

MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE[®]

ISSUE No. 57

JULY 2017

WHO CARES? AND WHY DON'T WE?

PART 2

PREFACE

AMERICA IS IN A PERIOD MARKED BY INTENSE INTERNAL ANTAGONISMS EQUAL TO OR GREATER THAN MANY OF THOSE IT HAS EXPERIENCED BEFORE. LOOKING BACK ACROSS OUR HISTORY, WE MUST VIEW OUR CIVIL WAR (CW) AS THE POINT AT WHICH OUR INTERNAL DIVISIONS PEAKED, RESULTING IN A FOUR YEAR WAR THAT SPLIT THE NATION IN TWO. THE PRIMARY ISSUE THEN THAT DROVE THE NATION FROM PEACE TO WAR WAS SLAVERY. OTHERS SUCH AS STATES' RIGHTS, INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS, TRADITION AND SECESSION WERE CALLED UPON TO BOLSTER THE SOUTH'S ARGUMENT, BUT IT WAS THE MORALITY OF SLAVERY AS AN INSTITUTION TO BE ACCEPTED AND SUPPORTED BY AMERICA'S GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE THAT SERVED AS THE DRIVING FORCE AND ARGUMENT. FROM OUR EARLIEST TIMES, SLAVERY WAS ALLOWED BECAUSE THE STRUGGLING NATION'S ECONOMY NEEDED THE FOOD, TOBACCO AND COTTON CROPS THAT THE SOUTH PROVIDED, AND BECAUSE SLAVERY COULD BE DISMISSED AS "HAVING BEEN THERE FROM THE BEGINNING".

BUT, THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS NOTWITHSTANDING, SLAVERY

WAS BOTH A MORAL AND A MORTAL WOUND TO OUR REPUBLIC WHICH, AS THE COUNTRY EXPANDED WESTWARD, WAS REOPENED MANY TIMES. FROM ITS ORIGINAL BASE IN OUR FOUR MOST SOUTHERN FOUNDING COLONIES OF GA, SC, NC AND VA, SLAVERY GREW WITH THE COUNTRY AND AS EARLY AS 1803, WITH JEFFERSON'S ACQUISITION OF THE VAST LOUISIANA PURCHASE TERRITORY, WARNING SIGNS THAT IT POSED PROBLEMS APPEARED IN NEWLY SETTLED COMMUNITIES.

IN THE QUARTER-CENTURY FOLLOWING OUR NEW NATION'S FOUNDING WE FOCUSED ON CREATING THE STABILITY AND INSTITUTIONS NEEDED FOR GOVERNMENT AND MADE A FINAL PEACE WITH ENGLAND IN ENDING THE WAR OF 1812. THEN, FUELED BY THE SEEMINGLY UNLIMITED PROSPECTS FOR FREEDOM AND GROWTH OFFERED BY THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE'S EXTENSION OF OUR SOVEREIGNTY AND BORDERS TO AND BEYOND THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, OUR WESTWARD MIGRATION ACCELERATED TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT IT BECAME THE DOMINANT ELEMENT IN OUR ECONOMY AND, ARGUABLY, OUR POLITICS FOR A CENTURY.

IN THE EARLY YEARS OF FORMING STATES OUT OF OPEN TERRITORY THE PROCESS WAS RELATIVELY EASY, AS POPULATION

IN THIS ISSUE, WITH EMPHASIS UPON OUR NATION'S EXTRAORDINARY HISTORY, WE EXPLORE THE UNANCHORED, DETERIORATING AND INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AMERICA'S PEOPLE, POLITICS AND CULTURE; AND WHY IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY OUR GOVERNMENT IS RIVEN BY TURMOIL AND VICIOUS OPPOSITION THAT FAR EXCEED THE NORMAL LEVELS OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE, WE WILL CONTINUE TO EXAMINE OUR CHANGING POLITICAL CULTURE, INCLUDING COMMENT ON PRESIDENT TRUMP'S FIRST NINE MONTHS IN OFFICE. AGAIN, BECAUSE HISTORY AND CULTURE BOTH DETERMINE AND REFLECT HUMAN BEHAVIOR, OUR HISTORICAL FOCUS WILL CONTINUE.

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WAS SPARSE AND AGREEMENT ON THE LOCAL AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS COULD GENERALLY BE REACHED IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF STATEHOOD. AS, HOWEVER, TIME PASSED AND THE INTERESTS, MIX AND NUMBERS OF NEW SETTLERS EXPLODED, THE PROCESS OF CONVERTING FROM TERRITORY TO STATEHOOD BECAME NOTABLY MORE COMPETITIVE AND DEMANDING. MOSTLY, THE CHALLENGES OF THIS PROCESS WERE RESOLVED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, BUT OCCASIONALLY WASHINGTON FOUND ITSELF ENGAGED MORE ACTIVELY THAN THE LAW SUGGESTED IN PICKING WINNERS AND LOSERS. FOR, AS THE PUBLIC'S RESISTANCE TO SLAVERY GREW, IT BECAME FREQUENTLY AND LOUDLY PROCLAIMED AS A SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE WITH THE RESULT THAT IN THE GROWING NUMBERS OF TERRITORIES THAT UNDERTOOK THE STATEHOOD PROCEDURE THE MORAL ARGUMENT AND THE POLITICAL DECISION OVER SLAVERY HAD TO BE MADE AND REMADE. SYMBOLICALLY, THE AREA OF GREATEST PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE WAS THAT OF OUR PRESENT STATES OF MO, KS AND NB WHICH FORM AN AREA LOCATED AT THE NATION'S CENTER — HALFWAY BETWEEN BOTH OUR ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC COASTS AND OUR NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN BORDERS.

IN PHILADELPHIA IN 1787, AS THE CONSTITUTION TOOK FORM, THERE WAS A STRONG ANTI-SLAVERY ELEMENT, BUT AS THE NEW NATION'S POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC FUTURE REQUIRED THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL THIRTEEN COLONIES AT THE CONVENTION, THE SOUTHERN GROUP PREVAILED AND SLAVERY WAS ALLOWED.

