORCES AND BEGAN THE PROCESS OF REINSTATEMENT. WITHIN A FEW YEARS MOST OF WHAT HAD BEEN TAKEN OUT WAS BACK IN.

IF MEMORY SERVES, THE TAX CODE NUMBERED ABOUT 20,000 PAGES AT THE BEGINNING OF ITS OVERHAUL IN 1986. TODAY IT'S AT 40,000 AND GROWING. THAT'S ENDURANCE.

AS ANY MEANINGFUL TAX REFORM WILL REQUIRE THE APPROVAL OF BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT, IT WILL REALISTICALLY NOT TAKE PLACE UNLESS ONE PARTY IS ABLE TO PULL OFF AN ELECTION SWEEP THAT GAINS CONTROL OF BOTH THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES, AND, EVEN THEN, REFORM WILL NOT BE EASILY WON.

WITH THE GOP HOLDING A STRONG EDGE IN THE HOUSE, THE MOST LIKELY CHANCE FOR CONTROL OF BOTH HOUSES WOULD SEEM TO LIE IN REPUBLICANS WINNING THE SENATE. LOOKING FORWARD TO NOVEMBER, THE GOP NEEDS TO PICK UP FOUR SEATS TO REGAIN THE SENATE MAJORITY, WHILE HAVING TO DEFEND ONLY 10 SEATS COMPARED TO THE DEMOCRATS' 23⁹.

THIS ADVANTAGE STEMS FROM THE FACT THAT ONLY ONE-THIRD OF THE SENATE'S 100 SEATS ARE VOTED ON EVERY TWO YEARS. THIS BENEFIT CAN FALL EITHER WAY, AND THIS YEAR FAVORS THE GOP. ANOTHER PLUS FOR THE LATTER IS THAT MANY OF THE 23 DEMOCRATIC DEFENSES WILL TAKE PLACE IN STATES WHERE REPUBLICANS WERE ABLE TO MOUNT STRONG EFFORTS WITH IMPORTANT RESULTS IN THE 2010 CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS.

THESE NUMBERS AND THEIR POLITICAL ROOTS CONSTITUTE A REAL ADVANTAGE FOR THE GOP IN THE CLIMATE OF THIS YEAR'S ELECTIONS, AND ON ELECTION NIGHT THE SENATE TALLY WILL BE AS IMPORTANT AS ANY, AND SHOULD BE CLOSELY WATCHED.

THE WORLD THAT AWAITS US

ON NOVEMBER 7, OUR GOVERNMENT CLOCK WILL BE RESET TO MEASURE FOUR MORE YEARS OF DEMOCRATIC INCUMBENCY OR TO START FRESH ON FOUR, OR PERHAPS EIGHT, YEARS UNDER REPUBLICAN CONTROL. WHICHEVER OCCURS, OUR TIME IS MOVING TOWARDS SOME DIFFICULT ISSUES AND CONFRONTATIONS THE CAUSES OF WHICH ARE ALREADY

BECOMING VISIBLE.

SUCCESSING ADMINISTRATIONS WILL HAVE TO FACE MACRO-FORCES THAT ARE BEING FORMED OUT OF THE FAILURES OF OUR POSTWAR POLITICS. SOME ARE ENVIRONMENTAL; SOME ARE ECONOMIC; SOME ARE POLITICAL; SOME ARE CULTURAL/RELIGIOUS. THEY ARE BOUND TOGETHER BY THE THREAD OF UNCONTROLLED POPULATION GROWTH. THEY WILL ALL BE HEARD IN THE TIME, PLACE AND LANGUAGE OF THEIR CHOICE. LOOKING AHEAD, WE IDENTIFY SOME OF THESE MACRO-FORCES AND HOW THEY MIGHT INTERPLAY WITH EACH OTHER, HOPING TO EXPAND THE AWARENESS OF OUR POLITICAL CLASS.

THERE ARE NOW FOUR MAJOR FORCES SEEKING SUPREMACY OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT ON OUR PLANET. IN THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC/MILITARY SPHERES THERE ARE CHINA, RUSSIA AND THE US. WE MAY LIKE TO CONSIDER OURSELVES AS ONLY INTERESTED IN ECONOMIC GOALS, BUT WE HAVE HUNDREDS OF MILITARY BASES AROUND THE WORLD AND THE WORLD'S LARGEST MILITARY BUDGET AND NUCLEAR ARSENAL.

THESE MIGHT BE DESCRIBED IN COLLOQUIAL TERMS AS "THE BIG 3", ALL COLOSSI WHO IMPRINT MOST OF THE WORLD'S LANDMASS. OUR FOURTH FORCE IS UNLIKE THE OTHERS IN ITS METHODS, ITS WEAPONS AND EVEN, TO SOME DEGREE, ITS GOALS. IT IS MILITANT ISLAM (MI) AND ITS PURPOSE IS GLOBAL DOMINATION OF ITS OWN DESIGN ACHIEVED THROUGH THE IMPOSITION OF ISLAMIC INTIMIDATION, SPIRITUALITY, LAW AND CULTURE. ANY AND ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE, WEAPONRY AND TORTURE ARE ACCEPTABLE TO BE USED AGAINST ANY AND ALL POPULATIONS — MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN — TO CONVERT THE WORLD TO ISLAMIC WORSHIP AND CULTURE.

IN VIEWING THESE MAJOR FORCES, WE MUST ACCEPT THAT WE ARE HATED OR NOT WANTED, OR BOTH, IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OUR CALLING CARDS READ "FREEDOM", "MONEY", "ROCK/POP", WAL-MART, COCA COLA, ETC.

WE MUST ALSO ACCEPT THAT THESE FOUR MACRO-FORCES ARE ELEMENTS IN AN ONGOING GLOBAL STRUGGLE WHICH WE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO CONTROL IN ITS ENTIRETY, AS ITS ALLIANCES, RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES EXIST IN A STATE OF CONSTANT MOTION.

AT THE HEAD OF THESE POWER SEEKING FORCES ARE POWERFUL FIGURES AND STRUCTURES MADE UP OF LARGE, MOSTLY CONTROLLED LEGISLATIVE BODIES, A HUGE MILITARY AND AN ALL-CONSUMING EGO FACTOR AT THE UPPER LEVEL THAT HAS USUALLY BEEN MOLDED BY ITS ABILITY TO SURVIVE IN LIFE OR DEATH AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT COMPETITION.

