

MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE[®]

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**EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!
WE ARE GOING ONLINE.
SEE IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT ON PAGE 13.**

WHO ARE WE? AND WHY ARE WE NOT WHO WE WERE?

PREFACE

POLITICAL AMERICA FOR MOST OF OUR HISTORY HAS BEEN NOT ONLY A PLACE TO LIVE, BUT ALSO A STATE OF MIND AND WAY OF LIFE DERIVED FROM OUR PLYMOUTH ROCK TO INDEPENDENCE HALL ORIGINS; AND FROM OUR CONSTITUTION'S GUIDANCE OF OUR NATION'S AND CONTINENT'S DEVELOPMENT.

INEVITABLY, THE TELLING OF OUR NATIONAL TALE MUST INSPIRE REVERENCE IN THOSE WHO LOVE AND UNDERSTAND THE BASIS FOR WHAT WE HAVE UNDERTAKEN AND ACCOMPLISHED.

THAT REVERENCE IS LACKING IN THE WAY MANY AMERICANS VIEW THEIR COUNTRY TODAY AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, BENEATH THE DOME IN DC WHERE IT SHOULD BE MOST NOTABLE. THERE, IT HAS MOSTLY BEEN DISCARDED AND REPLACED WITH ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS MORE SUITED TO TODAY'S POLITICAL TEMPER AND PACE.

THE TRUTH IS, ALTHOUGH POLITICAL TRUTH IS INCREASINGLY HARD TO COME BY, THAT WE HAVE DRIFTED SO FAR FROM OUR FOUNDERS' PRINCIPLES THAT WE DO NOT HAVE A GOVERNMENT THAT THEY WOULD RECOGNIZE. ACTUALLY, IT

IS SOMEWHAT OF A STRETCH TO EVEN REFER TO WHAT WE HAVE AS "GOVERNMENT". THIS CRITICISM CUTS BOTH WAYS — AGAINST THOSE ELECTED TO OFFICE AND AGAINST THOSE WHO ELECT THEM.

WHAT DO WE HAVE? TOUGH QUESTION, AND SOMETIMES IT'S DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE EXACTLY WHAT OUR GOVERNMENT IS COMPOSED OF AND HOW IT WORKS.

WHAT WASHINGTON REVEALS IS A STEADILY EXPANDING MIXTURE OF AGENCIES, BUREAUS, DEPARTMENTS, OFFICES, BOARDS, COMMITTEES, AND OTHER INITIATIVES THAT FORM THE STRUCTURE OF OUR FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY. THESE ENTITIES HAVE BEEN FORMED OVER TIME BY LEGISLATION CREATED BY CONGRESS THEORETICALLY TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE PUBLIC. THEY ARE RARELY TERMINATED AND, THEREFORE, ACCUMULATE.

**"TODAY THEY CONSTITUTE WHAT MANY
DC INSIDERS SEE AS A FOURTH BRANCH
OF GOVERNMENT."**

IN THIS ISSUE: WE COMMENCE A NEW SERIES ENTITLED WHO ARE WE? IN WHICH WE WILL EXAMINE MANY OF THE CONTRADICTIONS THAT BESET OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY AND CONFUSE OUR GOVERNMENT.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE: WE WILL CONTINUE THIS SERIES IN THE PRESENTLY PLANNED ORDER: FOREIGN POLICY, IMMIGRATION, EDUCATION.

CENTER FOR PUBLIC CONSCIENCE

P.O. Box 220722
WEST PALM BEACH,
FL 33422-0722

www.
centerforpublic
conscience.org

Email:
moconscience@aol.com

Bromwell Ault

Editor/Founder
Phone (561) 697-2233

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ONLY CONGRESS CAN CREATE LEGISLATION AND ONLY CONGRESS CAN PROVIDE THE MEANS OF FUNDING THE LAWS IT PASSES. SOME LAWS WORK THEIR WAY THROUGH THE MULTIPLE LEVELS AND COMMITTEES OF THE APPROVAL PROCESS ON THEIR OWN; OTHERS ARE GIVEN GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND/OR OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES SUCH AS THE DEPTS. OF DEFENSE AND JUSTICE, LABOR UNIONS, RELIGIOUS GROUPS, ETC. AND LOBBYISTS REPRESENTING EVERY POSSIBLE INTEREST ARE WITHIN INSTANT REACH. IN THEIR PRESENT NUMBER AND INTENSITY THEY HAVE BEEN PRESENT FOR ONLY ABOUT THREE DECADES. TODAY THEY CONSTITUTE WHAT MANY DC INSIDERS SEE AS A FOURTH BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT.

ONCE ENABLING LEGISLATION HAS BEEN PASSED, IT MUST CROSS OVER ONE OF GOVERNMENT'S GREATEST DIVIDES — FROM LEGISLATION TO IMPLEMENTATION, AND, IN ORDER TO MAKE THIS TRANSITION, EITHER NEW MANAGING BODIES MUST BE CREATED AND FUNDED, OR THE NEW PROGRAMS MUST BE FITTED INTO EXISTING ONES.

CONGRESS' TASK IS THEN MOSTLY DONE. SPACE WILL BE FOUND; STAFF WILL BE HIRED AND COUNSEL RETAINED; PLANS WILL BE ANNOUNCED; FUNDS WILL BE TRANSFERRED; AND OPERATIONS WILL COMMENCE. WITH ONLY MINOR VARIATIONS THIS IS THE WAY OUR GOVERNMENT HAS GROWN SO IMMENSELY OVER THE PAST HALF CENTURY.

ONE SUCH VARIATION, COMMENCING WITH PRES. CLINTON, IS THE INCREASING USE OF EXECUTIVE ORDERS (EO) WHEREBY SOME PURPOSES AND PROJECTS CAN BE ADDED TO THE BUREAUCRATIC MIX WITHOUT CONGRESSIONAL PASSAGE. OVER TIME, THESE PRIMARILY POLITICAL ACTIONS HAVE SERVED TO STRENGTHEN THE PRESIDENT'S HAND.

TO PUT THIS INCREASE IN PERSPECTIVE, CONSIDER THAT FDR ISSUED 11 EXECUTIVE ORDERS OVER HIS THIRTEEN YEARS IN OFFICE. THE FOLLOWING NINE PRESIDENTS FROM TRUMAN THROUGH BUSH I USED THEIR EO POWER 30 TIMES OVER 47 YEARS.

BUT THEN LOOK AT WHAT FOLLOWS. CLINTON ISSUED 15, BUSH II 62 AND OBAMA, WITH 2 PLUS YEARS REMAINING IN HIS PRESIDENCY IS REPORTED BY VARIOUS SOURCES TO HAVE ISSUED BETWEEN 200 AND 900. THE DIFFERENCE MAY LIE IN WHICH TYPE OF ORDER IS INCLUDED, BUT WHATEVER THE ACTUAL NUMBER, OBAMA'S USE OF EOs HAS REACHED A NEW LEVEL AND ESTABLISHED A NEW TECHNIQUE FOR ASSERTING THE POWER OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH.

IT IS NOT, HOWEVER, JUST THE GROWING FREQUENCY AND NUMBER THAT ARE OF CONCERN. SOME EOs CAN FIT WITHIN THE EXISTING STRUCTURE OF OUR GOVERNMENT AND REQUIRE NOTHING MORE THAN AN ADDITIONAL EFFORT OR NEW DIRECTION FROM PERSONNEL AND FUNDING RESOURCES ALREADY IN PLACE.

OTHERS ARE BOLDER AND MORE EXTENSIVE IN THEIR PURPOSE, WHICH OFTEN IS ONLY REVEALED AFTER THE ORDER HAS BEEN SIGNED, SO THAT WITH THE QUICKNESS OF A PEN STROKE AND IN THE PRIVACY OF THE OVAL OFFICE, REGULATIONS CAN BE PUT IN PLACE THAT BOTH SERVE THE WHITE HOUSE'S POLITICAL PURPOSES AND EXPAND THE BUREAUCRACY BY ADDITIONAL HIRING AND FUNDING REQUIREMENTS.

IT IS EVIDENT FROM THE SCALE OF EO USE PRACTICED BY CLINTON, BUSH II AND OBAMA THAT THE CONCEPT AND INTENTION OF THE EO HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY; AND, RATHER THAN BEING USED FOR RARE, SPECIFIC OR EMERGENCY PURPOSES, IT HAS QUIETLY BECOME JUST ANOTHER POLITICAL TOOL THE USE AND ACCEPTANCE OF WHICH PROVIDES AN EFFECTIVE WAY FOR THE PRESIDENT TO BYPASS CONGRESS.

WE SHOULD MAKE NO MISTAKE AND SEE THIS FOR WHAT IT IS — A GRADUAL SHIFT IN POWER TO THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH WITHOUT ANY INPUT OR APPROVAL FROM EITHER THE PUBLIC OR THE CONGRESS. THE SILENCE AND, THEREFORE, IMPLIED ACQUIESCENCE OF THE LATTER SUGGESTS THAT OUR INCREASINGLY IMPERIAL PRESIDENCY WILL ONLY BECOME MORE SO AND CAN BE EXPANDED WITHOUT RESISTANCE. THIS NEW PATTERN OF EO USE COULD DO GREAT DAMAGE TO OUR DEMOCRACY.

BUT IT'S NOT REALISTIC TO EXPECT CONGRESS TO EXERT THE KIND OF WATCH-DOG AUTHORITY THAT IT HAS IN THE PAST, AS IT HAS BEEN EQUALLY COMPLICIT WITH THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH IN OUR UNCONTROLLED BUREAUCRATIC EXPANSION OF THE LAST SEVENTY FIVE YEARS. AND IN WASHINGTON ALL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BUREAUCRATIC POOL ARE GRATEFULLY RECEIVED.

THERE IS ONE FINANCIAL ASPECT OF OUR BUREAUCRACY'S MANAGEMENT SYSTEM THAT PRECLUDES ANY POSSIBILITY OF GAINING CONTROL OVER ITS EVER MOUNTING EXPENSES. AND THIS IS THAT ANY CUT OR REDUCTION IS APPLIED AGAINST FUTURE INCREASE, NOT ACTUAL EXPENDITURES.

FOR EXAMPLE, IF CONGRESS MANDATES A 10% EXPENSE REDUCTION FOR AGENCY "X", IT IS NOT LEVIED AGAINST LAST YEAR'S ACTUAL,

OR THIS YEAR'S ESTIMATED, NUMBERS, BUT AGAINST THE PROPOSED INCREASE FOR THE YEAR AHEAD. THIS TECHNIQUE ASSURES CONTINUALLY INCREASING APPROPRIATIONS AND PERSONNEL HIRING.

ANOTHER GREAT DIVIDE IS ONE OF MANAGEMENT. ONCE CONGRESS HAS AUTHORIZED THE FUNDING OF A PROGRAM, IT HAS NO FURTHER INVOLVEMENT WITH IT EXCEPT FOR WHATEVER ADDITIONAL ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS ARE NECESSARY FOR ITS OPERATION.

THE ACTUAL MANAGEMENT OF THE MANY BILLIONS OF DOLLARS PUMPED INTO OUR BUREAUCRACY IS ASSIGNED BY THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH TO CANDIDATES OF VARYING BACKGROUNDS, SOME RELATED TO THE JOB AND OTHERS NOT, POLITICS OFTEN SERVING AS THE MOST FREQUENT DETERMINANT. THE DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY HEAD HAS GREAT INFLUENCE OVER THE STAFF, FUNDS AND ACTIVITIES UNDER HIS/HER COMMAND, AND THIS FIEFDOM EXTENDS DOWNWARD TO EACH SUCCEEDING LEVEL WHERE IT IS USUALLY ACCEPTED AND REPLICATED WITH RARE OPPOSITION.

THE END RESULT IS THAT OUR MASSIVE WASHINGTON BUREAUCRACY FUNCTIONS IN TWO MAJOR WAYS THAT ARE ANTI-THETICAL TO ITS ORIGINAL PURPOSES. IT DISTRIBUTES TAXPAYER MONEY WITH LITTLE OR NO EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION IN AMOUNTS THAT CAN ONLY INCREASE.

AND ITS INTERNAL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND PRACTICES HAVE CREATED A NEARLY PERMANENT POLITICAL CLASS OF SOMEWHAT LESS THAN INDEPENDENT STATUS. CIVIL SERVICE PLAYS ITS PART HERE BECAUSE IT MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO FIRE LONGTIME EMPLOYEES.