ALTHOUGH THIS EARLY FORM OF APPEASEMENT BY OUR FOUNDERS SECURED THE COOPERATION OF FOUR CRITICAL COLONIES AND, THEREBY, THE SUCCESS OF THEIR ENDEAVOR, IT WAS A FAUSTIAN BARGAIN. OUR EARLY ADMINISTRATIONS WINKED AND NODDED WITH BLIND EYES AND DEAF EARS, BUT IT WOULD NOT GO AWAY, NO MATTER HOW MANY EXCUSES OR AGREEMENTS WERE MADE. IT WAS A SHAME THAT HAD TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN WE COULD NEVER AVOID ITS COMPLETE DENIAL OF THE VALUES WE ESTABLISHED IN OUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE (DI) AND CONSTITUTION TO GUIDE OURSELVES AND OTHERS.

IN DECADE AFTER DECADE, AS NEW STATES WERE ADMITTED TO THE UNION, THE SLAVERY ISSUE WAS REBORN LOCALLY, IN CONGRESS AND IN THE NATION'S CONSCIENCE. AS IT GREW IN VIOLENCE AND FREQUENCY, CONGRESS ATTEMPTED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO "SETTLE" IT WITH A COMPROMISE OF ADMITTING NEW STATES ON AN ALTERNATING SLAVERY/FREE BASIS.

FROM OUR HISTORICAL VIEW THIS WAS DOOMED TO FAILURE, BUT IT'S POSSIBLE THAT

FROM THE POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE MOMENT CONGRESS MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT ITS COMPROMISE A WORKABLE STRATEGY — POSSIBLE, BUT HIGHLY DOUBTFUL. AS EMOTIONS ESCALATED AND PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF SLAVERY GREW, AND AS THE ISSUE CAME TO DOMINATE ALL POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND ITS NEWS COVERAGE, NATIONAL DIVISION BECAME INCREASINGLY BITTER. WITH TALK OF RECESSION, TROOP MOVEMENTS AND MILITARY CONSCRIPTION AND AS THE NATION APPROACHED CIVIL WAR, BOTH THE FORM AND FUTURE OF OUR POLITICAL CULTURE WERE SO CLOUDED BY DOUBT THAT THEY WERE, IN EFFECT, INDISCERNIBLE.

AS WE CAN SEE, LOOKING BACK, OUR CW DID NOT RESOLVE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE VALUES STATED BY OUR FOUNDERS AND THOSE OF GENERATIONS OF AMERICANS SINCE. THE OLD SLAVERY IS GONE, BUT THE PROBLEM OF RACE IN AMERICA STILL EXISTS, AND IN A MORE COMPLEX FORM THAN IN THE 19TH CENTURY. IN THE INTERVENING CENTURY AND A HALF OUR CONTROVERSY OVER RACE HAS HAD AN INCREASING IMPACT UPON OUR CULTURE, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS WITH UNFORTUNATE CONSEQUENCES FOR ALL. PROOF OF THIS IS THAT RACE IS AN ARGUMENT THAT CAN STAND ALONE OR JUST AS EASILY ATTACH ITSELF TO OTHER ISSUES AND BE USED TO SEEK OR DELIVER ADVANTAGE.

NEXUS

THE NEXUS BETWEEN CULTURE, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS IS A FRIGHTENING PLACE SIMILAR, PERHAPS, TO THE CENTER OF A BLACK HOLE WHERE UNKNOWABLE NUMBERS AND FORMS OF FORCES INTERACT IN WAYS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACTIVITIES AND LIMITS OF ITS GALAXY. SO, TOO, IN OUR CULTURAL, GOVERNMENTAL AND POLITICAL NEXUS WHERE MILLIONS OF INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP INTERACTIONS CREATE PRESSURES THAT ACT UPON OUR SOCIETY. ADMITTED OR DENIED, WELCOME OR OPPOSED, REAL OR IMAGINED, WE ATTEMPT TO DEAL WITH THEM AS BEST WE CAN TO PRODUCE SATISFACTORY, BUT FAR FROM HOPED FOR RESULTS.

BUT WHAT DOES "SATISFACTORY" MEAN? CERTAINLY, IN OUR PRESENT STATE OF INCREASINGLY ACTIVE AND BITTER ANTAGONISMS, WE CANNOT EXPECT OUTCOMES THAT DELIVER BROAD ACCEPTANCE AND COMMON PURPOSE. AS RECENTLY AS IN OUR LIFETIME WE HAVE EXPERIENCED TIMES OF SUCH UNITY WHEN THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENT AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST COULD BE SEEN AS SIMILAR, IF NOT JOINED. THOSE TIMES, NOW GONE, ARE A PART OF OUR PAST WHICH

WE HAVE UNWISELY DISCARDED, AND ARE IRRETRIEVABLE IN OUR PRESENT STATE OF DEEP DISUNION.

ANOTHER ELEMENT ALWAYS PRESENT IN OUR NEXUS IS OUR USE, OR MISUSE, OF LANGUAGE. UP UNTIL THE CW THE PROBLEM OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR BLACK AND WHITE POPULATIONS WAS REFERRED TO AS "SLAVERY". THIS WAS QUITE NATURAL BECAUSE THAT TERM SERVED AS A SYMBOL FOR ALL THE SOCIAL, PHYSICAL, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PAIN THAT OUR SOUTHERN SYSTEM OF OWNED HUMAN LABOR INFLICTED.

BUT SLAVERY WAS ALSO A METAPHOR FOR THOUGHTS AND PRACTICES IN OUR NEXUS THAT EXTENDED BEYOND ITS PLANTATION LABOR ZONE OF REFERENCE. PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION IN 1863 AND THE RATIFICATION OF THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION IN 1865 POLITICALLY AND LEGALLY TERMINATED SLAVERY IN THE U.S., AND YET DETERMINED ABUSE OF AMERICA'S NEWLY CREATED BLACK CITIZENS BY NEIGHBORS, LAW OFFICERS AND COMMERCIAL, EDUCATIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS CONTINUED THROUGHOUT AMERICA UNTIL AFTER WW II. DURING THIS TIME, WHAT HAD BEEN REFERRED TO AS THE "SLAVERY ISSUE" UNDERWENT A CHANGE TO "SEGREGATION", AND THEN AGAIN AFTER WW II TO "RACIAL RELATIONS" OR THE "RACE ISSUE".