SUPPOSE WE WERE TO FEED CHINA, RUSSIA AND THE US INTO A TIME MACHINE AND SHAKE IT UP FOR 50 TO 100 YEARS UNTIL ONLY ONE SURVIVES — NO MATTER WHO. WHICHEVER EMERGES WILL STILL FACE MI. REMEMBER, WORLD SUPREMACY IS AT STAKE AND IT IS JUST AS MUCH THE ALL-CONSUMING SPIRITUAL GOAL OF ISLAM AS IT IS THE POLITICAL GOAL OF COMMUNISM OR THE ECONOMIC GOAL OF CAPITALISM.

BUT ISLAM IS A RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT AND, WHILE IT ALSO HAS MAJOR POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES, WE WILL NOT DISCUSS IT IN DETAIL HERE. IT WILL, HOWEVER, PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN OUR NEXT CHAPTER THAT WILL BE LARGELY DEVOTED TO RELIGION.

HOW DO WE RESPOND TO THESE MAJOR FORCES THAT ARE WORKING THEIR WAY THROUGH OUR WORLD SOCIETY? WE ARE NOT MAKING PREDICTIONS OF WHO WILL ATTACK WHOM, AND WHEN, BUT DO CALL ATTENTION TO THE WAY SOME OF OUR POWERFUL FORCE LINES MAY ARRANGE THEMSELVES. WHY? BECAUSE POLITICS HAS THE SPEAKING PARTS IN HISTORY'S DRAMA. IT IS OUR POLITICAL LEADERS WHO WILL BE ON STAGE, DELIVERING THEIR LINES AND DEALING WITH CONFLICT. WE CAN ONLY HOPE THEY ARE WELL ENOUGH INFORMED TO UNDERSTAND THEIR ROLES, FOR THESE PLAYERS WILL ALMOST SURELY FIND THEIR ACCUSTOMED PLACES TOO CONFINING.

IN THE IMMEDIATE POSTWAR PERIOD THERE WAS ONE SUPERPOWER. DURING THE COLD WAR '60s, '70s AND '80s WE SHARED SUPERPOWER STATUS WITH THE RUSSIANS. MORE RECENTLY, CHINA HAS MADE THE NOISES NECESSARY TO BE NOTICED, AND THE CIRCLE HAS EXPANDED. AND NOW MI IS IN THE PROCESS OF ESCALATING ITS MESSAGE IN AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ, YEMEN AND, MOST RECENTLY, MALI.

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THESE ARE BROAD STROKES OF FORCES IN MOTION. THEY WILL NOT BE EXPLAINED TO US BY OUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES. NOR WILL WE BE TOLD WHAT OPTIONS ARE REALISTICALLY AVAILABLE TO US, NOR WHY OUR GOVERNMENT CHOOSES ONE PATH OVER OTHERS.

THERE ARE SMALLER STROKES, TOO, THAT WILL PLAY INTO THE LARGER ONES, AS WE LIVE IN A TIME OF DIMINISHING NATURAL RESOURCES; AND HISTORY TEACHES US THAT WHEN THERE IS NOT ENOUGH OF SOMETHING FOR NEIGHBOR NATIONS TO SHARE, ONE OFTEN TAKES A TERRITORIAL OR ECONOMIC BITE OUT OF THE OTHER.

CHINA AND RUSSIA HAVE ENGAGED IN THIS KIND OF WARFARE BEFORE, AND THEY MAY AGAIN. IN THE PAST RUSSIA HAS DOMINATED THEIR RELATIONSHIP, BUT CHINA HARBORS RESENTMENT FOR ITS MANY YEARS OF PERCEIVED INFERIOR STATUS IN THE WEST, AND SEEKS TO BE RECOGNIZED AS OF EQUAL STATUS IN MATTERS OF WORLD LEADERSHIP.

RUSSIA IS HOME TO AN ENORMOUS MUSLIM MINORITY WITHIN AND ALONG ITS SOUTHERN BORDER, MUCH OF WHICH IT SHARES WITH CHINA. THIS ELEMENT IS A VOLATILE ONE, WITH HISTORICAL, GENETIC AND CULTURAL TIES THAT GO BACK HUNDREDS OF YEARS, AND IT HAS BEEN TREATED WITH RARE DEFERENCE BY COMMUNIST LEADERS, INCLUDING STALIN. ITS TERRITORY PRODUCES OIL AND AGRICULTURAL HARVESTS AND SERVES AS A SORT OF BUFFER ZONE BETWEEN RUSSIA AND CHINA.

THIS STATUS QUO, AS LONG AS IT REMAINS CORDIAL, SERVES RUSSIA WELL, BUT RUSSIA IS ALSO HOME TO THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP IN THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND, SHOULD ISLAM CHOOSE TO ONCE AGAIN TAKE UP ITS "FLAMING SWORD", IT WOULD BE EMBROILED IN A VERY MESSY CONFLICT.

ANY WEAKNESS INTERNATIONALLY OR INTERNALLY ON THE PART OF CHINA AND THE US WOULD ELEVATE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RUSSIAN/MUSLIM CONFLICT AND CAST IT

IN THE LIGHT OF A SECULAR/RELIGIOUS CONFRONTATION.

WE HAVE OMITTED THE US FROM THIS SCENARIO BECAUSE WE WOULD NOT WANT TO BE ENGAGED TO A DEGREE THAT WOULD PLACE US IN AN INFLUENTIAL, OR A DECISIVE, ROLE. OUR POSITION WOULD BECOME DANGEROUS IF WE GIVE RUSSIA AND CHINA REASON TO COMBINE AGAINST US. THIS IS POSSIBLE UNDER VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT SINO/RUSSIAN COOPERATION HAS NOT PROVED SUCCESSFUL IN THE PAST. IT MAY JUST BE THAT THE BASIC LACK OF TRUST AND SUSPICION OF RISK BETWEEN THESE TWO NATIONS, EVEN UNDER THE SHELTERING UMBRELLA OF WORLD COMMUNISM, MAY BE TOO STRONG TO OVERCOME.

AMONG ALL THREE POWERS THERE IS PLENTY OF PARANOIA TO GO AROUND. WE, OF COURSE, CAN SEE IT MORE READILY IN OTHERS THAN IN OURSELVES, AND THE SAME IS TRUE FOR THEM. PARANOIA IS FED BY INTERNAL PROBLEMS OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER WHICH PRESENT CHALLENGES FOR THE THREE SUPERPOWERS.