THE PRIME EXAMPLE IS OUR DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, FORMED BY PRES. BUSH II AFTER 9/11 BY THE COMBINATION OF SOME OF OUR HISTORIC AGENCIES INTO ITS PRESENT BIGGER THAN EVER FORM. ITS NUMBER OF OFFICES, BUILDINGS, EMPLOYEES AND CONTACTS WITH THE PUBLIC ARE WITHOUT EQUAL AND AT ITS APEX IS SECTY. JEH JOHNSON. HIS POSITION IS EXTRAORDINARY IN REACH AND VARIETY EVEN BY WASHINGTON STANDARDS. AND HE PRESIDES OVER THIS VAST BUREAUCRATIC MACHINE AS IT ROLLS ON, IMPRINTING THE WASHINGTON MONEY/POWER STRUGGLE WITH ITS SIZE AND STRENGTH.

WHO WE WERE

IN THE WINTER OF 1850-51 AN EXTRAORDINARY EVENT OCCURRED — THE PUBLICATION IN BOSTON AND NYC OF TWO AMERICAN NOVELS OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE.

THE NOVEL WAS THE DOMINANT LITERARY ART FORM OF THE CENTURY, AND FLOURISHED IN RUSSIA, FRANCE, ENGLAND AND GERMANY WHERE HISTORY PROVIDED NATURAL BACKGROUNDS FOR EPIC STORIES AND THEIR CHARACTERS.

SEPARATED BY LESS THAN THIRTY STRAIGHT LINE MILES IN THE ROUNDED BERKSHIRE HILLS OF WESTERN MA, HERMAN MELVILLE AND NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE FACED EACH OTHER ACROSS BRIGHT NEW ENGLAND DAYS AND BLACK NIGHTS ILLUMINATED ONLY BY THE STARS. THEIR EFFORTS PRODUCED MOBY DICK AND THE SCARLET LETTER. AND MELVILLE, KEENLY AWARE OF HIS NEIGHBOR'S TALENT, DEDICATED MOBY DICK TO HIM: *"IN TOKEN OF MY ADMIRATION FOR HIS GENIUS THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED TO NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE"*.

WHY DO WE SEE THIS AS EXTRAORDINARY? AND WHY SHOULD WE CARE? AS WITH MOST HISTORICAL QUESTIONS, THE PAST CAN HOLD IMPORTANT CLUES. AS WE HAVE POINTED OUT BEFORE, THE AMERICA THAT EMERGED FROM OUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CONSTITUTION WAS REGARDED, ESPECIALLY IN CULTURAL MATTERS, AS A LESS THAN SUCCESSFUL COPY OF ITS ENGLISH FOREBEARS. THIS WAS A VIEW THAT WAS WIDELY HELD BOTH IN EUROPE AND AT HOME.

IT BEGAN TO SHIFT, HOWEVER, AFTER WASHINGTON IRVING, WHO SERVED AS OUR AMBASSADOR TO ENGLAND, RETURNED AND PUBLISHED HIS SKETCH BOOK, WHICH RECOUNTED HIS VIEWS OF ENGLISH PEOPLE AND LIFE. IT WAS FOLLOWED BY A COUPLE OF VOLUMES OF SHORT STORES, INCLUDING THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW, SET IN THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY AREA AROUND HIS HOME IN TARRYTOWN, LESS THAN 50 MILES NORTH OF NYC.

MEANWHILE, IN NEW ENGLAND SOMETHING MORE FAR-REACHING AND NATIONAL IN CHARACTER WAS AT WORK. A SMALL GROUP OF AMERICAN AUTHORS WRITING ABOUT AMERICA WERE TURNING OUT DISTINGUISHED EFFORTS IN A VARIETY OF FORMS — POETRY, FICTION, AND BOTH NATURAL AND PHILOSOPHIC COMMENTARY. THIS GENERATION, WHICH HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS "THE FLOWERING OF NEW ENGLAND"¹, INCLUDED EMERSON, THOREAU, CHANNING, LONGFELLOW, LOWELL AND, YES, HAWTHORNE. INDEED, A PRESCIENT RALPH WALDO EMERSON, "THE SAGE OF CONCORD", IN HIS AMERICAN SCHOLAR ADDRESS FORECAST AMERICA'S EMERGING CULTURAL STATUS, "OUR DAY OF DEPENDENCE, OUR LONG APPRENTICESHIP TO THE LEARNING OF FOREIGN LANDS, DRAWS TO A CLOSE."

MELVILLE'S AND HAWTHORNE'S EARLY WORKS HAD APPEARED ALONGSIDE MANY OF THOSE OF "THE FLOWERING" FROM WHICH THEY SEPARATED THEMSELVES BY THE ENORMOUS CREATIVE LEAP THAT PRODUCED MOBY DICK AND THE SCARLET LETTER. THESE TWO NOVELS ARE MARVELS OF METAPHOR, CHARACTER AND PLOT. THEY DEAL WITH THOSE ASPECTS OF HUMAN NATURE THAT ALMOST INVARIABLY ACCOMPANY TRAGEDY — GOOD AND EVIL, MAN AND GOD, SCIENCE AND NATURE, REVENGE, HUBRIS, BETRAYAL, FAITH, ABUSE, ISOLATION, PRETENSE AND THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF BLASPHEMY AND SPIRITUAL CORRUPTION.

WHAT IS SO EXTRAORDINARY ABOUT THESE NOVELS' APPEARANCE IS THAT THEY DRAW AN INTELLECTUAL LINE ACROSS THE HALFWAY MARK OF 19TH CENTURY AMERICA. THEY CAN APPEAR WITHOUT ARGUMENT, AND BE READILY ACCEPTED, ON ANY LIST OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST NOVELS IN THE COMPANY OF TOLSTOY, DICKENS, HUGO, CERVANTES AND OTHERS.

BEFORE THEIR PUBLICATION, WE HAD STRUGGLED TO FORM A NATIONAL LITERARY IDENTITY EQUAL TO OUR EUROPEAN CONTEMPORARIES. WE EXPERIMENTED AND MADE PROGRESS BUT WE WERE STILL WANNABES. AFTER THEIR PUBLICATION, EVEN THOUGH MOBY DICK WAS SLOW TO ACHIEVE ITS DUE RECOGNITION, WE HAD ARRIVED. AND WE, AND OTHERS, VIEWED OUR NEW CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE LENS OF UNDENIABLE ACHIEVEMENT.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE? WE MUST THINK ABOUT HOW UNLIKELY THIS EVENT WAS — TWO AMERICAN AUTHORS

WRITING AT THE SAME TIME; IN THE SAME PLACE; PRODUCING TWO WORLD CLASS NOVELS EQUAL TO THE BEST OF THE OLD WORLD.

“ ... ODDS DEFYING MOMENTS OF MEMORABLE CULTURAL VALIDATION.”

WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY, BOTH AS A COUNTRY AND A CULTURE, SINCE 1851 AND HAVE PRODUCED MANY GOOD BOOKS, INCLUDING ANOTHER TWO ICONIC NOVELS IN 1926, F. SCOTT FITZGERALD’S THE GREAT GATSBY AND HEMINGWAY’S THE SUN ALSO RISES, AT THE TIME OF OUR SECOND “FLOWERING” IN THE TWO DECADES BETWEEN WWI AND II. OCCURRING AS THEY DID, WITHIN A DECADE OF “THE WAR TO END ALL WAR”, THEY EXAMINE THE VALUES OF OUR BEHAVIOR AND IDENTITY IN LIGHT OF “THE GREAT WAR’S” LEGACY. THEIR’S, TOO, WAS A MONUMENTAL ACHIEVEMENT WHICH WOULD NOT BE EQUALED BY EITHER AUTHOR IN SUBSEQUENT YEARS. BOTH THESE EVENTS, WITHIN A CENTURY OF EACH OTHER, STAND OUT AS ODDS DEFYING MOMENTS OF MEMORABLE CULTURAL VALIDATION.

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IN CONSIDERING THE MAGNITUDE OF THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENT, WE CANNOT ESCAPE THE QUESTION OF “COULD WE DO THE SAME TODAY?” NO LONGER A YOUNG AND PRECOCIOUS NEWCOMER TO THE WORLD’S FAMILY OF NATIONS, BUT AS TODAY’S GLOBAL SUPERPOWER, CAN OUR PRESENT CHARACTER, CULTURE AND VALUES PRODUCE WORKS OF ART OF SUCH EVIDENT GREATNESS AS MD AND TSL?

WE THINK THE ANSWER IS CLEARLY “NO”; THAT AS A SOCIETY AND A NATION WE HAVE CHOSEN TO ESTABLISH VALUES AND FOLLOW DIRECTIONS THAT ARE VASTLY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OF OUR YOUNG, 19TH CENTURY AMERICA.

TECHNOLOGY, OF COURSE, CHANGES EVERYTHING; AND SO DOES HISTORY WHICH IMPACTS ALL POPULATIONS. IN OUR PRESENT AMERICA, WHAT LARGELY DEFINES “WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE ARE NOT WHO WE WERE” IS THE GROWING NUMBER OF CONFLICTS IN OUR GOVERNMENT AND ITS POLICIES BETWEEN “NOW” AND “THEN”.

THESE CONFLICTS ARE NOT REGULARLY EXPOSED TO THE PUBLIC, NOR CELEBRATED; BUT THEY ARE AT THE ROOT OF MANY OF OUR POLITICAL FAILURES. NOT SURPRISINGLY, AS OUR NATIONAL POLITICS ARE NOW MIRED IN STALEMATE, THE QUALITY OF OUR GOVERNMENT STEADILY DECLINES AND FINDS NEW WAYS TO DISAPPOINT — A PROCESS OF WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN GROWING CONCERN OVER THE PAST HALF CENTURY FOR ALL AMERICANS.

TIME ALSO CHANGES EVERYTHING, AND PROBABLY MORE THAN TECHNOLOGY. IT IS NOW JUST A CENTURY AND A HALF SINCE THE END OF OUR CIVIL WAR IN 1865 AND ANOTHER FIFTEEN YEARS SINCE MD AND TSL ENTERED OUR CONSCIOUSNESS. THE FORMER DATE MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF OUR SOCIETY/ECONOMY FROM AGRICULTURAL TO INDUSTRIAL AND CAPITALISM’S PERIOD OF DEFINING GROWTH AND SUCCESS. THE LATTER, PUBLICATION DATE IS AN ARTISTIC MILESTONE. SINCE THESE TIMES, OUR

ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL PATHS HAVE SHOWN DIVERGENT RESULTS. CAPITALISM HAS BEEN UNABASHEDLY SUCCESSFUL WITH ONLY OCCASIONAL SETBACKS WHILE, SINCE THE END OF WWII, WE HAVE WANDERED AND WITHERED IN A CULTURAL WASTELAND OF OUR OWN MAKING.

ONE MORE NOTE ABOUT TIME, AND ESPECIALLY THIS 150 YEAR PERIOD: IN THE LONG RUN OF WHAT WE REGARD AS HISTORIC TIME, A CENTURY AND A HALF GOES BY ALMOST WITHOUT NOTICE. BUT IN TERMS OF HUMAN TIME, IN WHICH OUR POLITICS AND POLICIES MUST FUNCTION, IT OFFERS MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SEASONED EVALUATION, CORRECTION AND ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL INTEREST. OUR SUCCESS IN THESE KEY EFFORTS HAS BEEN SPORADIC AND INCONSISTENT AND HAS BECOME ACCEPTED AS A POLITICAL FACT OF LIFE IN WASHINGTON.

IN THIS AND SUCCEEDING CHAPTERS OF THIS SERIES WE WILL CALL ATTENTION TO THE SOURCES AND CONSEQUENCES OF OUR MOST SERIOUS CONFLICTS AND CONTRADICTIONS, AND THE PARTS THEY PLAY IN HOW WE DEAL WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES OF OUR TIME AND PLACE.

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POLITICAL CONTRADICTIONS

TIME, TECHNOLOGY, COMMERCE, RELIGION, POPULATION AND KNOWLEDGE ALL MAKE HISTORY AND FORM CULTURES. EACH OF THESE MAKES ITS MARK AND LEAVES ITS IMPRINT WHICH IS THEN OVERRUN AND OBTUSCURED BY THE FORCE THAT FOLLOWS. THIS PROCESS IS REPEATED MANY TIMES IN ENDLESS COMBINATIONS. IT IS FUELED BY HUMANS’ OFTEN CORRUPTING DRIVES TO AMASS WEALTH, TO ACHIEVE POWER AND STATUS, TO PROCREATE AND, EVEN, TO LEARN. AS THE FLOW MUST GO ON, FUSION IS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE AND, WHEN IT FAILS, LEAVES IN ITS WAKE DIFFERENCES FROM WHICH DISTURBANCES, CONFLICTS OR CONTRADICTIONS CAN ARISE.