LANGUAGE, IN THIS CASE, MAY HAVE GIVEN THE ERRONEOUS IMPRESSION THAT CHANGING LABELS ALSO CHANGES HISTORY OR ITS AGENT, HUMAN BEHAVIOR. IT MAY, OR IT MAY NOT. WITH REGARD TO OUR PRE-CW 19TH CENTURY SLAVERY ISSUE, A LIMITED ASPECT OF ITS EXISTENCE AND EFFECTS WAS REMOVED WHILE OTHER NON-AGRICULTURAL FORMS OF RACIAL ABUSE AND SOURCES OF CONFLICT REMAINED FIRMLY IN PLACE.

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IN OUR VIEW, THE GOAL OF OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM MUST BE GOOD GOVERNMENT, NOT THE ASCENDANCY OF ONE POLITICAL PARTY OVER THE OTHER, BUT SUCH SUPRAPARTY THINKING FINDS LITTLE SUPPORT IN OUR POLITICAL ARENA TODAY. BOTH PARTIES CONNIVE TO AVOID RESPONSIBILITY BY THE TACTIC OF POSTPONEMENT — A/K/A "KICKING THE CAN DOWN THE ROAD" — WHICH EFFECTIVELY PRECLUDES ANY ACTION AND, WHEN IT RESULTS FROM A COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT, ALSO ANY BLAME.

AMERICA'S RACE PROBLEM HAS ACQUIRED A NEW, FOREIGN AND COMPLICATING DIMENSION IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD AND MOST MARKEDLY SINCE THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION'S 1965 PASSAGE OF THE IMMIGRATION REFORM AND NATIONALITY ACT WHICH TILTED OUR ADMISSIONS POLICY AWAY FROM ITS WESTERN EUROPEAN ORIGINS TO FAVOR THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES. WITH ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION FROM MEXICO, CENTRAL AMERICA AND AFRICA REACHING RECORD HIGHS, THE GROWING NUMBER OF ENTRANTS BORE NO RESEMBLANCE TO OUR TRADITIONAL MIX IN THAT IT WAS COMPOSED MOSTLY OF "PEOPLE OF COLOR".

SOME COULD SPEAK ENGLISH; MANY COULD NOT. SOME HAD A HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION; MOST DID NOT. SOME HAD DEVELOPED TRADE SKILLS; MORE HAD NOT. IN SHORT, FEW WERE SELF-SUPPORTING; OTHERS RELIED UPON OUR GOVERNMENT FOR THEIR SUPPORT — THEIR FOOD, HOUSING, EDUCATION, CLOTHING, HEALTH CARE, TRANSPORTATION, ETC. THESE NEW ADMISSIONS HAD NO

KNOWLEDGE OR EXPERIENCE OF THE HISTORY OF AMERICA'S RACIAL ARGUMENT, BUT THEY WERE "OF COLOR" AND COULD EASILY BE EXPLOITED BY IMMIGRANT ACTIVIST GROUPS TO DEMONSTRATE OR TO JOIN OTHER EFFORTS TO PUSH THE IMMIGRANT CAUSE. AND SOME COULD VOTE, LEGALLY OR OTHERWISE.

"NO NUMBERS, NO LIMITS, PLEASE; JUST "MORE".
AND NOW !"

THESE ADDITIONS TO OUR AMERICAN POPULATION FROM MOSTLY THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES, NOW RUNNING CLOSE TO 2 MILLION A YEAR, HAVE MADE OUR RACE PROBLEMS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT — LARGER IN NUMBERS, WITH MORE DEMANDS FROM LOUDER AND DIFFERENT VOICES AND CONSTANT PRESSURE FROM EACH NEW CONSTITUENCY TO BE RECOGNIZED AND REWARDED. HERE, THE IMMIGRANT ACTIVIST GROUPS EMPLOY THE TRADITIONAL METHODS OF POWER-SEEKING OF BOTH THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT. THEY WANT "BETTER" AND THEY WANT "MORE". NO NUMBERS, NO LIMITS, PLEASE; JUST "MORE". AND NOW !

SYNTHESIS

THIS IS DIFFICULT. RACE IS A COMPONENT OF CULTURE — LIKE LANGUAGE, RELIGION, ART, MUSIC, DIET, DRESS, ETC. LIKE ANY OTHER ELEMENT, IT CAN COMPETE OR COOPERATE WITH OTHERS THAT CREATE THE ENERGY TO SHAPE AND MOVE OUR CULTURAL DESTINY. OVER THE COURSE OF OUR HUMAN HISTORY RACE, LIKE RELIGION, HAS THRIVED AS A SOURCE OF CONFLICT BECAUSE IT COULD BE MANIPULATED TO SERVE POLITICAL, TERRITORIAL AND SOCIETAL PURPOSES. WHETHER SUCH CONFLICT WAS CONTROLLED BY LEADERS OR AROSE SPONTANEOUSLY FROM UNPLANNED CONTACTS BETWEEN DIFFERENT POPULATION GROUPS IS NOT IMPORTANT. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT RACIAL DIFFERENCES HAVE OVER THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY, LIKE RELIGIOUS, PHYSICAL, ECONOMIC AND TERRITORIAL DIFFERENCES, PROVIDED THE IGNITION POINT FOR MANY OF OUR WARS.

AMERICA'S UNFORTUNATE PROBLEM TODAY IS THAT, AS IN 1861, ITS RACE PROBLEM HAS TO BE RESOLVED HARMONIOUSLY WITH THE CULTURE OF WHICH IT IS A PART; AND IN THE INTERVENING CENTURY AND A HALF WE HAVE MADE THIS TASK IMMENSELY MORE DIFFICULT BY GREATLY INCREASING THE ADMISSION OF IMMIGRANTS OF OTHER CULTURES AND ABANDONING OUR TRADITIONAL BELIEF THAT GOOD IMMIGRATION POLICY REQUIRES ASSIMILATION. THIS VIEW WAS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL IMMIGRATION PRACTICE AND LEGISLATION FOR A CENTURY UNTIL ITS ELIMINATION BY THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION IN THE 1965 ACT.