INCREASING GLOBAL POPULATION AND SHRINKING PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES CAUSE ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS THAT ARE MOST KEENLY FELT IN STREETS, FARMS AND VILLAGES WHERE PEOPLE LIVE AND WORK. CHINA'S LARGE AND GROWING POPULATION MAGNIFIES THESE PROBLEMS, WHEREAS RUSSIA IS FORTUNATE TO HAVE A STABLE POPULATION THAT IS SMALL FOR ITS TERRITORY.

THE GREAT RUSSIAN LANDMASS WRAPS AROUND CHINA FROM VLADIVOSTOK ON THE PACIFIC TO TAJIKISTAN ON ITS WESTERN BORDER. IT HAS ACTED AS AN EFFECTIVE BARRIER TO CHINESE EXPANSION IN THE PAST, BUT MAY BE LESS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR MISSILE AGE.

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WE CANNOT FOCUS EXCESSIVELY ON CHINA'S ROLE IN OUR THREE-CORNERED POWER GAME. RUSSIA IS A KEY PLAYER IN WORLD COMMUNISM'S AUTHORITARIAN OPPOSITION TO OUR HIGH INTENSITY, WESTERN CAPITALISM. IT MAY HAVE A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT SHADE OR SHAPE TO ITS COMMUNIST MODEL, BUT IT IS COMMITTED TO MARXIST THEORY AND PRACTICE OF GOVERNMENT. IT DESERVES A CLOSER LOOK.

IN THE LATE 18TH CENTURY WE REBELLED AGAINST BRITISH ROYAL AUTHORITY, DECLARED INDEPENDENCE AND ESTABLISHED A NEW FORM OF DEMOCRATIC ELECTED GOVERNMENT BASED ON INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM.

IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE EUROPEAN MONARCHICAL HEGEMONY, RUSSIA, ITS LARGEST STATE WITH BLOOD TIES TO MOST OF EUROPE, UNDERWENT AN EQUALLY SIGNIFICANT REVOLUTION WHICH REMOVED THE RULING ROMANOV FAMILY FROM ITS ROYAL POSITION AS HEAD OF STATE. SHORTLY AFTER, A SMALL GROUP OF EUROPEAN MARXISTS PERFORMED A COUP D'ETAT, HIJACKED THE POPULAR REVOLUTION AND ESTABLISHED A NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT WHICH THEY CLAIMED WOULD DO AWAY WITH ROYAL ABUSE OF POWER AND WOULD RETURN IT TO RUSSIA'S VAST PROLETARIAT OF INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS.

THERE ARE OBVIOUS SIMILARITIES IN THESE TWO EVENTS, BUT THEIR METHODS AND CONSEQUENCES COULD NOT

HAVE BEEN MORE DIFFERENT. RUSSIA HAD AT ITS DISPOSAL OVER A HUNDRED YEARS OF WATCHING THE SUCCESSFUL AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND THE SUPPORT IT ATTRACTED IN ITS PROGRESS FROM UNDERDOG TO EUROPE'S SAVIOR IN WWI. IN THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHAOS THAT FOLLOWED, LENIN AND HIS COMRADES FIRMLY BELIEVED THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A "NEW ORDER" IN RUSSIA WOULD GENERATE BOTH POPULAR UPRISINGS BY WORKERS THROUGHOUT EUROPE AND FEELINGS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE MIDDLE, AND EVEN, UPPER CLASSES IN EUROPE AND AMERICA. HE WAS WIDELY WRONG ON BOTH COUNTS.

MOVING AHEAD TO THE LATER DAYS OF THE COLD WAR, PRESIDENT REAGAN, WITH HIS "GUNS AND BUTTER" ECONOMIC POLICY UNDERTOOK A BROAD REBUILDING OF OUR MILITARY TO COMPENSATE FOR THE RESTRAINTS OF THE CARTER YEARS. BIG MONEY WAS SPENT AND EVEN BIGGER MONEY WAS IMPLIED BY ANNOUNCEMENTS OF "STAR WARS" AND OTHER TECHNOLOGICALLY SUPERIOR SYSTEMS, SOME REAL AND SOME NOT.

THE RUSSIANS HAD NO CHOICE OTHER THAN TO TRY TO KEEP PACE WHICH THEY DID, AND WHICH PROVED TO BE UNAFFORDABLE. THE RESULT WAS A SEVERE ECONOMIC IMBALANCE WHICH AFFECTED ALL SECTORS OF THEIR ECONOMY AND WAS A KEY CONTRIBUTOR TO THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION.

WE QUITE LITERALLY OUTSPENT THEM TO THE POINT WHERE THEY COULD NO LONGER KEEP UP. THERE WAS MUCH OF THE CLASSIC POKER BLUFF IN OUR TECHNIQUE, BUT IT PROVED SUCCESSFUL.

BUT THAT WAS THEN. OUR NATIONAL DEBT WHEN PRES. REAGAN TOOK OFFICE WAS ABOUT 800 BILLION. TODAY THE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE REVERSED. OUR DEBT IS AT \$16 TRILLION AND INCREASING BY SLIGHTLY MORE THAN A TRILLION A YEAR. IF AND WHEN WE THINK IN TERMS OF "GUNS AND BUTTER", IT IS EVIDENT THAT WE WILL SOON HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH LESS OF BOTH.

"... BEARING IN MIND THAT LIMITS ARE NOT ALWAYS VISIBLE AT THE TIMES WHEN THEY ARE REACHED?"

WE SHOULD VIEW CAUTIOUSLY BOTH CHINA'S AND RUSSIA'S MILITARY PROGRAMS — EXPANDING THEIR NAVIES AND THEIR MISSILE LAUNCH AND DELIVERY CAPABILITIES TO OUR BASES AND MAINLAND — AND WE SHOULD ASK WHETHER OUR POSITIONS HAVE BEEN REVERSED. IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN OUR ASSUMED AND ACCUSTOMED SUPERIORITY, WILL WE BE PUSHED TO SPENDING LEVELS THAT OUR ECONOMY CANNOT SUPPORT? WILL WE BE EXTENDED TO OUR ECONOMIC EDGE, AND PERHAPS BEYOND, BEARING IN MIND THAT LIMITS ARE NOT ALWAYS VISIBLE AT THE TIMES WHEN THEY ARE REACHED?