DISTURBANCES ARE USUALLY DEALT WITH BY LAW AND CONFLICT BY FORCE IN WAYS THAT BRING ABOUT A RELATIVELY QUICK RESULT. CONTRADICTIONS ARE MORE SUBTLE; THEY CAN BE TOLERATED, APPEASED, IGNORED AND EVEN ENCOURAGED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE POLITICAL CLASS. THEY ARE A BARRIER BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENT AND HAVE SERVED AS A KEY ELEMENT IN THE INCREASING DYSFUNCTION OF OUR GOVERNMENT’S EXECUTIVE, LEGISLATIVE AND BUREAUCRATIC SPHERES OVER THE PAST HALF CENTURY.

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IF WE LOOK CAREFULLY, SERIOUS AND PAINFUL CONTRADICTIONS ARE READILY APPARENT THROUGHOUT OUR GOVERNMENT’S POLITICAL APPARATUS. SOME OF THE SAME CONTRADICTIONS THAT EXIST IN WASHINGTON REAPPEAR, PERHAPS IN A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT SIZE OR SHAPE, IN OUR STATE AND LOCAL POLITICS, BUT IT IS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL WHERE OUR ATTENTION AND EFFORTS ARE MOST NEEDED.

WITHOUT DOUBT THE MOST BLATANT AND HARMFUL FORM OF CONTRADICTION THAT EXISTS IN AMERICAN POLITICS

TODAY IS THE PRACTICE OF SELECTIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT (SLE) BY WHICH A GOVERNMENT AGENCY (LEGISLATIVE, EXECUTIVE OR BUREAUCRATIC) REFUSES TO ENFORCE, EITHER FULLY OR PARTIALLY, ANY DULY PASSED AND EXISTING LAW.

SLE, IN ITS MOST OBVIOUS AND CONSEQUENTIAL FORM, IS FOUND IN THE LONGSTANDING AND BROAD FAILURE OF OUR IMMIGRATION LAW GOING BACK TO 1965 WHICH WILL BE EXAMINED IN A LATER SECTION ON IMMIGRATION. THERE ARE OTHERS, LESS WELL KNOWN, PERHAPS, BUT JUST AS DAMAGING, WHICH THROW LIGHT ON THIS PARTICULAR FORM OF CORRUPTION.

THIS PAST FEBRUARY REP. JOHN DINGELL, D-MI, AT THE AGE OF 87, ANNOUNCED HIS RETIREMENT FROM CONGRESS AT THE END OF THIS YEAR. AT THAT TIME HE WILL HAVE SERVED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR 29 FULL TERMS, OR 58 YEARS. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THIS NUMBER SETS A NEW RECORD FOR CONGRESSIONAL LONGEVITY².

BUT WAIT! THERE'S MORE! DINGELL ENTERED CONGRESS IN 1955 AT THE AGE OF 29, SUCCEEDING HIS FATHER WHO HAD DIED. THE DINGELL FAMILY, FATHER AND SON, HELD OFFICE AND REPRESENTED MI VOTERS FOR MORE THAN TWO GENERATIONS DURING ONE OF WHICH THE SON SERVED AS CHAIRMAN OF THE ENERGY COMMITTEE. HEREWITH SOME COMMENTS BY DINGELL FROM HIS RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT³:

“THIS CONGRESS HAS BEEN A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT TO EVERYONE — MEMBERS, MEDIA, CITIZENS AND OUR COUNTRY.”

“THERE WILL BE MUCH BLAMING AND FINGER POINTING BACK AND FORTH, BUT THE MEMBERS SHARE FAULT, MUCH FAULT; THE PEOPLE SHARE MUCH FAULT, FOR ENCOURAGING A DISREGARD OF OUR COUNTRY, OUR CONGRESS AND OUR GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM.”

THIS IS AN EXTRAORDINARY ASSIGNMENT OF BLAME, EVEN FOR A MEMBER OF CONGRESS, AND ESPECIALLY FOR ONE WHO HAS FED AT THE GOVERNMENT TROUGH FOR 29 TERMS DURING WHICH HE MADE NO EFFORT TO BRING ABOUT THE KIND OF CONGRESSIONAL REFORM HE CITES AS BEING NECESSARY. DURING HIS LENGTHY CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ENERGY COMMITTEE HE WAS, HOWEVER, ABLE TO MAINTAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY.

THE UNDERLYING CONTRADICTION IS THAT OF HOLDING PROLONGED ELECTIVE OFFICE, WHETHER BY THE DINGELLS IN MI, KENNEDYS IN MA, BUSHES IN TX OR OTHER POLITICALLY ORIENTED FAMILIES WHO HAVE COME TO VIEW POLITICS AS A “FAMILY BUSINESS”. THE CONCEPT OF ELECTIVE GOVERNMENT STATED IN THE CONSTITUTION BY OUR FOUNDERS WAS THAT OF REVOLVING OFFICES OCCUPIED BY PRIVATE CITIZENS, NOT PROFESSIONAL, CAREER POLITICIANS DRIVEN BY DYNASTIC AMBITION.

WE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO CREATE TERM LIMITS, BUT THEY WERE SUCCESSFULLY OPPOSED IN CONGRESS AND THE COURTS. A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT MIGHT BE SUCCESSFUL, BUT IT IS A LENGTHY PROCESS THAT REQUIRES THE BACKING OF

CONGRESS AND THE STATES' LEGISLATURES.

THE ARGUMENT CAN BE MADE THAT THE DINGELL TYPE MEMBER OF CONGRESS WAS FAIRLY ELECTED, AND THAT FOR SIXTY PLUS YEARS ONLY DINGELLS, OR THEIR LIKE, COULD SERVE THEIR DISTRICTS, BUT THIS WON'T WASH FOR THE EVIDENT REASON THAT GERRYMANDERED DISTRICTS, LONG TENURE AND THE AVAILABILITY OF FEDERAL FUNDING FOR LOCAL PROJECTS ALL OPERATE AGAINST THE IDEAL OF A LEVEL ELECTORAL PLAYING FIELD.

REP. DINGELL'S RETIREMENT IS MORE THAN WELL DESERVED AND LONG OVERDUE. WHAT IS LESS DESERVED IS THE RICH COMPENSATION PACKAGE PROVIDED TO DINGELL BY OUR GOVERNMENT DURING HIS YEARS OF ACTIVE SERVICE AND WHICH WILL CONTINUE INTO HIS RETIREMENT.

REP. DINGELL'S CAREER IN CONGRESS IS MOST NOTABLE FOR ITS CONTINUITY — I.E. THAT HE COULD PROLONG IT FOR LONGER THAN ANY OTHER MEMBER OF CONGRESS IN OUR HISTORY. THAT IS THE “FAULT SHARED BY THE PEOPLE” WHO ELECTED HIM; NOT THAT THEY ENCOURAGED A “DISREGARD OF OUR COUNTRY, OUR CONGRESS AND OUR GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM”.

THE POLITICAL CONTRADICTION THAT TOPS ALL OTHERS IS THAT WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED SINCE OUR FOUNDING BY AN ELEGANT CONSTITUTION AND CONCEPT OF GOVERNMENT WHICH WE HOLD OUT TO THE WORLD AS BOTH A MODEL TO BE FOLLOWED BY OTHERS AND A BASIS FOR OUR SUPERIORITY. IN TRUTH WE HAVE ALLOWED IT TO BE PUSHED TO ITS PRESENT DYSFUNCTION BY ABUSING IT FOR PERSONAL GAIN AND IGNORING ITS TRADITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR RESPONSIBLE, OPEN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT.

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REPRESENTATIVE (?) GOVERNMENT

THE MENTION OF CONGRESSIONAL COMPENSATION REVEALS ONLY ONE ASPECT OF CONGRESS' GENEROSITY TOWARDS ITSELF. THE BASE SALARY IS \$174,000 TO WHICH ARE ADDED SIGNIFICANT AMOUNTS FOR COMMITTEE SERVICE AND CHAIRMANSHIPS. OTHER “PERKS” IN THE FORM OF GOODS AND SERVICES PROVIDE SAVINGS THAT EXPAND THE BASE SALARY INTO A VERY COMFORTABLE WAGE. THERE IS NO NEED TO LIST THESE “PERKS” INDIVIDUALLY. SUFFICE TO SAY, THEY ARE MANY AND GENEROUS AND HAVE MOVED OVER TIME IN THE DIRECTION OF CORPORATE MODELS.

IN ADDITION TO COMPENSATION, TO OBTAIN A TRUE AND CURRENT IMAGE OF THE CONGRESS, WE MUST CONSIDER ITS MEMBERS' WEALTH. ERIC LIPTON OF THE NY TIMES HAS RECENTLY REPORTED THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR HISTORY MORE THAN HALF THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ARE MILLIONAIRES.⁴ THIS MAY PARTIALLY STEM FROM A SIMULTANEOUS PROCESS OF INCREASING LARGESSE AND A DECLINING DOLLAR, BUT IT IS CONGRESS' HANDS THAT ARE ON THE CONTROLS.

AND, ALTHOUGH THE GOP HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH GREATER WEALTH, THE DATA IN THE TIMES

ARTICLE REVEALS THAT DEMOCRATS REPORTED A MEDIAN NET WORTH OF \$1.04 MILLION COMPARED TO \$1 MILLION FOR REPUBLICANS⁵.

CREATING AND ACCUMULATING WEALTH CAN TAKE TIME EVEN FOR THOSE WHO PURSUE IT ON A FULL-TIME BASIS. SERVING IN CONGRESS MAY FIT THAT DEFINITION, ALTHOUGH IT DOES NOT APPEAR IN ITS JOB DESCRIPTION. IT MAY BE THAT OUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES ARE ALL BUDDING WARREN BUFFETS MOVING UP FINANCIALLY FAR FASTER THAN THE REST OF US (CONGRESSIONAL WEALTH GREW BY 4.4% IN 2012, AS REPORTED IN 2013)⁶. BUT IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT MUCH OF CONGRESS' FINANCIAL ACUMEN MAY STEM FROM ITS NOT HAVING TO BE BOUND BY THE SAME RULES AS THE PUBLIC.

THE MOST GLARING EXCEPTION OF THIS NATURE IS THAT MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ARE FREE TO TRADE IN THE SECURITIES OF COMPANIES IN WHICH THEY HAVE ACCESS TO "INSIDER" INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC; AND THE FINANCIAL SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF THESE COMPANIES OFTEN IS DETERMINED BY CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATION AND/OR OVERSIGHT.

THIS IS JUST ONE OF MANY LINES OF DISTINCTION OUR ELECTED CONGRESS HAS DRAWN BETWEEN ITS CONSTITUENTS AND ITSELF. TO SOME DEGREE, THE INCREASED WEALTH OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS REFLECTS THE GROWING FINANCIAL SPACE BETWEEN THE WEALTHY AND THE POOR OVER THE PAST DECADES WHICH JOSH BIVENS, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AT WASHINGTON'S ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE, DESCRIBES AS:

"CONGRESS NOT ONLY SEEMS MORE RESPONSIVE TO POLICY DESIRES OF THE VERY RICH, BUT, INCREASINGLY, THEY ARE THE VERY RICH."⁷

THE PRESENT IMAGE OF CONGRESS IS A DISTURBING ONE. ITS 535 MEMBERS CONTROL MUCH OF THE NATION'S WEALTH AND ITS DESTINY, AND THIS AWESOME POWER EXTENDS TO OTHER NATIONS AND ECONOMIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. NOT CONTENT WITH THIS RAREFIED POLITICAL STATUS, IT HAS EMBARKED UPON A FULL-BLOWN PURSUIT OF PERSONAL WEALTH.

THE CONTRADICTION OF THE STATED FORMS, METHODS AND VALUES OF OUR DEMOCRACY HAS GREATLY CHEAPENED AND DAMAGED OUR GOVERNMENT.