BUT THAT'S NOT ALL THAT MAKES OUR CURRENT SITUATION SO FORMIDABLE. THE CONSTITUTION GIVES THE PRESIDENT STRONG AND APPROPRIATE AUTHORITY IN IMMIGRATION MATTERS, BUT CONGRESS MUST PASS LEGISLATION THAT COMBINES IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS OF MANY KINDS INTO A COMPREHENSIVE ACT AND PROVIDES THE SPECIFIC LANGUAGE NECESSARY FOR FUNDING AND ENFORCEMENT. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE WAY AHEAD MUST GO

THROUGH CONGRESS, BUT IT IS EQUALLY CLEAR AT THIS TIME THAT CONGRESS IS INCAPABLE OF DEALING WITH, LET ALONE RESOLVING, SUCH A DIFFICULT ISSUE. THE TRUTH IS THAT CONGRESS COULD PROBABLY NOT COME UP WITH EVEN A REASONABLE DISCUSSION BECAUSE THE IDENTITY POLITICS OF OUR TIME REQUIRE THAT NOT ONLY SHOULD ALL VOICES BE HEARD, BUT ALSO THAT THEIR DEMANDS BE HONORED. ERGO, MORE OF THE SAME GRIDLOCK!

WE ARE AT A VERY DIFFICULT STAGE OF OUR HISTORY WHICH PRESENTS US WITH A VARIETY OF MAJOR ISSUES — ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL — WHICH REQUIRE OUR UNDERSTANDING THE SOURCES, HISTORY AND VALUES OF OUR CULTURE. THEN, ARMED WITH THAT KNOWLEDGE, WE COULD ATTEMPT TO CREATE THE POLITICAL AWARENESS NECESSARY TO SET CULTURAL DIRECTIONS AND LIMITS.

THIS WOULD BE A NEW EXPERIENCE FOR AMERICA. STARTING EARLY IN OUR NATIONAL LIFE, WE BEGAN TO FORGE AN ENERGETIC, NATIVE CULTURE THAT BOTH REFLECTED AND SEPARATED ITSELF FROM ITS EUROPEAN ORIGINS. STILL, WE WERE YOUNG — IN THE PROCESS OF SETTLING OUR CONTINENT, GROWING UP, GETTING RICH AND TAKING ON GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITIES ALL IN THE SPACE OF LESS THAN TWO CENTURIES, WHEREAS MOST OF THE WORLD'S GREAT SURVIVING CULTURES HAVE BEEN IN PROCESS FOR A MUCH LONGER TIME AND HAVE HAD THE BENEFIT OF BOTH THEIR GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR PEOPLE'S ATTENTION AND PROTECTION.

IT'S NOT THAT AMERICA LACKS CULTURE; WE HAVE MADE SOME UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WAY THE WORLD LIVES AND SEES ITSELF, BUT AS A NATION WE HAVE FOCUSED FAR MORE OF OUR ENERGY AND INTEREST ON COMMERCE THAN CULTURE. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF OUR GREAT DEPRESSION (GD) IN THE 1930S, WHEN THE WORKS PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION (WPA) CREATED EMPLOYMENT FOR PAINTERS, SCULPTORS, WRITERS AND OTHERS, THE CONCEPT OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AS A SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR ARTISTS HAD VERY LIMITED SUPPORT. TODAY THAT CONCEPT MIGHT BE EASIER TO ACCEPT, BUT FAR MORE DIFFICULT TO IMPLEMENT, BECAUSE OF THE GROWING NUMBER AND FORMS OF DIVISION THAT OUR POLICIES HAVE ENCOURAGED IN OUR GOVERNMENT AND OUR PEOPLE.

IN GOVERNMENT, THE CURRENT ENMITY BETWEEN OUR TWO POLITICAL PARTIES QUALIFIES EVEN MINOR ISSUES FOR THE “JUGULAR” APPROACH. SIMILARLY, THERE ARE LINES OF DIVISION THROUGHOUT OUR POPULATION DRAWN BY MULTICULTURALIST (MC) ELEMENTS WHOM WE HAVE ALLOWED, EVEN INVITED, TO ESTABLISH THEMSELVES HERE. AS DIVISION IS THEIR STATED PURPOSE, THE RESULTS OF THEIR ACTIVITIES HINDER OUR EFFORTS TOWARDS MAINTAINING A UNIFIED DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC.

EVERY CULTURE HAS SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT IT WHICH DISTINGUISHES IT FROM OTHERS AND WHICH, WHETHER CAUSED BY NATURAL PROCESSES OR BY HUMAN PURPOSE, CAN MOLD THE DIRECTION AND LIVES OF ITS MEMBERS. NOWHERE IS THIS MORE EVIDENT THAN IN THE FOUR AMERICAN CENTURIES THAT HAVE ELAPSED SINCE THE PILGRIMS' ARRIVAL IN PLYMOUTH; AND NO MEANINGFUL VIEW OF AMERICAN CULTURE IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING HOW NATURAL AND HUMAN AGENCIES HAVE COMBINED TO PRODUCE OUR PRESENT CULTURE.

IN ONE WAY, THE PILGRIMS' LANDING MARKED A NEW BEGINNING — A SEPARATION FROM CENTURIES OF EUROPEAN HISTORY, TRADITION, RELIGION AND MONARCHICAL RULE. THEY ENJOYED A SENSE OF RELIEF THAT THEIR LIVES WOULD BE FREE FROM THE RELIGIOUS AND TERRITORIAL WARS OF THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT, AS WELL AS THE CONFINING ASPECTS UPON THEIR GOVERNMENT AND THEIR INDIVIDUAL LIVES OF POLITICAL POWER DETERMINED BY ROYAL LINEAGE.

AT THE SAME TIME, AS THEY REGARDED THE ISOLATION OF THEIR NEW SURROUNDINGS AND CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY HAD THE BENEFIT OF THE SHARED LANGUAGE, LAW AND FAITH OF THEIR ENGLISH ANCESTRY. MOREOVER, THEY KNEW THAT THIS UNIQUE ANGLICAN HERITAGE WAS THEIRS TO KEEP AND WOULD NOT HAVE TO BE ALTERED OR SUPPRESSED BY A DIFFERENT CULTURE IN THEIR NEW LAND.