THERE IS IRONY HERE THAT OUR ENEMIES WILL FIND COMFORTING. WE SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE TRAP AND CONDUCT OUR GOVERNMENT ACCORDINGLY. OUR MILITARY FUNDING, R&D AND PROCUREMENT PROCESSES ARE NOTORIOUSLY EXPENSIVE. DO WE CONTINUE TO BORROW THE MONEY THEY REQUIRE FROM CHINA? THIS IS JUST ONE OF MANY NON SEQUITURS IMPOSED ON US BY OUR INCREASING DEBT, AND WE SHOULD BE ALWAYS AWARE THAT THE LEVEL AT WHICH OUR SPENDING BECOMES

UNSUSTAINABLE AND UNAFFORDABLE IS ONE THAT WE HAVE CREATED, NOT OUR ENEMIES.

WITH THE COLLAPSE OF THE USSR, MASSIVE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHANGE WAS VISITED UPON THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE IN FULL VIEW OF THE REST OF THE WORLD. THE RESPONSE OF THEIR LEADERS HAS BEEN FAR FROM PERFECT, OR EVEN GOOD, AND MUCH DIFFICULT WORK REMAINS TO BE DONE.

THE QUESTION WE SHOULD ASK OURSELVES IS — "IF WE WERE TO EXPERIENCE A SHOCK TO OUR SYSTEM ON THE WORLD STAGE BEFORE A FULL HOUSE, HOW WOULD WE HANDLE IT? OUR PEOPLE? OUR GOVERNMENT? AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, OUR INSTITUTIONS?"

THESE ARE QUESTIONS THAT CALL FOR ANSWERS. THEY COME ABOUT BECAUSE OF THE YEARS OF FAILED POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN OUR EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES WHICH WE HAVE ALLOWED, ENCOURAGED AND ACCEPTED.

* * *

FORCES CREATE ISSUES; ISSUES CREATE POLICIES; AND POLICY CAN PROVIDE EITHER PEACEFUL CONTACT OR CONFRONTATION BETWEEN NATIONS AND PEOPLES. THE FORCES CITED HERE ARE COMMON, EGO-DRIVEN, POLITICAL ONES OF COMPETITION AND AGGRESSION. THERE ARE MANY MORE THAT ARE LESS POLITICAL, BUT NEVER COMPLETELY FREE OF POLITICS — MIGRATION, STARVATION, EDUCATION, RESOURCE SCARCITY, CULTURAL DECIMATION, POPULATION, CLIMATE AND SEA LEVEL CHANGE AND OTHERS WHICH IMPACT OUR HUMAN CONDITION AND OUR LIFE ON EARTH. OUR MOST SERIOUS POLITICAL PROBLEM IS THAT OUR ELECTED GOVERNMENT IS UNWILLING AND UNABLE TO ENGAGE THESE MATTERS. IN ALL OF THEM WE HAVE RECENTLY DEVELOPED FAR GREATER KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THEM THAN WE HAVE EVER HAD BEFORE. THE OVERRIDING QUESTION FOR OUR CENTURY IS WHETHER WE CAN APPLY THEM TO PEACEFUL AND NON-DESTRUCTIVE SOLUTIONS. THE SAME CAN EASILY BE SAID OF OUR POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONCERNS.

OUR RUSSIA/CHINA/ISLAM IMAGE IS JUST A VIEW OF A MOMENT IN OUR WORLD. IT CAN BE ALTERED INSTANTLY BY OTHER FORCES IN OUR GLOBAL MIX, BUT IT WILL NOT GO AWAY UNTIL IT CAN BE DEFUSED BY HUMAN NATURE AND EFFORT. SUCH AN OUTCOME WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR MANKIND EVEN AT ITS NOBLEST AND MOST ARTFUL TIMES AND CHARACTER, BUT THOSE ARE NOT WHAT IS NOW AVAILABLE. OUR CHALLENGE IS THAT, WHILE WE ARE BURDENED BY A FAILED POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, WE MUST TRY TO REPAIR OUR SOCIETY, OUR NATION AND OUR INSTITUTIONS.

SOME POLITICAL MARKERS

THE FRENZY AND SHOW BIZ OF THE CONVENTIONS ARE NOW OVER AND RECEDING IN OUR CONSCIOUSNESS. WE ARE SHIFTING OUR FOCUS FROM SELF-SERVING STATEMENTS TO THE

QUESTIONS THAT WILL FRAME THE CANDIDATES' LAST MONTH OF CAMPAIGNING AND THEIR FOUR DEBATES. THEN, ON NOV. 6, THE PUBLIC WILL RENDER ITS ANSWER CODED IN ELECTORAL RESULTS.

AND AFTER NOV. 6? CAN WE REALLY DO BETTER? CAN WE REDUCE OR ELIMINATE CORRUPTION IN A CONGRESS SO TAINTED THAT IT HAS NO IDEA OF THE DEGREE BY WHICH IT FAILS THE MOST BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF GOOD GOVERNMENT?

WHICHEVER PARTY WINS, THERE ARE MANY ISSUES THAT REQUIRE URGENT ATTENTION. HERE ARE A FEW THAT BECAUSE OF THEIR NATURE OR THEIR CONSEQUENCES MUST BE CONFRONTED AND RESOLVED:

- 1) THE ECONOMIC "CLIFF" IN OUR PATH POSED BY OUR RECKLESS BUDGETARY AND LEGISLATIVE PRACTICES. BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THIS TRAGEDY OF NUMBERS LIES THE TRUTH THAT FOR A QUARTER OF A CENTURY OUR SPENDING AND DEBT LEVELS HAVE BEEN MANIPULATED BY CONGRESS AND THE WHITE HOUSE ALIKE FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES WITH THE BILL SENT TO THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER.
- 2) OUR NATIONAL DEBT, NOW AUTHORIZED AT \$16.4 TRILLION, WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO BE RAISED AGAIN EVEN IF SOME AGREEMENT CAN BE FASHIONED FOR THE FUTURE. THE BEST EFFORT TOWARDS DEALING WITH DEBT/DEFICIT IN OUR OPINION WAS THE PROGRAM RECOMMENDED BY THE SIMPSON-BOWLES COMMISSION, AND SHOULD BE THE BASIS FOR ANY BIPARTISAN UNDERTAKING. HERE AGAIN, POLITICS ARE EVIDENT, AS PRES. OBAMA, WHO ESTABLISHED THE COMMISSION, BACKED AWAY FROM IT; AND REP. PAUL RYAN, WHO SERVED ON IT, FAILED TO VOTE FOR ITS FINAL FORM. BOTH DEFECTORS SIMPLY DID NOT WANT TO BE IN THE POSITION OF BACKING PROVISIONS THAT WERE OPPOSED BY THEIR KEY SUPPORTERS.
- 3) THERE IS AN ECONOMIC CONSIDERATION THAT UNDERLIES MUCH OF OUR ACCUMULATED POLICY. IT HAS SO FAR BEEN KEPT MOSTLY OUT OF SIGHT, BUT UNLESS WE CAN MAKE GENUINE PROGRESS TOWARDS FISCAL SANITY IT WILL SOON BE HEARD AND FELT. THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER IS ENTITLED TO THINK THAT AT SOME POINT GOVERNMENT SPENDING IN OUR MUCH TOUTED CAPITALISTIC SYSTEM WILL PRODUCE A RETURN, OR VALUE, COMPARABLE IN THEORY OR FACT TO THAT RECEIVED BY THE TAXPAYERS' OWN USE OF CAPITAL.
- 4) THE NOMINATING DEBATES, THE CONVENTIONS AND THE CAMPAIGN SPEECHES HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH ENDLESS REFERENCES TO THE MIDDLE CLASS, AS IF IT WERE SOME FIXED IDENTITY. IT IS NOT. IT CHANGES IN SIZE AND MAKE-UP, AND ITS SHARE OF THE COUNTRY'S WEALTH HAS DECREASED FROM 62% IN 1971 TO THE PRESENT 45%¹⁰. SIMILARLY, IN 1971 61% OF ADULTS WERE LISTED AS IN THE MIDDLE CLASS AS OPPOSED TO 51% TODAY.¹¹ MIDDLE CLASS MEMBERSHIP REDUCTION CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED BY MOVING EITHER UP OR DOWN. AS THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER USES AN INCOME RANGE OF \$39,418 TO \$118,255 TO DEFINE THE PLACE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS IN OUR ECONOMIC STRUCTURE, SLIPPAGE FROM THE BOTTOM SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAN OVERFLOW

AT THE TOP.

- 5) KING CORN AGAIN: IN 2005 CORN WAS SELLING FOR \$2 PER BUSHEL AND ABOUT 13% OF OUR DOMESTIC PRODUCTION WAS CONVERTED TO ETHANOL¹². TODAY, ONLY SEVEN YEARS LATER, OUR CORN PRICE IS AT A RECORD \$8.20 PER BUSHEL AND 37% OF OUR CROP, OR ABOUT 4.3 BILLION BUSHEL, WILL GO TO ETHANOL PRODUCTION¹³. ETHANOL PRODUCTION IS NOT PROFITABLE WITHOUT A GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY WHICH WAS TERMINATED A YEAR AGO. STILL, THIS PROGRAM, WHICH AMOUNTS TO A MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR GIFT TO OUR FARMING SECTOR, CONTINUES, AND IS A STRONG CONTRIBUTOR TO THE RISING FOOD PRICES AFFECTING ALL AMERICANS. THE ETHANOL SCAM, WITH ITS POLITICAL MOTIVATION, IS JUST ONE REASON WHY OUR ENTIRE FARM POLICY REGULATION OF PRICING, PRODUCTION AND SUBSIDIES SHOULD BE REVIEWED, REDUCED AND RESTRUCTURED.

OUR MOMENT OF TRUTH IN THE VOTING BOOTH

THIS IS AN INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT ELECTION. IT MAY BE OUR LAST CHANCE TO CORRECT THE ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FAULTS THAT WE HAVE ALLOWED TO DOMINATE OUR GOVERNMENT. NORMALLY, WE DO NOT BACK CANDIDATES BECAUSE THE STRUCTURAL FAULTS IN BOTH PARTIES ARE SO STRONG AND DEEP THAT THEY DETERMINE SUCCESS OR FAILURE. HOWEVER, IN THIS ELECTION WE SUPPORT THE ROMNEY/RYAN TICKET. WE DO SO, NOT WITH THE BELIEF THAT THEY ARE "RIGHT" ON EVERY ISSUE. QUITE TO THE CONTRARY, THE GOP HAS ITS OWN BRANDS OF ERROR AND EXCESS THAT IT REGULARLY PUTS ON DISPLAY, AND, GIVEN OUR PRESENT IDEOLOGICAL ATMOSPHERE, IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT THEY WILL REAPPEAR.

THIS ELECTION IS NOT ABOUT FARM SUBSIDIES, TAX RATES, TRADE TARIFFS OR OTHER ISSUES EITHER SIDE OF WHICH CAN BE REASONABLY ARGUED AND WHICH HAVE DOMINATED PAST CAMPAIGNS. IT IS ABOUT DECIDING THE COURSE FOR THE FUTURE THAT OUR COUNTRY WILL TAKE AND, BECAUSE OF PAST ERRORS AND THEIR PRESSURES, HAVING VERY LITTLE TIME IN WHICH TO DO IT. IT IS ABOUT HAVING THE COURAGE TO RECOGNIZE A MESS OF OUR OWN MAKING, TO ADMIT IT AND TO COMMIT TO A PAINFUL PROCESS OF DIGGING OURSELVES OUT. THIS WILL NOT BE EASY, BUT IF WE DON'T, WE CAN ONLY LOOK AHEAD TO MORE STAGNATION, CORRUPTION AND DETERIORATION OF OUR GOVERNMENT.

"OR ARE THEY ONLY QUAINT RELICS FROM
THE PAST WHICH WE HAVE OUTGROWN?"

THERE IS A STRONG NATIONAL IDENTITY COMPONENT TO THIS ELECTION BECAUSE IT POSES THE QUESTION, "ARE WE WHO WE SAY WE ARE?" THIS QUESTION OF IDENTITY GOES BACK TO OUR ORIGINS. ARE THEY OF VALUE IN PLANNING OUR FUTURE? OR ARE THEY ONLY QUAINT RELICS FROM THE PAST

WHICH WE HAVE OUTGROWN?

WE THINK ONE OF PRES. OBAMA’S MOST SERIOUS FAILURES HAS BEEN HIS VISION OF AMERICA’S FUTURE AND OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY. THE FORMER IS DIRECTED SO FAR TO THE LEFT THAT IT WOULD TAKE THE NATION OUT OF ITS HISTORICAL POLITICAL ORBIT. CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL — SOCIALISM, LIBERALISM, THE FAR LEFT — IT WOULD DO AWAY WITH CENTRIST GOVERNMENT. IN VIEWING THE LATTER AND OTHER CONSEQUENCES, IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT PRESIDENT OBAMA NEITHER UNDERSTANDS NOR RELATES TO OUR ESSENTIAL IDENTITY.