* * *

FOR THE AMERICAN COLONISTS FROM ENGLAND THE PROCESS OF SEPARATION AND INDEPENDENCE WAS VERY PAINFUL. AND EMOTIONAL, BECAUSE THEY WERE CUTTING TIES WITH CUSTOM, LAW, CURRENCY, FRIENDS, FAMILY, GOVERNMENT AND, IN SOME CASES, RELIGION. THE OFFSET WAS THEIR DESIRE TO ESTABLISH A NEW DEMOCRATIC STATE FREE OF THE CLASS AND SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS THAT CONTROLLED MUCH OF ENGLISH LIFE.

A CLASSLESS SOCIETY IS THE STUFF OF MANY POLITICAL DREAMS, BUT HAS PROVED DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE. IN AMERICA, WE HAVE COME AS CLOSE AS ANY OTHER MAJOR POWER, ALTHOUGH TIME AND MONEY AND POWER OPERATE IN

WAYS THAT ABRABE OUR COMMUNITARIAN VALUES.

HOW CAN WE RESPOND TO OUR WEALTH-SEEKING, DYSFUNCTIONAL CONGRESS WHICH SETS ITSELF APART FROM ITS OBLIGATIONS TO BOTH REPRESENT THE PEOPLE AND TO PASS AND ENFORCE THE LAWS OF THE LAND? THE DEMOCRATS HAVE LONG BASHED REPUBLICANS WITH ACCUSATIONS OF CLASS WARFARE. IT SEEMS THE REAL CLASS WARFARE IS BEING WAGED BY CONGRESS AGAINST THE PUBLIC, AS IT ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH AN ELITE MONEY AND POWER STRUCTURE UNDER ITS CONTROL. THIS IS A LONG WAY AND FAR CRY FROM WHAT OUR FOUNDERS, AND THE COLONISTS THEY REPRESENTED, ENVISIONED FOR "OUR NOBLE EXPERIMENT". MORE AND MORE, BY WORD AND BY DEED, THE IMPRESSION COMING FROM BOTH THE LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCHES ABOUT OUR DEMOCRACY IS THAT POWER AND WEALTH CAN BE PUT TO THEIR BEST USE BY THE POLITICAL ELITES.

THIS IS NOT JUST A PERSONAL POLITICAL OR ETHICAL CHOICE ANYMORE. IT HAS METASTASIZED THROUGHOUT MANY OF OUR GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND CAN DOMINATE THEIR THOUGHT AND POLICY PROCESSES. CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL — THE NEW RIGHT, COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATISM, SOCIAL CAPITALISM, THE NEW WORLD ORDER, GLOBAL ECONOMICS — WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN AMERICA TODAY AND SHAPING OUR GOVERNMENTAL FAILURE IS FAR REMOVED FROM THE TIME AND TEMPER OF OUR ORIGINS.

* * *

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH IS NOT ALONE IN ITS PURSUIT AND EXERCISE OF PRIVILEGE. THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH IS EQUALLY COMMITTED, ALTHOUGH IN THE SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT FORM OF ENGAGING IN INCREASINGLY FREQUENT AND COSTLY TRAVEL. THIS IS NOTHING NEW, AS PREVIOUS PRESIDENTS — NOT CONTENT TO ENJOY THE LUXURY OF THE WHITE HOUSE — HAVE FOUND OPPORTUNITIES TO LEAVE DC ON "NECESSARY VACATIONS".

IN THE CORPORATE WORLD THE MOST COMMON VACATION MODEL IS TWO WEEKS TIME AND YOU PAY YOUR OWN WAY. IN THE WHITE HOUSE THE SCALE IS FAR GREATER — ALMOST UNIMAGINABLE — AND THE TAXPAYER PAYS, EVEN FOR EXPENSES THAT ARE CLEARLY OF A PERSONAL NATURE.

IN THE '50S, IKE'S VACATIONS CONSISTED MOSTLY OF OCCASIONAL TRIPS TO PLAY GOLF AT THE MASTERS IN AUGUSTA, GA. SIMILARLY, DURING THE KENNEDY YEARS JFK VACATIONED AT HYANNIS, MA OR PALM BEACH, FL. STATE TRIPS WERE ARRANGED AND CONDUCTED FOR POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC PURPOSES. LOOKING BACK, PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL THEN SEEMS QUAIN BY TODAY'S PRACTICE.

WHAT HAS CHANGED? THERE HAS BEEN INCREASED PROVISION FOR SECURITY — SOME NECESSARY, SOME DEBATABLE. RECENT WHITE HOUSE OCCUPANTS VIEW THE USE OF TRAVEL AS A NECESSARY POLITICAL PROCESS REGARDLESS OF ITS COST. THIS POLITICAL EXTENSION OF PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL REQUIRES THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL PRESS CORPS BE INCLUDED TO ISSUE APPROVED AND POLITICALLY FAVORABLE PRESS RELEASES. TRAVELING LIGHT HAS NO MEANING OR BACKERS AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND, IF THE DUKE OF CORNWALL WISHED TO VISIT A COUSIN IN, SAY, YORKSHIRE, IT WAS A “BIG DEAL”, FOR HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MULTIPLE HOUSEHOLD PROVIDERS, FAMILY MEMBERS, GOVERNMENT ADVISORS, SERVANTS, ENTERTAINERS AND A SUBSTANTIAL SECURITY GUARD SELECTED FROM HIS MILITARY FORCE. ROADS, WHERE THEY EXISTED, WERE POOR, TRAVEL WAS SLOW AND BOTH VISITING AND HOSTING WERE DIFFICULT. SOME THINGS HAVE CHANGED; OTHERS HAVE NOT. KEY AMONG THE LATTER IS THE COMMITMENT TO THE EXERCISE OF “ROYAL” EXCESS AS A TIMELESS “RIGHT”.

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION HAS POSTED SOME NUMBERS THAT SEEM SO INSENSITIVE TO THE PUBLIC MOOD THAT THEY COULD WELL COUNTER WHATEVER POLITICAL ADVANTAGE WAS ANTICIPATED FROM THE TRAVEL. FOR INSTANCE:⁸

1) A COST OF \$5 MILLION FOR A TWO DAY TRIP TO IRELAND FOR MRS. OBAMA, 6/13 REPORTED BY THE WASHINGTON TIMES.

2) A COST ESTIMATED AT \$100 MILLION FOR PRES. OBAMA AND FAMILY TO VISIT AFRICA 7/13. JUST UNDER \$16 MILLION OF THIS TOTAL WAS RECORDED BY THE AIR FORCE AS FLIGHT EXPENSES INCURRED SOLELY FOR THE OBAMA FAMILY. FURTHER DETAIL AS TO THE LOGISTICS INVOLVED FOR THIS AFRICAN TRIP COME FROM A CONFIDENTIAL PLANNING DOCUMENT OBTAINED BY THE WASHINGTON POST. “MILITARY CARGO PLANES WILL AIRLIFT IN 56 SUPPORT VEHICLES, INCLUDING 14 LIMOUSINES AND THREE TRUCKS LOADED WITH SHEETS OF BULLETPROOF GLASS TO COVER THE WINDOWS OF THE HOTELS WHERE THE FIRST FAMILY WILL STAY. FIGHTER JETS WILL FLY IN SHIFTS, GIVING 24 HOUR COVERAGE OVER THE PRESIDENT’S AIRSPACE, SO THEY CAN INTERVENE QUICKLY IF AN ERRANT PLANE GETS TOO CLOSE.”

3) A COST OF \$7.8 MILLION ESTIMATED BY THE HAWAII REPORTER FOR THE PRESIDENT’S 2012-13 VACATION IN HONOLULU.

THE PROBLEM WITH ALL OF THESE EXPENSES IS ONE OF SCALE, OF PERCEPTION. WHEN THE PRESIDENT TAKES OFF IN AIR FORCE ONE WITH HIS PARTY OF FAMILY, ADVISORS, ETC., IT IS SHADOWED BY A SECOND 747 CARRYING THE MEDIA CORPS. FOOD, FUEL AND OTHER OPERATING COSTS CAN ADD UP QUICKLY WHEN FLYING OVER A HUNDRED PEOPLE TO DISTANT DESTINATIONS.

THE APPROPRIATENESS OF DECISIONS TO UNDERTAKE TRAVEL SPENDING OF THESE AMOUNTS IS SURELY OPEN TO QUESTION. BUT THERE IS ANOTHER FACTOR AT WORK, AND THAT IS THEIR NECESSITY. WE HAVE ACHIEVED A LEVEL OF TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITY THAT ALLOWS THE PRESIDENT TO PROJECT HIS WORDS AND IMAGE ELECTRONICALLY TO ANY PLACE IN THE WORLD FROM THE WHITE HOUSE.

AND THERE IS YET ANOTHER ELEMENT. THE TRUTH IS THAT THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT DOES NOT HAVE TO TRAVEL ANYWHERE. AS “LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD”, THERE ARE VERY FEW EVENTS THAT COMMAND HIS PRESENCE ELSEWHERE. AND FOR MOST OTHER COMMERCIAL, DIPLOMATIC OR POLITICAL MISSIONS THEIR REPRESENTATIVES ARE BEST SERVED BY A

VISIT TO WASHINGTON TO PRESENT THEIR VIEWS TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, AND KEY AGENCIES, AS WELL AS THE PRESIDENT.

“IT IS THE SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT AND SPECIAL PRIVILEGE THAT CONTRADICTS WHAT AND WHO WE SAY WE ARE!”

OUR GOVERNMENTAL TRAVEL FACILITIES AND AVAILABILITY ARE ALSO GREATLY MISUSED BY CONGRESS, MOST NOTABLY REP. NANCY PELOSI, D-CA. ALL IN ALL, THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER IS PAYING HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS A YEAR FOR UNNECESSARY POLITICAL/PERSONAL TRAVEL COSTS. IT’S NOT JUST THE EXCESSIVE AMOUNTS OF THESE COSTS THAT RANKLE. IT IS THE SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT AND SPECIAL PRIVILEGE THAT CONTRADICTS WHAT AND WHO WE SAY WE ARE!

* * *

PROTECTING THE CONSUMER

SOME CONTRADICTIONS ARE SIMPLY MORE OUTRAGEOUS THAN OTHERS AS IN THE CASE OF OUR CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU (CFPB) ESTABLISHED, IT IS CLAIMED, “TO ACQUIRE AND MAINTAIN A NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE PANEL OF CREDIT INFORMATION ON CONSUMERS FOR USE IN A WIDE RANGE OF POLICY RESEARCH PROJECTS...”⁹

WE COULD EASILY ASSUME FROM ITS TITLE AND THIS STATEMENT THAT CFPB MIGHT ATTEMPT TO SERVE THE PUBLIC’S INTEREST IN MATTERS OF FINANCIAL POLICY AND PRACTICE WITH RELEVANT INFORMATION, IF AND WHEN CONTACTED. ACTUALLY, PUBLIC CONTACT HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY DISCOURAGED FROM CFPB’S FOUNDING WHEN IT WAS ALLOWED A VERY GENEROUS OPERATING BUDGET BEYOND CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT OR CONTROL — AN IRRESISTIBLE TEMPTATION IN OUR WASHINGTON BUREAUCRACY.

TWO YEARS AGO CFPB (RICHARD CORDRAY, DIRECTOR) SET ABOUT ON A PROGRAM TO REMODEL ITS HEADQUARTERS AT AN ESTIMATED COST OF \$55 MILLION. AS OF MAY, OVERRUNS HAVE INCREASED THE COST BY \$90 MILLION TO \$145 MILLION¹⁰ WITH THE LIKELIHOOD OF MORE TO COME.

THIS EXCESS DREW A COMMENT TO CORDRAY FROM REP. JEB HENSARLING, CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES, THAT “YOU ARE SPENDING MORE PER SQUARE FOOT THAN THE TRUMP WORLD TOWER”¹¹. IT ALSO CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF A SENIOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER AT THE WASHINGTON EXAMINER WHICH FILED A REQUEST FOR PERTINENT RECORDS UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA). WITHIN A FEW MONTHS CFPB INFORMED THE EXAMINER THAT IT HAD LOCATED 350 PAGES OF WHICH IT WOULD WITHHOLD 335. PROTRACTED LITIGATION IS ALMOST ASSURED FOR THE NEAR FUTURE AND THERE IS NO CERTAINTY AS TO WHERE, OR IF, THE INFORMATION SOUGHT WILL BECOME PUBLICLY AVAILABLE.

THE INITIAL CONTRADICTION HERE IS THE VERY EVIDENT EXCESS SPENDING ON ITS OFFICE SPACE BY AN AGENCY

DESIGNATED TO PROVIDE “CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION”, AND ITS SCALE IS AS ALARMING AS ITS REASON.