SCALE WAS ANOTHER CIRCUMSTANCE WHICH BLESSED THEIR ENTERPRISE, ALTHOUGH THEY HAD NO IDEA OF THE SIZE AND ABUNDANCE OF TERRITORY AVAILABLE TO THEM. IN MANY RELOCATION EFFORTS, MIGRANTS CARVE OUT A PRESENCE THAT IS RESTRICTED BY NATURAL BARRIERS OR BY OTHER INHABITANTS. WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME AND PROCREATION OVER EVEN A FEW GENERATIONS THE AREA OF ORIGINAL SETTLEMENT MAY SEEM INADEQUATE, CAUSING THE NEW COMMUNITY TO FIND A LARGER SPACE OR TO ENGAGE IN A WAR WITH ITS NEIGHBORS TO SECURE MORE LAND AND WATER, AND THE FOOD, FISH, TIMBER, ETC. THEY CAN PROVIDE. SCALE WAS NOT A MATTER OF CONCERN TO THE PILGRIMS; SURVIVAL WAS. CERTAINLY, NEITHER THEY, NOR THEIR CHILDREN, NOR GRANDCHILDREN HAD ANY IDEA OF THE SIZE AND VARIETY OF THE CONTINENT THAT STRETCHED BEFORE THEM AS THEY FACED WESTWARD.

TWO OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES FAVORED THE PILGRIMS' SUCCESS. THE COMPOSITION OF THEIR GROUP WAS HOMOGENEOUS. THEY ALL CAME FROM THE SAME PLACE, SPOKE THE SAME LANGUAGE, ENJOYED SIMILAR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS AND RELIGIOUS MOTIVATION. THE PILGRIM COMMUNITY WAS NOT A MIXTURE OF DIFFERENT CULTURES AND BACKGROUNDS WITH ALL THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CONFLICT, JEALOUSY AND IDENTITY PROBLEMS THAT THEY OFTEN PRESENT.

AND LASTLY, THERE IS THE PRIOR PRESENCE FACTOR. THE NEW WORLD WAS CONSIDERED VIRGIN TERRITORY BY EUROPEAN STANDARDS BECAUSE IT LACKED THE GOVERNMENTS, FLEETS, AND ARMIES THAT WESTERN CIVILIZATION (WCIV) HAD DEVELOPED TO MAINTAIN A NEARLY CONSTANT STATE OF WAR IN EUROPE. NOR DID IT HAVE EUROPE'S ADVANCED COMMERCE, POPULATION CENTERS, ARCHITECTURE AND TRANSPORTATION CAPABILITIES. EVEN THOUGH THE NEW WORLD WAS SEEN AS “VIRGIN”, IT WAS NOT UNINHABITED. ITS NATIVE AMERICANS EXISTED IN THEIR OWN TIME, CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY ALL OF WHICH, BUT ESPECIALLY TECHNOLOGY, COMBINED TO RENDER THEM UNABLE TO MOUNT ANY TRULY EFFECTIVE RESISTANCE TO THE EUROPEAN INVASION. IN CONDITIONS OF EQUAL — OR NEAR EQUAL — TECHNOLOGY, PRIOR PRESENCE CAN BE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR, BUT SUCH WAS NOT THE CASE FOR OUR NATIVE AMERICAN POPULATIONS. WHAT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN

CULTURES SHOWS EARLY AND MOST CLEARLY IS HOW DESTINY CAN BE ORDERED BY DIFFERING LEVELS OF TECHNOLOGY — “THE TECHNOLOGY GAP”.

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THE EARLY PERIOD OF THE PILGRIMS’ SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PURITY WAS BRIEF, FOR, AS WORD OF THE NEW WORLD’S ABUNDANCE AND FREEDOM REACHED EUROPE’S WAR WEARY POPULATIONS, MORE FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS CHOSE TO EMIGRATE AND CREATE A FUTURE HERE. THE DUTCH AND GERMANS CONCENTRATED IN THE ATLANTIC STATES WHILE THE FRENCH FAVORED NORTHERN AREAS ALONG THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER AND GREAT LAKES CLOSE TO THE CANADIAN SETTLEMENTS ESTABLISHED BY THEIR EARLY EXPLORERS.

THE CENTURY AND A HALF FROM THE LANDING AT PLYMOUTH TO OUR DI, WITH ITS INTRODUCTION OF NEW NATIONALITIES, RELIGIOUS FORMS AND MARITIME TRADE, DRASTICALLY CHANGED THE NATURE OF THE AMERICAN COLONIAL EXPERIENCE AND POSED A POLITICAL QUESTION THAT WOULD NOT BE RESOLVED UNTIL OUR DI. HOW COULD THESE VARYING INTERESTS, OPINIONS, BACKGROUNDS AND NEEDS BE RESOLVED POLITICALLY WHEN LEGAL AUTHORITY WAS HELD AND EXERTED BY THE ENGLISH KING, AND EFFECTIVE, LOCAL CIVIL CONTROL WAS ADMINISTERED BY HIS SOLDIERS ? THE MANY DIFFICULTIES OF THIS SITUATION WERE FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE ENGLISH MONARCH’S BIZARRE BEHAVIOR AND PRIMITIVE COMMUNICATION BY SAILING SHIPS.

UNDER THESE CONDITIONS RUMORS, SUSPICION, PLOTS AND REBELLION FLOURISHED, AND IN THE LARGER CITIES SUCH AS BOSTON, NYC AND PHILADELPHIA THEY BEGAN TO COMBINE IN WAYS THAT OFFERED THE FEELING AND HOPE OF SELF-GOVERNMENT. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE DEGREE OF COMMITMENT TO THE EMERGING POSSIBILITY OF INDEPENDENCE COULD DIVIDE FAMILIES, NEIGHBORS, TOWNS, TRADES, CHURCHES, SCHOOLS AND EVENTUALLY REACH THE STAGE WHERE THE MANY SHADES OF POLITICAL OPINION WERE CONSOLIDATED INTO TWO GROUPS — THE TORIES WHO BACKED ENGLAND’S ROYAL RULE AND THE OPPOSITION, WHO FIRST SOUGHT A FORM OF HOME RULE WITH FEW RESTRICTIONS WHILE MAINTAINING ITS AFFILIATION AS AN ENGLISH COLONY, AND THEN MOVED TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE.