HOWEVER, EVEN MORE DAMAGING TO OUR COUNTRY THAN THIS LACK OF UNDERSTANDING HAS BEEN HIS ABUSE OF OUR CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS. FRUSTRATED BY THE RESTRICTIONS IT IMPOSES, PRES. OBAMA HAS IGNORED AND REFUSED TO ENFORCE EXISTING LAW AND HAS EMPLOYED EXECUTIVE ORDERS TO AVOID OUR SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES. HE HAS DONE THIS BY ESTABLISHING NEW AGENCIES AND CENTERS OF AUTHORITY NOT SUBJECT TO THE CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW AND OVERSIGHT THAT IS CENTRAL TO OUR THREE BRANCH FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

ALL ELSE CAN BE ARGUED, PERHAPS, BUT NOT THESE TWO EXTRAORDINARY USURPATIONS OF POWER. THEY WERE, UNFORTUNATELY, EXERCISED WITH THE ACQUIESCENCE OF A COMPLIANT CONGRESS, BUT EVEN SO, THEY CONSTITUTE A REACH WE CANNOT ALLOW. PART OF OUR TASK IN COMING YEARS WILL BE TO RETURN TO BEING THE NATION OF LAWS THAT WE HAVE CLAIMED TO BE. AS PRES. OBAMA’S ACTIONS AIM IN EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION, WERE HIS METHODS TO CONTINUE FOR ANOTHER FOUR YEARS, OUR CONSTITUTIONAL REPUBLIC COULD BE SO DISMANTLED AS TO PRECLUDE ITS RESCUE.

UNILATERAL REASSIGNING OR ESTABLISHING POWER SOUNDS A DEATH KNOLL FOR DEMOCRACY, AND WE THINK PRES. OBAMA’S MISUSE OF HIS EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON, RECOMMENDS THAT HE NOT BE REELECTED.

NOVEMBER 7 TO DECEMBER 31

WE STARTED THIS CHAPTER BY QUOTING FROM THE LAST SENTENCE OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE THE FOUNDERS’ PLEDGE TO EACH OTHER OF “THEIR LIVES, THEIR FORTUNES AND THEIR SACRED HONOR”. TODAY, SUCH A STATEMENT WOULD BE DISMISSED AS SHEER IDEALISM, BUT FOR THE FOUNDERS IT WAS A GUIDING SENSE OF REALISM. BRIDGING THIS GAP IS ONE OF THE FORMIDABLE TASKS THAT NOW FACES AMERICA.

THE IDEALISM OF OUR REVOLUTION AND SUBSEQUENT BIRTH OF NEW GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN SEEN BY SOME AS A PRODUCT OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT. THIS IS NOT QUITE RIGHT, BUT THE ENLIGHTENMENT WAS THE CLIMATE OF THE TIME WHICH ENCOURAGED INQUIRY AND CHANGE ACROSS A WIDE RANGE OF HUMAN BELIEFS.

THERE WERE TWO SIMULTANEOUS, CONVERGING FORCES AT THE HEART OF OUR IDEALISM. THE FIRST WAS THE SHARED SENSE OF MISSION OF RIGHTING THE WRONGS OF THE OLD WORLD IN A NEW SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS

ATMOSPHERE, AND THE OTHER WAS THE IMMENSE POWER OF BEING JOINED IN THE CREATION OF A NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT. MUCH AS IN QUANTUM PHYSICS, OUR IDEALISM WAS THE ENERGY THAT WAS RELEASED IN A NEW AND DISTINCTIVE FORM WHEN THESE FORCES CAME TOGETHER.

AS THE EVENTS THAT LOOM AHEAD ARE THOSE THAT CANNOT BE SOLVED IN THE CONGRESS’ PRESENT STATE OF ANTAGONISM AND GRIDLOCK, WE WOULD BE WELL SERVED BY ADDING IDEALISM TO THE CONGRESSIONAL MENU. GIVEN OUR PRESENT STATE OF CONGRESS, THIS WILL NOT BE EASY, BUT IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

“ . . . THEY DON’T CARE ENOUGH TO KNOW, OR KNOW ENOUGH TO CARE, ABOUT THE NATIONAL INTEREST.”

MOST MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS ARE NOT EVIL, ALTHOUGH SOME CLEARLY ARE. FOR THE MOST PART THEY FAIL BECAUSE THEY ARE CORRUPT AND SELF IMPORTANT TO THE POINT OF SEEING THEMSELVES AS BEING ABOVE BOTH THE LAW AND THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS. THEY APPEAR IN A GREATLY MAGNIFIED IMAGE THROUGH THE MEDIA’S LENS. SADLY, THEY DON’T CARE ENOUGH TO KNOW, OR KNOW ENOUGH TO CARE, ABOUT THE NATIONAL INTEREST.

THE HEADY ATMOSPHERE IN WASHINGTON IS ONE OF PLENTY — PLENTY OF MONEY, POWER, IMPORTANCE, BENEFITS, PHOTO-OPS, PARTIES AND, OF COURSE, EXCUSES. THIS “LIFE AT THE TOP” HAS CORRUPTED CONGRESS’ THOUGHTS, PRACTICES AND SOUL.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN THERE ARE NOT SOME HONEST AND WELL MEANING MEMBERS. THERE ARE, BUT THEY ARE OVERWHELMED BY THE ATTITUDES OF THEIR ASSOCIATES AND WHAT GOES ON AROUND THEM. THERE IS LITTLE THINKING “OUTSIDE THE BOX” BECAUSE LIFE WITHIN THE BOX IS EASY, RICH AND POWERFUL AND MOST OF THE VOTES ARE THERE.

AS CONGRESS HAS REPEATEDLY SHOWN BY ITS ETHICAL FAILURES, PERSONAL SHAME IS HARD TO COME BY, BUT THERE IS PLENTY COLLECTIVELY. THAT’S A REAL SHAME BECAUSE OUR COUNTRY IS GOING THROUGH VERY DIFFICULT TIMES — AND IT DESERVES BETTER, MUCH BETTER.

* * *

AS BAD AS THIS MAY SOUND, THERE IS A SILVER LINING. COMMENCING THE DAY AFTER THE ELECTION, WE WILL HAVE FIFTY-SIX CRITICAL DAYS UNTIL THE YEAR-END WHICH WILL PROVIDE AN UNUSUAL COMBINATION OF OPPORTUNITY AND MOTIVATION FOR BEGINNING TO REPAIR OUR COUNTRY.