BUT THERE IS SOMETHING FAR WORSE IN THIS SITUATION. IT IS THE NOW ALMOST ROUTINE WAY IN WHICH ALL AREAS OF OUR GOVERNMENT, BUT ESPECIALLY THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH, DEFLECT AND/OR DENY FOIA REQUESTS.

THIS PRACTICE HAS INCREASED IN THE OBAMA PRESIDENCY BECAUSE OF HIS EXPANDED USE OF EXECUTIVE ORDERS, BUT IN REALITY, EVER SINCE FOIA’S PASSAGE IN 1968, ADMINISTRATIONS, WHETHER REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT, HAVE USED ALL LEGAL AND OTHER MANEUVERS AVAILABLE TO THEM TO AVOID OR REDUCE THEIR OBLIGATION TO RESPOND FULLY AND PROMPTLY TO FOIA REQUESTS.

THE FOIA WAS SEEN BY MOST OBSERVERS OF OUR POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES AS A MEANINGFUL TILT OF OUR DEMOCRACY BACK IN THE DIRECTION OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS. IT WAS A “BIG DEAL”, BUT HAS FALLEN INTO A STATE OF CONSIDERABLE DISREPAIR. KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORKINGS OF OUR GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE RESTRICTED ONLY IN RESPONSE TO THE MOST SERIOUS NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS. IN THIS MATTER, A VERY IMPORTANT CONTRADICTION UNDERLIES THE CFPB COST OVERRUNS.

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GUNS AND JUSTICE (DELAYED)

THE SITUATION FROM WHICH THIS NEXT CONTRADICTION ARISES IS BEYOND BELIEF — EXCEPT THAT IT HAPPENED AND HAS BROUGHT ABOUT EXTENSIVE LITIGATION INVOLVING THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (DOJ), THE CONGRESS AND THE WHITE HOUSE.

WE REFER TO A DOJ OPERATION CALLED FAST AND FURIOUS (FF) THAT TOOK PLACE FROM 9/09 TO 12/10 IN WHICH THE DOJ “SURREPTITIOUSLY” SUPPLIED MARKED GUNS TO MEXICAN DRUG CARTELS IN THE HOPE THAT THEY COULD BE USEFUL IN CRIMINAL IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES. AS FLAWED A CONCEPT AS THIS WAS FOR OUR CABINET LEVEL LEGAL DEPARTMENT, IT BECAME EVEN WORSE WHEN THESE MARKED WEAPONS WERE REVEALED TO HAVE BEEN USED IN THE KILLING OF A U.S. BORDER PATROL AGENT.

AT FIRST, ATTORNEY GENERAL (AG) ERIC HOLDER DENIED ANY DOJ KNOWLEDGE OR INVOLVEMENT, BUT, AS INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY GREW, HE WAS FORCED TO ADMIT PARTICIPATION, WHILE REFUSING ALL ATTEMPTS TO PROVIDE MEANINGFUL DETAILS INCLUDING QUERIES FROM THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM. THE LATTER PROMPTED THE US DISTRICT COURT IN DC TO CITE THE DOJ FOR CONTEMPT OF CONGRESS — A HISTORICAL “FIRST” FOR AN ACTIVE, IN-OFFICE AG¹².

THE NEXT SHOE TO DROP CAME FROM THE WHITE HOUSE WHEN PRES. OBAMA INVOKED EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE TO KEEP THE CASE RECORDS FROM PUBLIC VIEW AND TO PROTECT THE AG’S CLAIMS AND POSITION. THERE HAVE BEEN DISCUSSIONS OF SETTLEMENT AND AN ORDER BY A FEDERAL JUDGE TO

UNDERTAKE MEDIATION WITHOUT ANY REAL PROGRESS.

THERE ARE SOME TRICKY ISSUES PRESENT IN THIS SITUATION. AS JUDICIAL WATCH, A PRIVATE WATCHDOG GROUP, HAS BROUGHT SUIT UNDER THE FOIA TO MAKE THE FF RECORDS PUBLIC, THE LITIGATION IS NOW THREE-SIDED WITH THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OPPOSING THE LEGISLATIVE AND THE PUBLIC’S CALL FOR OPENNESS.

AS SUCH, THERE MAY BE DEEMED TO BE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES INVOLVED THAT WOULD WARRANT REVIEW BY A HIGHER COURT. FOR EXAMPLE, WE CAN QUESTION THE PRESIDENT’S CLAIM OF “EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE” WHICH:

“ALSO HAD THE EFFECT OF PROTECTING HOLDER FROM BEING PROSECUTED FOR CONTEMPT, BECAUSE IT IS THE ‘PRACTICE’ OF THE DOJ NOT TO PROSECUTE CONTEMPT OF CONGRESS CHARGES IF THE DOCUMENTS IN DISPUTE ARE BEING WITHHELD PURSUANT TO EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE CLAIMS.”¹³

THIS IS VERY CLEARLY A SELF-SERVING TACTIC FOR AG HOLDER WITH THE ABILITY, AT LEAST FOR NOW, TO SHIELD HIS AND THE DOJ’S ACTIONS FROM THE KIND OF OPEN INQUIRY THAT WAS BOUND TO RESULT FROM THE “BLOWN” FF PROGRAM.

AT EVERY TURN IN THIS SCANDAL AS IT HAS PLAYED OUT, MORE CONFLICTS AND CONTRADICTIONS HAVE BEEN REVEALED. AS IT MOVES TOWARDS SETTLEMENT OR TO A COURT RESOLUTION, IT IS CERTAIN THAT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WILL BE MADE PUBLIC EITHER BY COURT DECREE OR BY THE VERY NATURE OF THE LEGAL ARGUMENTS.

IN A NEGATIVE SENSE THIS IS A CASE THAT “HAS EVERYTHING” — A PROJECT SERIOUSLY FLAWED IN CONCEPT AND INEPTLY EXECUTED, THE DEATH OF A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER, FALSE DENIAL (FIRST, OF THE DOJ’S INVOLVEMENT AND, THEN, OF RESPONSIBILITY GOING TO THE TOP) AND THE CONTINUING WITHHOLDING OF RECORDS SOUGHT UNDER THE FOIA.

WITH THE FAILURE OF CONGRESS TO FULFILL ITS REPRESENTATIVE ROLE IN SO MANY WAYS, THE FOIA HAS BECOME ONE OF THE PUBLIC’S MOST EFFECTIVE, REMAINING WAYS TO SPEAK, TO BE HEARD AND TO BECOME INFORMED. UNFORTUNATELY, IT, TOO, CAN BE BLUNTED BY GOVERNMENTAL RESISTANCE. AS DESCRIBED BY JUDICIAL WATCH, “GOVERNMENT AGENCIES SELDOM RELEASE REQUESTED RECORDS AS THE LAW REQUIRES. USUALLY IT IS A TORTURED PROCESS, PLAGUED BY ONE GOVERNMENT DELAY AFTER ANOTHER.”¹⁴

FF, OR AT LEAST WHAT WE NOW KNOW ABOUT IT, IS A FRIGHTENING EXAMPLE OF HOW GOVERNMENT POWER, PEOPLE, PROGRAMS, PLANNING AND PRIVILEGE CAN ALL GO WRONG AND BE MISUSED. ON ITS SURFACE, IT IS A SORRY TALE AND WILL ONLY BECOME MORE SO AS FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES KNOWN.

BENEATH ITS SURFACE, AT THE LEVEL OF OUR NATIONAL CONTRADICTIONS WHERE WE INCREASINGLY MUST ASK “WHO ARE WE?”, FF DISCLOSES CONTRADICTIONS AS SERIOUS AS ANY IN OUR GOVERNMENT. OUR DOJ AND ITS AG, WHO HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN SEEN AS “THE PEOPLE’S LAWYER”, HAVE

ENGAGED IN ILLEGAL AND EXTRA LEGAL ACTS, HAVE DENIED THEM TO THE PUBLIC AND THE CONGRESS AND, WHEN DENIAL WAS PROVEN FALSE, HAVE RESORTED TO CLAIMING THE PROTECTION OF EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE.

“...IT IS FRONT AND CENTER, CLEARLY VISIBLE, AND READY AT ANY TIME TO SERVE A POLITICAL PURPOSE.”

SADLY, THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF CONTRADICTION IN OUR GOVERNMENT’S BRANCHES AND BUREAUCRACY. IN SOME PLACES IT TAKES PLACE OUT OF SIGHT, BUT IN OUR DOJ IT IS FRONT AND CENTER, CLEARLY VISIBLE, AND READY AT ANY TIME TO SERVE A POLITICAL PURPOSE.

* * *

WHEN IS A LAW NOT A LAW ?

CONTRADICTIONS ENJOY SPECIAL STATUS IN AMERICAN LIFE, ALTHOUGH THEY SEEM TO CONTRADICT MUCH OF WHAT WE CLAIM TO BE. AND, WITHOUT MUCH DOUBT, THEY EXIST TO THE DEGREE THAT THEY DO BECAUSE WE HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO THEM AND PERMIT THEM. POLITICALLY, THEY PROVIDE A DEFAULT POSITION THAT AVOIDS MAKING A DIFFICULT CHOICE.

SELECTIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT (SLE) IS PERHAPS THE MOST WIDELY PRACTICED FORM OF CONTRADICTION. WE HAVE DISCUSSED IT IN EARLIER CHAPTERS, MOSTLY IN RELATION TO IMMIGRATION, AND WILL REVISIT IT IN THAT CONTEXT LATER IN THIS SERIES, BUT IT IS ALIVE AND WELL IN OTHER AREAS.

IN FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR, AS THE ARGUMENT OVER SAME-SEX MARRIAGE ESCALATED EMOTIONALLY AND SPREAD THROUGHOUT OUR POLITICAL AND JUDICIAL SYSTEMS, AG HOLDER FELT IT NECESSARY TO ISSUE A STATEMENT OF CLARIFICATION IN WHICH HE DECLARED “THAT STATE ATTORNEYS GENERAL, WHO BELIEVE THAT LAWS IN THEIR STATES BANNING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE ARE DISCRIMINATORY, ARE NOT OBLIGATED TO DEFEND THEM”¹⁵

GAY MARRIAGE HAD BECOME A VERY PROMINENT NATIONAL ISSUE BY THE TIME OF HOLDER’S STATEMENT, AND EXTENSIVE LITIGATION WAS IN PROCESS IN BOTH STATE AND FEDERAL COURTS. THE AG’S STATEMENT, ITSELF, WAS ONE OF TOP-LEVEL CONTRADICTION BY PROVIDING A RATIONALE FOR STATE AGS TO DISREGARD THEIR STATES’ LAWS. IT CUT ACROSS MULTIPLE LEGAL ZONES AND PROBABLY RESULTED IN CONFUSION RATHER THAN CLARIFICATION. AND IT CERTAINLY PROVIDED A PRECEDENT FOR STATE AG’S TO USE AS AN ARGUMENT, THREAT OR EXIT IN PRESENTING FUTURE CASES.

REGARDING THE SAME SUBJECT OF GAY MARRIAGE, DURING THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION CONGRESS HAD PASSED THE DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE ACT (DOMA) WHICH DEFINED MARRIAGE AS BEING BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN IN MATTERS OF FEDERAL LAW. AS TIME PASSED AND THE GAY MARRIAGE ISSUE BECAME MORE POLITICALLY CHARGED, DOMA BECAME MORE OF A LIABILITY THAN A DEFENSE AND THE OBAMA

ADMINISTRATION “WANTED OUT”. THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY AG HOLDER ANNOUNCING IN THE COURSE OF A LEGAL ACTION FILED UNDER DOMA THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NO LONGER DEFEND IT.

SIMILARLY, THE INTENSIFICATION OF THE ARGUMENT OVER HEALTH CARE, AS DEADLINES APPROACHED AND THE POLITICAL STAKES INCREASED, LED THE PRESIDENT TO MAKE CHANGES BY EXECUTIVE ORDER.

WE SHOULD NOT DECEIVE OURSELVES INTO THINKING SLE IS PURELY A DEMOCRATIC PARTY TACTIC, AS GEORGE W. BUSH’S SIGNING CEREMONIES FREQUENTLY INCLUDED STATEMENTS BY PRES. BUSH THAT IDENTIFIED THOSE PARTS OF THE LAW JUST SIGNED WHICH HE DID NOT INTEND TO ENFORCE.