MADE IN THE USA

THE AMERICAN POLITICAL PRESENCE IN THE NEW WORLD HAS EXPERIENCED SO MANY TRIALS, FAILURES, CHANGES AND TRIUMPHS OF HISTORY AND CHARACTER THAT IT CAN BE HELPFUL TO DIVIDE IT INTO SEVERAL DISTINCT PERIODS. AS DATES TEND TO OVERLAP, IT IS BEST TO DESIGNATE THESE STAGES BY NAME.

THE FIRST IS THE COLONIAL PERIOD FROM PLYMOUTH ROCK TO THE DI. THEN COMES INDEPENDENCE, FOLLOWED BY CIVIL WAR, INDUSTRIALIZATION, WORLD POWER AND SUPERPOWER. THROUGHOUT ALL THESE STAGES OF ITS EXISTENCE IT HAS UNDERGONE INNUMERABLE CHANGES — LARGE AND SMALL, FAILURES AND SUCCESSSES, SOME FORCED ON US AND OTHERS SELF-IMPOSED.

OUR ENVIABLE SUCCESSSES ATTRACTED COMPETITION, PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORT FROM A WIDE VARIETY OF SOURCES, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL, WHICH ATTEMPTED TO CONVERT OUR ACHIEVEMENTS TO THEIR BENEFIT. WE HAVE BEEN VERY FORTUNATE THAT, COMMENCING WITH THE CREATION OF OUR POLITICAL IDENTITY BY OUR CONSTITUTION IN 1789, WE HAVE MOSTLY BEEN ABLE TO PREVENT THE USURPATION OF OUR POLITICAL POWER AND PROCESS BY ADHERING TO THE VALUES WE STATED IN OUR DI, CODIFIED IN OUR CONSTITUTION AND THEN TESTED AND CONFIRMED IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

"A FORM IN WHICH THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH SERVED AS THE NATION’S MIND, THE CONGRESS AS ITS SOUL AND THE PEOPLE AS ITS WAY. "

THE TASK OUR FOUNDERS SET FOR THEMSELVES WAS MONUMENTAL — POLITICALLY, SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY— REQUIRING NOTHING LESS THAN A SUCCESSFUL REVOLUTION TO SEPARATE FROM ENGLAND AND THEN TO FORM A TRANSPARENT AND RESPONSIVE ELECTED GOVERNMENT. IN THE FIRST HALF CENTURY OF ITS EXISTENCE, OUR INDEPENDENCE STAGE, THIS GOVERNMENT AND ITS VALUES WERE CHALLENGED AND TESTED BY AN INCONCEIVABLE RANGE OF ISSUES THAT ACCOMPANIED THE INITIAL SUCCESS OF ITS THEORY OF POPULAR GOVERNMENT. AS TIME PASSED, OUR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC WAS ABLE TO ACHIEVE A FORM IN WHICH THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH SERVED AS THE NATION’S MIND, THE CONGRESS AS ITS SOUL AND THE PEOPLE AS ITS WAY. WE MIGHT, FROM TIME TO TIME, LOSE ONE OF THESE FUNCTIONS, BUT THE RESULTING IMBALANCE WOULD BE REPAIRED BY THE OTHER TWO.

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FORMER SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE “TIP” O’NEILL FAMOUSLY REMARKED THAT “ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL”. HE SERVED IN AND SPOKE FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, “THE PEOPLE’S HOUSE”, WHICH SERVES AS A GATHERING AREA AND FILTER FOR LEGISLATIVE ATTEMPTS BEFORE THEIR MOVING ON TO THE SENATE. THE LATTER, IN TURN, CONDUCTS ITS OWN WINNOWING PROCESS BY WHICH LEGISLATION IS FURTHER EDITED, REDUCED OR REJECTED PRIOR TO BEING SENT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR HIS APPROVAL.

THE IMPORTANT, AND EVEN ENDURING, ISSUES THAT SURVIVE THIS PROCESS OF ELIMINATION TRANSCEND O’NEILL’S EMPHASIS ON LOCALITY. THEY ARE, HOWEVER, NOT “WRITTEN IN STONE”, AS BOTH THE SUPREME COURT AND CONGRESS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW, AND EVEN REVERSE, THEIR OWN DECISIONS.

OVER TIME, WE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO GIVE THE SAME LATITUDE TO OUR CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENT AS WE HAVE EXERCISED IN ITS FORMATION. IN THEORY, THIS IS A PLUS FOR ELECTED GOVERNMENT, BUT IT IS ALSO A TARGET FOR ABUSE FROM MANY OF THE BENEFICIARIES OF OUR EXCEPTIONALLY BROAD RANGE OF LIBERTIES.

THE CONSTITUTION IS THE ULTIMATE PROTECTOR OF OUR GOVERNMENT, THE MOAT BEYOND WHICH PUBLIC PREROGATIVE

AND PRESSURE LIE IN WAIT AND LAY THEIR SIEGE, BUT EVEN THE CONSTITUTIONAL DRAWBRIDGE CAN BE LIFTED TO ALLOW AMENDMENTS. THE PROCESS OF AMENDMENT IS LENGTHY AND COMPLICATED, INVOLVING THE MORE THAN MAJORITY APPROVAL OF BOTH CONGRESS AND THE STATES' LEGISLATURES; AND IT HAS ONLY BEEN ACCOMPLISHED TWENTY-SEVEN TIMES IN OUR HISTORY. IN OUR COUNTRY'S PRESENT MOOD AND STATE OF DIVISION, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANY AMENDMENT ATTEMPT COULD SUCCEED.

AMERICANS BEING INVENTIVE IN GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS OTHER PRACTICES, WE HAVE FOUND WAYS TO CIRCUMVENT OUR CONSTITUTION RATHER THAN TO DIRECTLY CHANGE IT. THIS IS DONE BY PROLONGED REINTERPRETATION OF ITS LANGUAGE AT ALL LEVELS OF OUR JUDICIAL SYSTEM. IT IS NO STRETCH TO VIEW OUR BILL OF RIGHTS AS THE POLITICAL FOUNDATION OF OUR GOVERNMENT AND ITS VALUES, AND BEYOND REACH OF OUR AMENDMENT PROCESS. WHY, THEN, IS SO MUCH OF OUR COURTS' TIME SPENT IN ARGUMENT OVER THEIR LANGUAGE ? THAT LANGUAGE HAS BEEN IN EFFECT OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS — SAME ENGLISH LANGUAGE, SAME WORDING, SAME INTENDED MEANING WITH ONLY THE USUAL, INFREQUENT ATTACKS OCCASIONED BY THE PASSAGE OF TIME. BUT NOW, AT OUR ELEVATED LEVEL OF DIVISION, NO CAUSE IS SO REMOTE THAT IT CANNOT CLAIM A DIFFERENT INTERPRETATION OF OUR CONSTITUTION — THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS BEING THAT OF MUSLIMS WHO MAKE THE ARGUMENT THAT SHARIA LAW IS PROTECTED BY THE FIRST AMENDMENT AND THAT TO NOT ACCEPT IT AS EQUAL TO OURS CONSTITUTES A VIOLATION OF THEIR CIVIL RIGHTS, WHETHER CITIZENS OR NOT !