THIS NARROW WINDOW RESULTS FROM LEGISLATION PASSED LAST YEAR BY CONGRESS WHICH DEFERRED MEANINGFUL ACTION ON OUR BUDGET/DEBT CRISIS UNTIL 12/31/12 AND WHICH STIPULATED VERY HARSH ACTIONS UNLESS REMEDIAL AGREEMENTS CAN BE REACHED BY THAT TIME.

THE OPPORTUNITY IS A CONSEQUENCE OF CONGRESS HAVING FEW OPTIONS MOST OF WHICH IT WOULD RATHER NOT HAVE TO CHOOSE. IF IT DOES NOTHING, THE BUSH TAX CUTS

EXPIRE AND WHICHEVER PARTY HAS BEEN ELECTED WILL BE CHARGED WITH ALLOWING A TAX INCREASE.

THE SAME DISCIPLINE WILL APPLY TO THE ACTIVATION OF DEEP SPENDING REDUCTIONS WITH THE SAME SENSE OF FAILED LEADERSHIP ANTICIPATED FROM THE PUBLIC. CONGRESS IS IN A BIND — A BIND THAT SEEMED TO OFFER A CLEVER AND TIMELY WAY OUT OF MEETING ITS OBLIGATIONS LAST YEAR — BUT, NEVERTHELESS, STILL A BIND.

THIS SITUATION IS A CLASSIC CONFRONTATION BETWEEN A PUBLIC WHOSE INTEREST HAS BEEN IGNORED AND AN ARROGANT GOVERNMENT. IT IS A STORY THAT HAS PLAYED OUT IN AMERICAN POLITICS FOR FAR TOO LONG, BUT NOW THERE IS A NEW ELEMENT THAT HAS CHANGED THE POLITICAL BALANCE CONSIDERABLY AND WHICH EFFECTIVELY DEPRIVES CONGRESS OF ITS USUAL RESPONSE OF “KICKING THE CAN DOWN THE ROAD” AGAIN.

THE GAME CHANGER THAT OFFERS THE POSSIBILITY OF CONGRESS ACTING RESPONSIBLY IS THE GLOBAL RECESSION THAT HAS FORCED GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR ECONOMIES TO MOVE IN DIFFICULT DIRECTIONS FOR THEIR PEOPLE, THEIR POLITICIANS AND, EVEN IN SOME CASES, THEIR CURRENCIES.

“WE PRINT DOLLARS;
OTHERS HAVE TO BUY THEM.”

THE EYES OF THE WORLD NOW WATCH OUR CONGRESS MORE CLOSELY THAN EVER BEFORE FOR SOME SIGN OF FISCAL INTEGRITY, AS THE DOLLAR IS THE WORLD’S RESERVE CURRENCY. RECKLESS SPENDING AND DEBT ACCUMULATIONS BY THE US NOT ONLY CHEAPEN THE VALUE OF OUR CURRENCY, BUT THOSE OF OTHER NATIONS AS WELL. THERE IS, OF COURSE, ONE ENORMOUS DIFFERENCE. WE PRINT DOLLARS; OTHERS HAVE TO BUY THEM.

IT APPEARS THAT THE “KICK THE CAN DOWN THE ROAD” TACTIC CAN NO LONGER BE ASSUMED TO GIVE CONGRESS THE MILEAGE IT HAS IN THE PAST. ANY ATTEMPT AT SUCH “BUSINESS AS USUAL” WOULD BE SEEN FOR WHAT IT HAS COME TO BE — A SLOW DEFAULT ON OUR DEBT — AND WOULD INFLICT DAMAGE ON FINANCIAL MARKETS HERE AND ABROAD.

THE PRESSURES OF THESE POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL FORCES MAY, HOPEFULLY, BE STRONG ENOUGH TO FORCE CONGRESS INTO ACTIONS CONSISTENT WITH THE NATIONAL INTEREST, ACTIONS WHICH NEITHER PARTY WANTS BUT WHICH BOTH MAY HAVE TO ACCEPT. IN IMMIGRATION, FOR INSTANCE, JUST BY ENFORCING PRESENT LAW AND ELIMINATING FRAUD AND COSTLY GIVE-AWAY PROGRAMS, SAVINGS OF OVER \$350 BILLION ANNUALLY COULD BE HAD.

SOCIAL SECURITY IS ANOTHER GOVERNMENT PROBLEM CRYING OUT FOR AN ANSWER. THE MAIN ELEMENTS, WHICH HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH IN FASHIONING A SOLUTION, ARE THE AGE WHEN COVERAGE COMMENCES, THE SALARY CAP, THE TREATMENT OF BENEFITS, FRAUD, THE SALARY PERCENTAGES PAYABLE BY THE EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE AND THE SEGREGATION OF SS FUNDS SO THAT FUTURE CONGRESSES CANNOT REPEAT THE LARCENY OF THE PAST.

ALL OF THESE PROBLEMS ARE SOLVABLE, EITHER INDIVIDUALLY OR TOGETHER. ASSEMBLE A GROUP — CONSISTING OF ONE REPUBLICAN AND ONE DEMOCRAT EACH

FROM THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE, TWO REPRESENTATIVES EACH FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE AND THE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING OFFICE AND TWO POLITICAL INDEPENDENTS LIKE US — WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO “FIX” THE SS PROGRAM, AND IN THE SPACE OF A FEW DAYS AGREEMENT WOULD ALMOST ASSUREDLY BE REACHED. SS IS AN EASY MATHEMATICAL EXERCISE THAT PRESENT AND PAST ADMINISTRATIONS HAVE ALLOWED TO BECOME A MAJOR ECONOMIC/POLITICAL PROBLEM.

ISSUES SUCH AS IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL SECURITY ARE BIG ISSUES BECAUSE BIG MONEY IS INVOLVED AND BECAUSE THEY CHALLENGE EACH PARTY’S CORE BELIEFS. THEY ARE ALSO HIGHLY EMOTIONAL ISSUES THAT HAVE BEEN EXPLOITED IN THE PAST BY THE MEDIA AND BY POLITICIANS WHOSE ARGUMENTS FAIL ON LOGICAL, HISTORICAL OR FINANCIAL GROUNDS, AND WHO MUST, THEREFORE, PLAY THE EMOTIONAL CARD.