OUR CONSTITUTION REQUIRES THE INCOMING PRESIDENT TO TAKE AN OATH THAT HE WILL “FAITHFULLY EXECUTE THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, AND WILL TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY, PRESERVE, PROTECT AND DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.”¹⁶ IN ITS RELATIVELY BRIEF TEXT IT OFFERS THE PROVISIONS AND PROCESSES FOR OUR GOVERNMENT’S OPERATION, INCLUDING THE PASSAGE AND TERMINATION OF LEGISLATION. RECALLING THE FOUNDERS’ EXPERIENCES UNDER THE ENGLISH MONARCHY, IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT IT LIMITED EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY.

THIS OPEN ATTITUDE TO PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE IN THE ENFORCEMENT OF OUR LAW IS A RELATIVELY RECENT TURN IN OUR WAY OF GOVERNING. IN A STRUCTURE AND BUREAUCRACY AS LARGE AS OURS, IT IS PROBABLY INEVITABLE THAT OPERATIONAL CONTRADICTIONS WILL OCCUR, BUT THEY CAN BE EASILY REMEDIED.

IT IS AT THE HIGH LEVELS WHERE POLICY AND LEGISLATION ARE FORMED WHERE SLE IS ABLE TO DO ITS GREATEST DAMAGE. SILENTLY CONCEIVED AND EXERCISED, IT CAN EXIST AND EXTRACT ITS TOLL UNTIL EXPOSED TO PUBLIC VIEW. EVEN THEN, HAVING GROWN IN ACCEPTANCE, AS WE HAVE SEEN, IT MAY PROVE DIFFICULT OR IMPOSSIBLE TO ELIMINATE.

ON MARCH 12, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSED HR4138 DESIGNED TO “EXPEDITE LAWSUITS AGAINST THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE FOR FAILING TO CARRY OUT CONGRESSIONAL MANDATES.”¹⁷ IT HIGHLIGHTED THE PRESIDENT’S ENFORCEMENT FAILURES REGARDING HIS IMMIGRATION AND HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION, BUT HAS GONE ABOUT AS FAR AS IT CAN UNDER OUR PRESENT POLITICAL ALIGNMENT. THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE THAT IT WILL GAIN EITHER ATTENTION OR TRACTION IN THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROLLED SENATE, AND EVEN LESS THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD SIGN IT.

OF ONE THING WE CAN BE SURE — WHEN THE LAW IS IGNORED, AS WHEN IT IS CREATED, BENEFITS OF MONEY OR POWER, OR BOTH, ARE PART OF THE PROCESS.

“WE ARE A NATION OF LAWS”¹⁸

IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT ANY MEMBER OF CONGRESS EXISTS WHO HAS NOT AT SOME POINT QUOTED THIS PHRASE. IT IS USUALLY INTENDED TO FAVORABLY DISTINGUISH OUR LAWS FROM OTHERS AND/OR TO INDICATE THAT OUR COMMITMENT TO

THEM IS GREATER.

“WE ARE A NATION OF LAWS”. IT ROLLS EASILY OFF THE TONGUE; IT STATES AND IMPLIES MUCH IN CAPSULE FORM; IT IS HISTORIC; AND, YES, IT SUGGESTS SUPERIORITY, NO MATTER HOW IT IS DELIVERED.

“WE ARE A NATION OF LAWS”. BUT, ARE WE? MANY OF OUR LAWS APPLY TO SOME GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS AND NOT TO OTHERS. WE CLAIM TO OBSERVE FREE MARKET PRINCIPLES AND CODIFY THEM INTO LAW, BUT THEN CREATE A BODY OF TAX LAW SO CRAMMED WITH SUBSIDIES, WRITE-OFFS, DEDUCTIONS, EXCEPTIONS AND OTHER EXEMPTIONS THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR COMMERCIAL SECTOR AND GOVERNMENT IS MORE ONE OF DEPENDENCE THAN FREEDOM. AND, IRONICALLY BUT NOT ACCIDENTALLY, THE MAIN BENEFICIARIES OF OUR REVERSAL OF FREE MARKET PRACTICE HAVE BEEN THOSE VOICES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR WHO HAVE CALLED MOST INSISTENTLY FOR A MINIMAL GOVERNMENT PRESENCE IN ECONOMIC EFFORTS.

OTHER LAWS ARE NOT DIMINISHED BY DETAILS AS IN OUR TAX CODE. THEY SIMPLY ARE IGNORED AND GO UNENFORCED BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF POLITICAL WILL TO EITHER CARRY OUT THEIR PROVISIONS OR TO REVOKE OR AMEND THEM. THIS FAILURE IS ONE OF CHARACTER AND COURAGE THAT IS NOW WIDELY ACCEPTED WITHIN CONGRESS AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. IT IS ARGUABLY THE MOST TRAGIC AND FAR-REACHING OF OUR MANY GOVERNMENTAL DYSFUNCTIONS — AND ITS PRACTICE AND ACCEPTANCE ARE INCREASING.

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“... THE INTERESTS OF THIRTEEN DIFFERENT ENTITIES HAD TO BE MERGED INTO ONE FORM SATISFACTORY TO ALL!”

FEW HISTORIES OF OUR FOUNDING PAY SUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO ONE ASPECT OF THE BEGINNING OF OUR “NOBLE EXPERIMENT”. IT IS THE MIRACULOUS WAY IN WHICH THE FOUNDERS WERE ABLE TO BRING THIRTEEN DIFFERENT COLONIES TOGETHER INTO ONE NATION. CHALLENGES RANGED FROM MINOR TO MAJOR, BUT EACH ONE HAD THE POTENTIAL TO BECOME A DEAL KILLER. THESE MATTERS INCLUDED LOCAL ONES SUCH AS ELECTION, REPRESENTATION, LAND GRANTS, RELIGION, TAXES, DEBT, TRADE, INHERITANCE AND OTHERS ALL OF WHICH HAD TO BE REWORKED IN WAYS THAT WOULD CONFORM TO THE NEW NATIONAL STATUS. THE MATTER OF OBTAINING AGREEMENT ON HOW THE VARYING AMOUNTS AND TYPES OF DEBT SHOULD BE TREATED WAS A COMPLICATED AND EMOTIONAL PROCESS. FOR PROPER PERSPECTIVE, REMEMBER THAT THE INTERESTS OF THIRTEEN DIFFERENT ENTITIES HAD TO BE MERGED INTO ONE FORM SATISFACTORY TO ALL!

AS NO ORDINARY BARGAINING SESSION COULD HAVE ACHIEVED THE NECESSARY RESULT, THE KEY ELEMENT THAT DELIVERED AGREEMENT WAS THE COMMON VISION OF THE NEW REPUBLIC.

IN THE COURSE OF REACHING AGREEMENT MANY DIFFERENCES AND CONTRADICTIONS HAD TO BE RESOLVED. THE ONE THAT PROVED TO BE IMPOSSIBLE WAS SLAVERY, AND IT

REMAINED A PAINFUL CONTRADICTION UNTIL IT WAS ENDED BY OUR CIVIL WAR. THE FOUNDERS WERE, HOWEVER, WELL AWARE OF THE POLITICAL AND MORAL DILEMMA POSED BY SLAVERY.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE HAD STATED THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL, “... ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN INALIENABLE RIGHTS ... LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS ...” HOWEVER, THIRTEEN YEARS LATER, AFTER THE CONSTITUTION’S RATIFICATION, SLAVES HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED TO COUNT AS THREE FIFTHS OF A FREE PERSON.¹⁹ WHILE THIS MIGHT HAVE SEEMED A REASONABLE COMPROMISE AT THE TIME, IT PUT IN PLACE AND HARBORED A CONTRADICTION THAT WOULD TEST AND PLAGUE OUR NEW GOVERNMENT UNTIL IT DIVIDED THE COUNTRY BY CIVIL WAR.

THE FOUNDERS ACTIONS WERE UNDERSTANDABLE IN THEIR CONTEXT, AS THE COTTON AND TOBACCO CROPS OF VIRGINIA, GEORGIA AND THE TWO CAROLINAS WERE VALUABLE EXPORT ITEMS FOR THE NEW NATION. AND THE PLANTATION LIFE AND ECONOMY OF THE SOUTH HAD TO BE RETAINED, FOR WITHOUT THE SOUTHERN STATES THERE COULD BE NO NATION. IRONICALLY IT WAS OUR WESTWARD EXPANSION AND GROWTH THAT CAUSED SLAVERY’S DEMISE, AS ITS PAIN AND INJUSTICE SPREAD INTO NEW AREAS.

EVENTUALLY PUBLIC OPINION AND PRIVATE CONSCIENCE COULD NO LONGER SUPPORT SLAVERY’S INHUMANITY. IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DEALT WITH BY LEGISLATION, BUT IN THE THREE QUARTERS OF A CENTURY BETWEEN OUR CONSTITUTION AND CIVIL WAR THE SOUTH’S PLANTATION ECONOMY HAD PROSPERED AND THE WAY OF LIFE IT SUPPORTED HAD BECOME A CULTURE WITH EMOTIONAL, AS WELL AS ECONOMIC, BONDS AND VALUES AND TRADITIONS.

AS THE COUNTRY MOVED WEST, SO DID THE SOUTH AND THE ARGUMENT OVER SLAVERY. CONGRESS GREW WITH THE ADDITION OF NEW STATES, BUT THE BITTER DIVIDE REMAINED, AND NO LEGISLATIVE SOLUTION COULD BE FOUND. IT WAS ABOUT AS MESSY A GOVERNMENT PROBLEM AS POSSIBLE, AND STILL RANKS AS THE LONGEST RUNNING, MOST SERIOUS CONTRADICTION IN OUR HISTORY.

WHAT SLAVERY CAN SHOW US IS THAT CONTRADICTIONS IN GOVERNMENT COME WITH INHERENT RISKS. SOME DIE OUT, IF LEFT UNATTENDED, BUT OTHERS FESTER, FIND WAYS TO SURVIVE AND PROGRESS TO A STATE OF CONFLICT AT WHICH POINT THEY MAY BE BEYOND THE REACH OF LEGISLATION OR LOGIC.

OUR FOUNDERS KNEW THAT SLAVERY WAS MORALLY INDEFENSIBLE, BUT COULD NOT IMAGINE THAT IT WOULD CREATE CIVIL WAR AND IMPERIL EVERYTHING THEY HAD STRUGGLED TO ACHIEVE. THEY TURNED THEIR HEADS AND GAVE IT A PASS.

SLE HAS THE CAPABILITY TO CONFUSE AND DESTABILIZE GOVERNMENT THE SAME WAY THAT THE SLAVERY ISSUE DID AND HAS HAD A DEADLY EFFECT UPON OUR LEGAL PROCESS.

THE TRULY AWFUL PART OF OUR ALLOWING CONTRADICTIONS TO EXIST IS THAT CITIZENS HAVE THE POWER TO CALL ATTENTION TO THEM AND MAKE OUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES TAKE ACTION. AND YET, WE LEAVE IT IN THE HANDS OF THE TWO MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE MISTAKEN

BELIEF THAT THEIR INTERESTS ARE THE SAME AS OURS AND THAT WE WILL BENEFIT FROM THEIR CHOICES. THIS IS FOLLY, SHEER FOLLY.

CASTING A BRIGHT LIGHT ON SLE IS OF IMPORTANCE SECOND TO NONE. IT MUST BEGIN AT THE CITIZEN LEVEL AND MOVE UPWARD. IT'S A STORY WITH THE POTENTIAL FOR REAL MEDIA TRACTION AND COVERAGE, BUT THE PUSH MUST COME FROM THE BOTTOM AND BE SUFFICIENTLY STRONG AND SUSTAINED TO CREATE SPACE BETWEEN THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA AND THE ECONOMICAL AND POLITICAL INTERESTS TO WHICH IT HAS BECOME JOINED. THIS IS NO EASY TASK, BUT IT MUST BE DONE. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE, ESPECIALLY IN TODAY'S WORLD, TO MAINTAIN A FUNCTIONAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IN WHICH THE ENFORCEMENT OF ITS LAWS IS DETERMINED BY POLITICAL CHANCE, WHIM OR INTEREST. OUR COUNTRY, ITS CONSTITUTION AND OUR COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE ALL DESERVE BETTER.

“THE RESULTS OF ONE VOTE ARE NEVER GUARANTEED FOR THE NEXT.”