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FOLLOWING OUR REVOLUTION AND SEPARATION FROM ENGLAND A WAY HAD TO BE FOUND TO UNITE THE MANY VOICES CALLING FOR FREEDOM INTO A LEGITIMATE STATE AND FUNCTIONAL GOVERNMENT. AS TRAVEL AND COMMUNICATION WERE SLOW, THIS WAS NOT A QUICK OR SMOOTH PROCESS, BUT BY 1787 SUFFICIENT AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED AMONG THE THIRTEEN COLONIES TO CONVENE A CONSTITUTIONAL FORUM TO PROVIDE THE LEGAL BASIS AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THEIR TRANSFORMATION INTO A NEW NATION OF UNITED STATES.

WITH ITS WRITING COMPLETED IN SEPTEMBER AND ITS RATIFICATION IN 1789 A UNIQUE SOVEREIGN STATE WAS FORMED OUT OF THIRTEEN INDEPENDENT COLONIES WHOSE STRONGEST TIE WAS THEIR COMMON ORIGIN AND SUFFERING UNDER ENGLISH RULE. THE FOUR YEARS FROM THE REVOLUTION'S END THROUGH THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION WERE DEMANDING, AND SOMETIMES CHAOTIC, BECAUSE OF THE MANY DECISIONS, REGULATIONS, COMPROMISES, LAWS (AND THE ARGUMENTS THAT SUPPORTED OR OPPOSED THEM) THAT HAD TO BE MADE. AND IN THEIR CRAFTING OF A GOVERNMENT "TO FORM A MORE PERFECT UNION"¹ , HISTORY WAS MADE.

BUT THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING. THERE WAS MUCH MORE TO BE DONE, MORE PROGRESS AND IMAGINATIVE LEAPS OF FAITH TO BE MADE TO INITIATE THE CONSTITUTION'S METAMORPHOSIS FROM A WELL-INTENTIONED COLLECTION OF WORDS AND PHRASES TO THE STRUCTURAL BASIS FOR PEACEFUL, REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT CAPABLE OF

SERVING THE INTERESTS AND NEEDS OF ITS CITIZENS FOR THE MOMENT AND THE FUTURE.

THERE IS A STARTING POINT, NOT EASILY FIXED OR EVIDENT, BETWEEN THE CONCLUSION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS AND OUR EMBRYONIC NATIONALITY WHEN, BY THOUGHT OR DEED OF GOVERNMENT AND/OR ITS CITIZENS, THE PROCESS OF CREATING OUR POLITICAL CULTURE COMMENCED. BECAUSE OF OUR NORTHERN EUROPEAN HERITAGE IT DID NOT START FROM "SCRATCH", BUT WITH THE COMBINATION OF OUR NEW LAND, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL VALUES, THE BIRTH OF A UNIQUELY AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE OCCURRED.

STRETCHING FROM THE VT & NH BORDERS WITH CANADA JUST BELOW MONTREAL TO GA'S SOUTHERN BORDER, THE COLONIES' POPULATIONS HAD STEADILY GROWN, AS HAD THEIR MIX OF SKILLS, RELIGIONS, NATIONALITIES AND COMMERCE. SOMEHOW, IN THE FORMING OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT, THESE VARIABLES WERE ABLE TO COMBINE WITH ITS HERITAGE OF LAW, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION TO BEGIN TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL VALUES THAT WOULD PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN SHAPING AMERICA'S POLITICAL CULTURE.

FOLLOWING RATIFICATION IN 1789, THE FOUNDERS DISCOVERED THAT SOME KEY PROTECTIONS WHICH THEY HAD TAKEN FOR GRANTED WERE NOT SPECIFICALLY INCLUDED. THIS WAS REMEDIED BY THE SIMULTANEOUS PASSAGE OF THE FIRST TEN AMENDMENTS, KNOWN AS THE BILL OF RIGHTS, WHICH AFFORDED AMERICAN CITIZENS TWO KINDS OF PROTECTION — RIGHTS TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BENEFITS AND FREEDOMS FROM PUBLIC AND INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIORS THAT THREATENED THE SAFETY OF INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES.

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THE COMBINATION OF "RIGHTS TO" AND "FREEDOM FROM" IN OUR CONSTITUTION SET A NEW TONE AND DIRECTION FOR POLITICAL THOUGHT WHICH, EVEN MORE AMAZINGLY, CAME NOT FROM ONE OF WCIV'S OLDEST AND STRONGEST POWERS, BUT FROM A FLEDGLING NATION, ONLY RECENTLY BORN OF REVOLUTION, WITH NO MONEY, NO ARMY AND NO EXPERIENCE OF GOVERNMENT.

ALL SUCH IMPROBABILITY ACCEPTED, ONCE THE BILL OF RIGHTS WAS ADDED TO OUR CONSTITUTION, THERE WAS NO TURNING BACK; THE NEW TONE AND DIRECTION WERE FIXED. IT WOULD BECOME THE STRUCTURAL CENTERPIECE OF OUR JUDICIAL AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT AND GUIDE THE THINKING OF COUNTLESS INDIVIDUALS AND INSTITUTIONS COMMITTED TO OUR POLITICAL PROCESS. AND IT BOUND FOR THE FUTURE THE DI'S DECLARATION THAT THE NEW NATION'S PEOPLE "ARE ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN UNALIENABLE RIGHTS . . ." ²

"TOGETHER THEY UNITED INTO A NEW WHOLE FAR LARGER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS."