THE ADVANTAGE OF CONVENING A SMALL GROUP AS SUGGESTED ABOVE IS THAT EVERYONE STARTS OFF EVEN, IDEAS HAVE MERIT OR NOT ON THEIR OWN AND CAN BE DISCUSSED EVEN THOUGH THEY MAY NOT EXACTLY FIT THE PARTY TEMPLATE. NOBODY HAS TO BE “RIGHT” ALL THE TIME; NOR DOES EACH POLITICAL PARTY HAVE TO BE SEEN AS VICTORIOUS.

THE GROUP COUNTS TEN MEMBERS OF WHOM FOUR ARE POLITICIANS. THESE ARE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT FAVOR A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST. SO, TOO, DOES THE SHORTNESS OF TIME AND THE IMPENDING DISASTER OF DOING NOTHING.

* * *

AMERICA IS GREATLY BURDENED BY ITS POLITICAL FAILURE. NOW, THE PRESSURE OF TIME MAY BE ABLE TO BRING ABOUT NECESSARY CHANGE. LIKE LIGHTNING, IT COULD ILLUMINATE OUR GOVERNMENT AND REVERBERATE POLITICALLY THROUGHOUT THE NATION AS THUNDER ROLLING THROUGH THE DARK NIGHT.

2013 AND BEYOND

MONETARY POLICY IN OUR COUNTRY IS MOSTLY DETERMINED OUT OF THE PUBLIC’S VIEW BY THE FEDERAL RESERVE, THE TREASURY DEPT., THE WHITE HOUSE, A FEW KEY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND A SWARM OF ADVISORS, LOBBYISTS, EXPERTS AND ACADEMICS THAT MOVE THROUGH OUR GOVERNMENT LEVELS. IT IS OFTEN A MATTER OF COMMENT, BUT NOT OF DEBATE.

FOR A COUNTRY WHOSE CURRENCY CARRIES THE STATUS OF THE WORLD’S RESERVE, OR STANDARD, MONETARY POLICY BECOMES A DIFFICULT MIXTURE OF POLITICS, FOREIGN POLICY, ECONOMICS, DIPLOMACY AND TRADE POLICY. PUBLIC STATEMENTS ARE RENDERED IN THE INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE OF NEWS RELEASES DESIGNED TO CONCEAL ANY MEANINGFUL KNOWLEDGE OF EFFORTS AND GOALS LEST THEY “SPOOK THE MARKETS”. AND IN TODAY’S WORLD, MARKETS “SPOOK” EASILY.

IN THE PAST HALF CENTURY OUR SPENDING AND BORROWING PRACTICES HAVE GREATLY REDUCED THE VALUE OF OUR DOLLAR, AND, BECAUSE OTHER COUNTRIES MUST HOLD DOLLARS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND EXCHANGE PURPOSES, THESE ASSETS ARE CHEAPENED BY A DECLINE IN THE DOLLAR'S VALUE. IN GENERAL, A LOSS OF VALUE FOR THE RESERVE CURRENCY CAUSES PROBLEMS FOR ITS HOLDERS UNTIL A NEW RESERVE CAN BE ESTABLISHED. THIS IS NOT AN EASY PROCESS.

WE CANNOT EXPECT TO CONTINUE IN OUR PRESENT DEFICIT FINANCING MODE AND HOPE THE REST OF THE WORLD WILL FOLLOW SUIT. CARRIED TO A TIPPING POINT, OTHER COUNTRIES WILL REACT TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AND, WHETHER ACTION IS TAKEN, OR ONLY CALLED FOR, UNCERTAINTY AND DISLOCATION IN THE WORLD'S FINANCIAL MARKETS (I.E., SPOOKING) WILL RESULT.

MANAGING THESE COMPLEX, INTERCONNECTED FINANCIAL ELEMENTS INVOLVING THE WORLD'S STANDARD CURRENCY REQUIRES REAL LEADERSHIP OF A KIND THAT DIFFERS FROM THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP WE SOUGHT AND EXERCISED DURING OUR SOLE SUPERPOWER YEARS OF THE COLD WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH.

THE WORLD HAS CHANGED AND WILL CONTINUE TO AT AN INCREASINGLY RAPID RATE. WHERE AND HOW IN AMERICA WILL WE FIND THE LEADERSHIP REQUIRED TO ENGAGE THE PROBLEMS OUR RESERVE CURRENCY PRESENTS? OUR OUR MASSIVE DEBT? OUR OUR OUT-OF-CONTROL SPENDING?



ECD 10/4/12

END NOTES

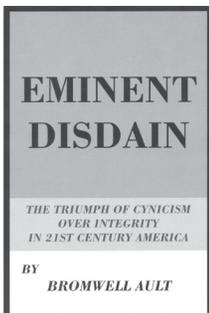
- ¹ MID AMERICAN NEWS APRIL, 2012
- ² EARTH POLICY RELEASE — RISING TEMPERATURE RAISING FOOD PRICES — LESTER R. BROWN 8/6/12
- ³ PALM BEACH POST LTE 7/9/12
- ⁴ “IRS PAYING ID THIEVES . . .” BY JOSH LEDERMAN, ASSOCIATED PRESS, VIA PALM BEACH POST 8/3/12
- ⁵ IBID
- ⁶ IBID
- ⁷ IBID
- ⁸ IBID
- ⁹ PALM BEACH POST 10/12/11
- ¹⁰ PEW RESEARCH CENTER VIA PALM BEACH POST 9/3/12
- ¹¹ IBID
- ¹² PALM BEACH POST 8/6/12 PUT CORN ON THE TABLE. NOT IN THE TANK BY ROBERT BRYCE
- ¹³ IBID

EDITOR'S BIO

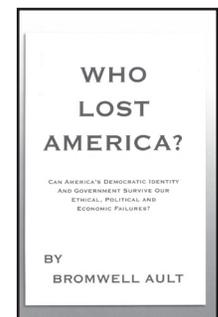
MR. AULT IS RETIRED FROM BUSINESS, A GRADUATE OF YALE UNIVERSITY, AND THE AUTHOR OF A RETAIL FOOD STUDY (LA ROCHE & Co. NYC, NY 1957) WHICH DESCRIBED THE EMERGENCE AND GROWING DOMINANCE OF THE SUPERMARKET IN AMERICAN FOOD RETAILING; AND EMINENT DISDAIN: THE TRIUMPH OF CYNICISM OVER INTEGRITY IN 21ST CENTURY AMERICA. (AUTHORHOUSE, BLOOMINGTON, IN 2009)

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