WE DO NOT DEFAULT ON OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR LAW FOR ANY REASON OTHER THAN POLITICAL EXPEDIENCE. LAWS CAN BE EASILY REVOKED OR AMENDED BY CONGRESS, AND OFTEN ARE FOR MINOR OR ROUTINE MATTERS. BUT THE LARGER, MORE VEXATIOUS, DIVISIVE AND EMOTIONAL ONES ARE SHUNNED BECAUSE, IN REOPENING THEM TO DEBATE AND THE VOTING PROCESS, NEW POWER BALANCES AND TRADE-OFFS WOULD BE REQUIRED. THE RESULTS OF ONE VOTE ARE NEVER GUARANTEED FOR THE NEXT.

CONGRESS HAS THE ABILITY TO INITIATE LEGISLATIVE CHANGE ON ITS OWN, OR IT CAN BE PUSHED TO TAKE ACTION BY BILLS PROPOSED BY THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH — I.E., THE PRESIDENT AND/OR THE DEPARTMENTS/AGENCIES UNDER HIS DIRECTION. OUR LACK OF A CORRECTIVE FUNCTION IN BOTH BRANCHES IS A KEY CAUSE OF OUR PRESENT GOVERNMENTAL PARALYSIS, AND IT CAN ONLY BE REPAIRED BY THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF BOTH PARTIES. THIS CANNOT HAPPEN UNLESS EACH CAN CLEARLY SEE MORE BENEFITS THAN DRAWBACKS FROM A NEW OUTLOOK. BUT BOTH ARE LOOKING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION.

DEBT, WAR, FAMINE, DISEASE, UNEMPLOYMENT, PUBLIC UNREST — ALL CAN RAISE HACKLES AND CREATE POLITICAL FEAR. THE REALITY IS THAT AFTER ONLY A LITTLE MORE THAN TWO CENTURIES SINCE OUR FOUNDERS PLEDGED TO EACH OTHER “OUR LIVES, OUR FORTUNES AND OUR SACRED HONOR”²⁰ WE HAVE A GOVERNMENT THAT IS NEITHER RESPONSIVE NOR RESPONSIBLE.

IT WAS OUR FOUNDERS' VISION OF GOVERNMENT THAT WAS THE ORIGINAL AMERICAN DREAM. IT BEARS NO RELATION TO THE MONEYED, MARKETPLACE, CONSUMERIST VERSION THAT HAS BEEN SUBSTITUTED AND OFFERED BY OUR COMMERCIAL, POLITICAL AND MEDIA INTERESTS.

“... ARE FACED WITH RENEWING OUR VALUES, REPAIRING OUR METHODS AND REBUILDING OUR GOVERNMENT.”

WE ARE AT A STAGE WHEN ONLY ITS CITIZENS CAN SALVAGE OUR REPUBLIC FROM THE PRESENT WRECKAGE. THIS WILL TAKE ENORMOUS EFFORT, COOPERATION, DEDICATION AND PATIENCE IN THE FACE OF WHAT IS NOW A VERY WELL ENTRENCHED ADVERSITY. OUR TIME AND MEANS ARE LIMITED, BUT OUR HOPE NEED NOT BE. IT HAS, AFTER ALL, BEEN WITH US SINCE 1776. IT HAS TAKEN A FEW HITS HERE AND THERE, BUT HAS BEEN ABLE TO RESTORE ITSELF, AND US, TOO. WE ARE AT SUCH A TIME TODAY AND ARE FACED WITH RENEWING OUR VALUES, REPAIRING OUR METHODS AND REBUILDING OUR GOVERNMENT.

THIS MAY SOUND LIKE AN OLD FASHIONED FORM OF POPULISM, BUT IT'S WHAT OUR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCE CALLS FOR. OUR FAILURES SURROUND US. THEY GROW IN NUMBER AND CONSEQUENCE AND ARE AS READILY AVAILABLE FROM DEMOCRATS AS FROM REPUBLICANS.

IN GOVERNMENT, ONE FAILURE PREPARES THE WAY FOR ANOTHER AND, AS THEY SPREAD, THEY LESSEN THE AREAS AND DIRECTIONS IN WHICH CITIZENS CAN INTERVENE AND PRESS FOR PUBLIC REDRESS.

WE LIVE IN AN IDLE TIME WHEN REFERENCE TO OUR HISTORICAL DIRECTIONS AND VALUES ARE RIDICULED. THEY, OF COURSE, WERE NOT PERFECT. WE TRIPPED OVER OURSELVES AND STUMBLED FROM TIME TO TIME, BUT WERE ABLE TO SURVIVE AND, IN SOME TIMES AND WAYS, TO IMPROVE. LOOKING AROUND, WHAT, WE MUST ASK, IS BEING OFFERED TODAY?

* * *

“WHY WE ARE NOT WHO WE WERE”

IN THE LATE 18TH CENTURY, AS THE THIRTEEN COLONIES MOVED EVER CLOSER TO SEVERING THEIR PARENTAL TIES TO ENGLAND, THE PRINTED WORD WAS THE MOST POWERFUL MEANS OF TRANSMITTING POLITICAL THOUGHT AND OPINION. ARTICLES, EDITORIALS, ESSAYS, MANIFESTOS, BOOKS, DRAMAS AND POETRY WERE ALL USED TO EXPLAIN THE NEW THINKING OF THE TIME AND TO TRANSFORM IT INTO POLITICAL REALITY.

THOMAS PAINE WAS ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT FOUNDERS, ALTHOUGH HE NEVER HELD POLITICAL OR MILITARY OFFICE. BUT HE WAS FULLY COMMITTED TO THE CONCEPT OF LIBERTY AND WROTE ABOUT IT, AND ENGLAND'S ABUSE OF IT, IN WAYS THAT ENERGIZED OUR COLONIAL ANCESTORS EMOTIONALLY AND POLITICALLY AND MOVED THEM FROM MERE DISSENT TO REVOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE.

WHILE THERE WERE MANY DIFFERENCES IN OPINION AND PHILOSOPHY AMONG OUR FOUNDERS, THEY WERE IN AGREEMENT THAT A NEW SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT WAS NECESSARY TO MAKE THE REFORMS AND ESTABLISH THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT THAT WOULD HONOR THE PRINCIPLES THEY SHARED. THIS WAS THEIR UNIQUE AND MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT AND IT SERVED THEM, AND THE NATION, WELL UNTIL THE CIVIL WAR.

AFTER IT, THE COUNTRY HAD TO BE PUT BACK TOGETHER, BUT IT HAD BECOME A DIFFERENT COUNTRY WHOSE VAST ENERGIES WERE MOSTLY ALIGNED WITH THE FORCES AND DEMANDS OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRIALIZATION AND THE VARIOUS

EXPRESSIONS OF POWER THEY ENCOURAGED.

“IT BECAME POLITICALLY HISTORIC.”

THE OLD VISION OF NEW GOVERNMENT HAD GROWN DIM. THOMAS PAINE’S VOICE WAS MUFFLED AND DISTANT. THERE WAS PLENTY OF RHETORIC TO RECALL WHAT WE ONCE WERE AND HAD ONCE SET IN PLACE, BUT IT GENERALLY FAILED THE TEST OF TIME. OUR REVOLUTION AND FOUNDING, AS GENERATIONS CAME AND WENT, LOST ITS IMMEDIACY. IT BECAME POLITICALLY HISTORIC.

AS A SOCIETY, WHEN OUR PEACE AND VALUES WERE THREATENED, WE CAME TOGETHER IN TWO WORLD WARS AND HEROICALLY SAVED OURSELVES AND OTHERS. VALUES, HOWEVER, DO NOT “SELL” AS WELL IN PEACE AS IN WAR, AND AFTER WWII THE FLOW OF MONEY THROUGH OUR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS ROSE TO PREVIOUSLY UNIMAGINABLE LEVELS.

PART OF THIS NEW MONEY WAVE CAME FROM THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES SPAWNED BY MILITARY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AND UNLIMITED GOVERNMENT FUNDING. AS WELL AS ROCKET WEAPONRY AND SUPERSONIC AIRCRAFT, IT PRODUCED TV, COMPUTERS, NEW MEDICINES AND MATERIALS. IT CHANGED THE WAY WE SPOKE, WROTE, SAW THINGS AND COMMUNICATED, AND IN THE RUSH TO THE EDGES OF THE NEW WORLD, TO BE FIRST, TO BE #1, WE ALLOWED OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM TO DETERIORATE TO THE POINT WHERE THERE IS NOW LITTLE EVIDENCE OF OUR FOUNDERS’ VISION.

AND SOMETHING ELSE THAT NO LONGER EXISTS IN OUR SHREDDED GOVERNMENT IS THE SHARED OBLIGATION AND WILL FOR THOSE IN ALL THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT TO SUSPEND THEIR PURSUIT OF IDEOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE IN FAVOR OF GOALS, METHODS AND LEGISLATION THAT WILL SERVE THE NATION’S INTEREST AND RESTORE A NATIONAL VISION FOR OUR TIME THAT HONORS OUR ORIGINS.

THIS CANNOT HAPPEN UNTIL, AND UNLESS, ALL OF OUR POLITICAL CAST — REPUBLICANS, DEMOCRATS, LIBERALS, CONSERVATIVES, INDEPENDENTS, TEA PARTY, MARXISTS, SOCIALISTS, MULTICULTURALISTS, WHITES, HISPANICS, ORIENTALS, AFRICAN AMERICANS — REALIZE THAT WE HAVE REACHED A TIPPING POINT AFTER WHICH, UNLESS WE CHANGE, WE WILL NO LONGER BE ABLE TO “PLAY THE GAME” AS WE HAVE KNOWN IT. THAT IS OUR FIRST STEP.

OUR SECOND GREAT TASK IS THAT, HAVING REALIZED THAT “BUSINESS AS USUAL” IS NOT AN OPTION, ALL PARTIES MUST BE READY AND COMMITTED TO UNDERTAKING A THOROUGH PROCESS OF SUBSTANTIVE REFORM THAT WILL CHANGE “THE GAME” COMPLETELY — THE FIELD, THE RULES, THE UMPIRES AND REFEREES, THE EQUIPMENT, THE UNIFORMS, THE MEDIA COVERAGE AND THE REWARDS; EVERYTHING.

THE ONLY WAY OF SUCCEEDING IN THIS PROCESS AND ACCOMPLISHING ITS GOAL IS FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS TO REALIZE THAT THEIR FUTURE REWARDS ARE DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL TO THE AMOUNT OF POLITICAL CAPITAL THEY INVEST NOW.

THIS IS A SOBERING THOUGHT FOR POLITICIANS AND CITIZENS ALIKE. AND, AGAIN, THEY MUST REALIZE THAT

POLITICAL “BUSINESS AS USUAL” HAS RUN ITS COURSE AND FAILED.

“... WASHINGTON, ADAMS, FRANKLIN, PAINE, JEFFERSON, MADISON — SPEAKING WITH THE AUTHORITY OF THEIR OWN SUCCESS.”

NO POLITICAL REFORM IS EASILY ATTAINED. WHAT IS CONTEMPLATED HERE IS A MAMMOTH UNDERTAKING — A TRULY NATIONAL EFFORT THAT WILL REQUIRE TIME AND EFFORT OVER AN EXTENDED PERIOD. IN ITS COURSE WE WILL HAVE TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT OURSELVES AND OUR GOVERNMENT THAT WE HAVE STRENUOUSLY AVOIDED FOR OVER HALF A CENTURY. WITH OR WITHOUT DEFINITIVE ANSWERS, JUST ASKING MAY START THE PROCESS OF REALIZATION AND MOVEMENT THAT IS NECESSARY. AND AT SOME POINT, IF WE ARE ABLE TO LISTEN CAREFULLY WE MAY EVEN HEAR ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE WORDS OF OUR FIRST GENERATION LEADERS — WASHINGTON, ADAMS, FRANKLIN, PAINE, JEFFERSON, MADISON — SPEAKING WITH THE AUTHORITY OF THEIR OWN SUCCESS.

* * *

DEMOCRACY DOES NOT COME GIFT-WRAPPED IN A TIDY PACKAGE. IT IS A BETTER PHILOSOPHY THAN A MANAGEMENT SYSTEM; IT INSPIRES MORE SUCCESSFULLY THAN IT FUNCTIONS. BECAUSE OF THE BREADTH OF ITS ASPIRATIONS AND THE NUMBERS AND VARIETY OF ITS PROPONENTS ITS CHOICES CAN APPEAR RANDOM AND SUBJECT TO UNSETTLING CHANGE. WHILE UNSETTLING, CHANGE IS A DYNAMIC CAPABLE OF UNLEASHING EXCEPTIONAL POLITICAL ENERGY. AND, EVEN AS DEMOCRACY GROWS AND SUCCEEDS AS OURS HAS, THAT ENERGY MUST BE CONTROLLED AND DIRECTED ACCORDING TO THE TERMS OF THE CONTRACT THAT DEMOCRACY ESTABLISHES BETWEEN CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENT. IF, OR WHEN, EITHER FAILS THIS BASIC RESPONSIBILITY, POLITICAL DISORDER, AND THEN CHAOS, WILL RESULT. THAT IS THE COURSE ON WHICH AMERICA IS NOW EMBARKED.

IN OUR AND OTHER DEMOCRACIES, THE MEANS OF SALVATION ARE ALWAYS AT HAND. HOWEVER UNLIKE THE 20TH CENTURY’S MONOLITHIC COMMUNIST AND FASCIST SYSTEMS, IT CAN ONLY BE EXERCISED BY INDIVIDUALS ACTING UPON WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS SHARED INTERESTS AND VALUES. BUT EVEN MORE THAN PERCEPTION IS NECESSARY. FINALLY THE MANY INTERESTS/VALUES MUST BE COMBINED INTO PUBLIC OPINION THAT CAN SURVIVE THE CYNICISM OF OUR PRESENT POLITICAL MACHINERY AND ATTACH ITSELF TO OUR EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF GOVERNMENT.

“THEY ARE ABLE TO DISTURB OUR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES. ”

THERE ARE TENSIONS IN EVERY SOCIETY WHICH, WHEN UNRESOLVED, LEAVE CONTRADICTIONS. AS TENSIONS DRAW MORE ATTENTION AND EMOTION, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE NOTICED AND DEALT WITH AS PART OF SOCIETY’S RUSH TO PROGRESS. CONTRADICTIONS ARE MORE PASSIVE

IRAQ

AND CAN BE TOLERATED OVER LENGTHY PERIODS WITH OCCASIONAL ADJUSTMENTS. THEY ARE EXPERIENCED MORE AS INCONVENIENCES THAN THREATS. BUT THIS IS MISLEADING FOR AS THEIR NUMBER AND IMPACT INCREASE, THEY ARE ABLE TO DISTURB OUR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES.

AMERICA RANKS HIGH IN CONTRADICTIONS. NO SOCIETY OR SYSTEM IS EVER COMPLETELY FREE OF THEM — NOT THE PRIMITIVE NOMADS, NOR THOSE OF THE EARLY AGRICULTURAL GROUPS, NOR THE PLANNED COMMUNITIES OF ADVANCED 20TH CENTURY COMMUNISM AND SOCIALISM.

BUT WE HAVE MORE THAN OUR SHARE — AGRICULTURE/INDUSTRY, RICH/POOR, CONSERVATIVE/LIBERAL, URBAN/RURAL, RACIAL/ETHNIC, GROWTH/ENVIRONMENT, IMMIGRANT/NATIVE, COASTAL/INTERIOR, RELIGIOUS/ATHEIST, ADDICTED/NON-ADDICTED, WELL FED/HUNGRY, ETC. AS WE WERE A NATION THAT GREW FROM SEPARATE COLONIES, WE WERE BOUND TO HAVE CONTRADICTIONS FROM OUR BEGINNING.

FOR THE MOST PART, THEY WERE MANAGEABLE WITH THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION OF THE SLAVERY ISSUE. THE ARGUMENT OVER SLAVE VS. FREE STATUS BECAME SO ABRASIVE AND CHALLENGED OUR VALUES TO SUCH A DEGREE THAT WE ENDED UP GOING TO WAR AGAINST EACH OTHER OVER IT.

WE TRIED TO TREAT IT AS SOMETHING WE COULD QUIETLY TOLERATE BY, AS WE MOVED WESTWARD, ALLOWING NEW STATES TO BE ADMITTED ON AN ALTERNATING BASIS — ONE FREE, ONE SLAVE, AND THEN THE SAME AGAIN. THIS WAS SOCIAL, HUMAN AND POLITICAL FOLLY IN TOP FORM, BUT THE PROBLEM, IN THE FORM OF THIS VERY PAINFUL CONTRADICTION, WOULDN'T GO AWAY. IT WAS THERE IN OUR MIRROR EVERY MORNING AT THE BEGINNING OF THE DAY AND EVERY NIGHT AT ITS END. AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ARE STILL WITH US.

OUR AMERICAN SOCIETY SHOWS MORE LINES OF DIVISION TODAY THAN AT ANY TIME IN ITS HISTORY. THEY LESSEN OUR SENSE OF NATIONAL COHESION AND THEY INCREASE THE BURDEN ON GOVERNMENT. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOVERNMENT TO FUNCTION FOR ALL WHEN ITS ELECTED MEMBERS ARE COMMITTED TO AN ARRAY OF SPECIAL GROUPS. BOTH THE LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCHES ARE AT FAULT AS WE NEAR SEVERAL TIPPING POINTS.

DO NOT BE TEMPTED TO THINK OUR COMMENTS ARE ALARMIST. THEY ARE NOT, BUT, IF YOU REQUIRE PROOF OF THEIR RATIONALITY, JUST CONSIDER WHAT LIFE IN OUR COUNTRY WILL BE LIKE AT MID-CENTURY IF WE MAKE NO EFFORT TO DEAL WITH THE NUMBERS POSED BY OUR POPULATION, ENVIRONMENTAL, IMMIGRATION, DEBT, TAX AND RESOURCE ISSUES.

AND HERE'S ONE LAST AND VAST CONTRADICTION. IF WE DO NOTHING, THESE NUMBERS AND THEIR THREATS WILL CONTINUE TO GROW, AND YET EVERY POLITICIAN CLAMORS FOR MORE GROWTH.

WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY — POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY AND CULTURALLY — IN A TIME OF PLENTY. THE GREAT SENSE OF LIMITLESS ABUNDANCE THAT HAS GUIDED US IN THE PAST NO LONGER APPLIES TO KEY AREAS OF OUR LIVES OR OUR GOVERNMENT.

AMERICA'S CITIZENS, MUST RECOGNIZE THIS AND INSIST THAT IT BE REFLECTED IN GOVERNMENT POLICY.

EVENTS HERE ARE MOVING SO RAPIDLY IN THE DAYS BEFORE WE MUST GO TO PRINT (6/20) THAT WE ARE UNABLE TO OBTAIN A REASONABLE UNDERSTANDING OF THE ULTIMATE DIRECTION, LET ALONE THE RESULTS, OF THIS SITUATION.

ONE, HOWEVER, THAT IS READILY APPARENT IS THE FAILURE OF A DECADE OF US FOREIGN POLICY IN THE NEAR EAST. THIS STATEMENT IS BASED ON THE LOSS OF OVER 4,000 LIVES IN IRAQ AND A LESSER, BUT CONTINUING, NUMBER IN AFGHANISTAN.

ALSO SEEMING TO REACH THE STATE OF AN ENDURING OBLIGATION FOR THE US IS OUR PROGRAM TO SUPPLY THE IRAQI ARMED FORCES. THE REPEATED IMAGES ON TV NEWS PROGRAMS OF TERRORIST FORCES WEARING UNIFORMS, BRANDISHING WEAPONS AND DRIVING VEHICLES "MADE IN THE USA" AND THEN ABANDONED BY IRAQI ARMED FORCES CANNOT HELP BUT SHOCK AMERICAN TAXPAYERS WHO HAVE "FOOTED" THE BILL.

ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO, WHEN WE INITIATED OUR MISADVENTURE IN IRAQ WE OPINED THAT, WHATEVER THE LENGTH OR OUTCOME OF OUR PRESENCE THERE, THE HISTORIC DIVISIONS AND ENMITIES OF THE AREA, WOULD RESUME AFTER OUR DEPARTURE.

WELL SUPPLIED WITH STOLEN FUNDS AND ARMS, THEY HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED THEIR VISION OF THEIR ROLE AND GOAL TO REGIONAL STATUS, AND NO LONGER SEEM CONTENT WITH MERELY BEING A PART OF IRAQ.

THIS WILL TURN OUT TO BE AN ENORMOUSLY COSTLY POLICY FAILURE. A GLOBALLY IMPORTANT REGION HAS CONVERTED ITS POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES INTO ARMED CONFLICT. OUR ACTIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES ARE DISAPPOINTING WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF BECOMING MORE SO AS EVENTS UNFOLD.

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

FOR THOSE WHO CAN RECALL THE PRE-WAR, PRE-TV ERA OF PRINT MEDIA'S DOMINANCE, THESE WERE THE WORDS OF NEWSBOYS HAWKING AN EXTRA EDITION WITH NEWS OF ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT NATURE. THE "EXTRA" EDITION BROUGHT WORKERS OUT OF OFFICE BUILDINGS AND STOPPED PEOPLE IN THE STREET AND IN THEIR CARS; AND THE SELLER, HOLDING HIS SUPPLY OF PAPERS UNDER ONE ARM, EXTRACTED, FOLDED AND HANDED A PAPER TO THE BUYER WITH THE OTHER, AND THEN COLLECTED THE COIN (NICKEL OR DIME) WITH THE SAME HAND IN ONE AMAZINGLY QUICK AND COORDINATED MOTION.

FAST FORWARD TO THE PRESENT AND, ON THE OCCASION OF OUR NATION'S 225TH BIRTHDAY, AN "EXTRA" ANNOUNCEMENT OF OUR OWN. OVER

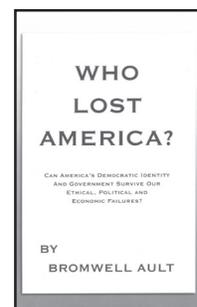
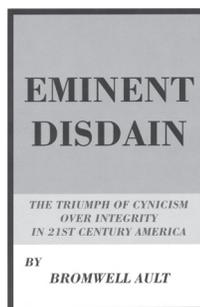
END NOTES

- ¹ THE FLOWERING OF NEW ENGLAND 1815-1865 BY VAN WYCK BROOKS. E. P. DUTTON & Co., Inc. 1936
- ² REP. DINGELL TO RETIRE AFTER NEARLY 60 YEARS BY ASHLEY PARKER, NY TIMES VIA PALM BEACH POST 2/25/14
- ³ IBID
- ⁴ ANALYSIS: MORE THAN HALF OF CONGRESS NOW MILLIONAIRES, ERIC LIPTON NY TIMES VIA PALM BEACH POST 1/12/14
- ⁵ FIGURES IN THE TIMES ARTICLE ARE FROM AN ANALYSIS PREPARED BY THE CENTER FOR RESPONSIVE POLITICS.
- ⁶ IBID
- ⁷ Cf. #4 ABOVE
- ⁸ THESE FOUR ITEMS FROM VERDICT, BY JUDICIAL WATCH 4/14.
- ⁹ IBID 5/14
- ¹⁰ IBID 5/14
- ¹² IBID 5/14
- ¹² IBID 12/13
- ¹³ IBID 12/13
- ¹⁴ IBID 12/13
- ¹⁵ HOLDER: NO DUTY TO DEFEND BANS BY MATT APUZZO, NY TIMES VIA PALM BEACH POST 2/25/14
- ¹⁶ THE CONSTITUTION OF THE US ARTICLE II SECTION 1
- ¹⁷ FAIR IMMIGRATION REPORT 4/14
- ¹⁸ THIS COMMENT HAS BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO SEVERAL SOURCES. REGARDLESS OF ITS ORIGIN, ITS MESSAGE SEEMS TO REFLECT CONGRESS' TEMPER.
- ¹⁹ U S CONSTITUTION - ARTICLE 1 - SECTION 2
- ²⁰ THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE JULY 4, 1776

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; EMINENT DISDAIN: THE TRIUMPH OF CYNICISM OVER INTEGRITY IN 21ST CENTURY AMERICA.; AND WHO LOST AMERICA? CAN AMERICA'S DEMOCRATIC IDENTITY AND GOVERNMENT SURVIVE OUR ETHICAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FAILURES?

THE AUTHOR'S MOST RECENT BOOK, WHO LOST AMERICA?, DEALS WITH TOPICS COVERED IN MOC ISSUES 19 THROUGH 27. BOTH IT AND HIS FIRST VOLUME, EMINENT DISDAIN, ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE PUBLISHER AUTHORHOUSE, AT 888-280-7715 OR AT AUTHORHOUSE.COM.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Bromwell Ault', is written over a faint circular stamp.

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