THE DESIRE FOR FREEDOM IN RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION SO ESSENTIAL TO THE PILGRIMS WAS LOGICALLY EXTENDED TO POLITICAL MATTERS AS THE COLONIES GREW AND ATTRACTED

INCREASING REPRESSION FROM ENGLAND. AND THEN, WHEN THE BILL OF RIGHTS SPECIFIED OTHERS SUCH AS SPEECH, ASSEMBLY, PROTEST, PRESS, TRIAL BY JURY, ETC., THEY UNITED INTO A NEW WHOLE FAR LARGER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS.

THIS ENLARGED SENSE OF FREEDOM BECAME PERVERSIVE, SPREADING INTO POLITICAL PLACES AND SPACES BOTH IN CONGRESS AND AMONG THE NEW CITIZENRY. IT PROVIDED A STRIKING AND TRUE BEGINNING FOR AMERICA'S POLITICAL CULTURE SO POWERFUL THAT IN THE COURSE OF OUR HISTORY WE APPLIED IT TO AREAS OTHER THAN OUR POLITICAL CULTURE — SOMETIMES SUCCESSFULLY, AND SOMETIMES NOT.

IN THE EARLY DAYS OF OUR REPUBLIC, THE TWO MOST POWERFUL FORCES THAT DROVE OUR FOUNDERS WERE THOSE OF UNION, OF UNITING THE THIRTEEN COLONIES INTO ONE WORKABLE GOVERNMENT WHICH WE HAVE COMMEMORATED EVER SINCE BY THE MOTTO "E PLURIBUS UNUM"³ ON OUR COINS; AND, SECONDLY, FREEDOM FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE STATE FROM ABUSE BY GOVERNMENT, DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN.

ALTHOUGH THERE IS A BUILT-IN TENSION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND GOVERNMENT, SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES CAN RESOLVE IT BY THEIR LEGISLATION AND PRACTICES. DEPENDING IN LARGE PART UPON A NATION'S POLITICAL CULTURE, SUCH RESOLUTION MAY ENDURE FOR DECADES OR VANISH QUICKLY AS THE RESULT OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC OR SOCIAL COLLAPSE.

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ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE 19TH CENTURY, WITH THE RATIFICATION OF ITS CONSTITUTION AND BILL OF RIGHTS, THE YOUNG AMERICA FOUND ITSELF FACED WITH NUMEROUS DECISIONS AS TO HOW TO EMPLOY THE BROAD FREEDOMS IT HAD ESTABLISHED. LIKE ANY OTHER COUNTRY, THERE WERE VEXING PROBLEMS INVOLVING CURRENCY, TAXATION, TRADE, AGRICULTURE, ETC., ALL WITH INSISTENT AND IMPORTANT CONSTITUENCIES WHICH COULD CLAIM ONE OR MORE FREEDOMS IN SUPPORT OF THEIR POSITIONS. ROUTINE STUFF, PERHAPS; BUT NEVER EASY TO RESOLVE.

BUT THERE ALSO WERE USES OF FREEDOM, NOT SO ROUTINE, FOR, ALTHOUGH ENGLAND'S ARMY HAD BEEN REMOVED, ITS NAVY CONTINUED TO ATTACK AMERICAN VESSELS AT SEA TO PROTECT HISTORICALLY BRITISH TRADE ROUTES AND SOURCES. THIS PRACTICE REQUIRED THE US TO BUILD A NEW NAVY WHICH ENGAGED THE ENGLISH IN THE WAR OF 1812 (1812-1815) AND THEN DISPLAYED THE POWER NECESSARY TO BACK UP THE MONROE DOCTRINE (1823). FREEDOM OF THE SEAS BECAME PART OF OUR POLITICAL CULTURE THEN AND HAS REMAINED SO EVER SINCE.

AT THIS STAGE OF INDEPENDENCE, ANOTHER MORE POWERFUL DIRECTION FOR THE EXERCISE OF OUR FREEDOM CULTURE BEGAN TO FORM. WITH GOVERNMENT IN PLACE, UNION NOW ACHIEVED AND A GROWING COMMERCE AT HOME AND ABROAD, AMERICA TOOK ITS FIRST STEPS ON A CENTURY-LONG PROCESS OF WESTWARD EXPANSION. PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO PUSH THE WILDERNESS BACK HAD MOSTLY BEEN UNDERTAKEN BY INDIVIDUALS OR SMALL GROUPS, BUT NOW, STRENGTHENED BY A NATIONAL IDENTITY AND INTEREST, THOSE WHO TRAVELLED TOWARDS THE SETTING SUN COULD SEE THEMSELVES AS PART OF SOMETHING LARGER, AS

EXTENDERS OF THE NATION'S WESTERN BORDER, ITS TERRITORY AND THE NATION ITSELF — ITS CONCEPT, VALUES, PEOPLE, ITS DESTINY. FOR A CENTURY, FREEDOM AND UNION SERVED AS POLES OF THE MAGNET OF EXPANSION THAT DREW MILLIONS OF AMERICANS ACROSS THE COUNTRY FROM THE EAST COAST TO THE WEST.

AT FIRST, WHERE PIONEERS SETTLED, THERE WERE ONLY NATURAL STOPPING POINTS, THEN PERHAPS A CROSSING OF TRAILS; AND LATER A VILLAGE, A TOWN, A COUNTY AND EVENTUALLY STATEHOOD. BUT THE PROGRESS FROM FRONTIER TO STATE CAPITAL WAS NEITHER QUICK NOR SMOOTH, AS THE LAW AND OTHER ASPECTS OF OUR REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT TOOK TIME, EFFORT, MONEY AND COMMONALITY OF THE NEW COMMUNITY TO BE PUT IN PLACE.

LAW ENFORCEMENT WAS AN INFORMAL, AND SOMETIMES INDIVIDUAL, EFFORT — SO MUCH SO THAT TEXAS JUDGE ROY BEAN DECLARED HIMSELF TO BE "LAW WEST OF THE PECOS", HUNG A SIGN TO THAT EFFECT ON THE COURTROOM WALL BEHIND HIM AND KEPT A BIBLE AND REVOLVER ON THE TABLE BEFORE HIM AS HE HEARD CASES.

THE STATEHOOD PROCESS IN ITSELF BECAME AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF OUR POLITICAL CULTURE. IT COULD VARY SIGNIFICANTLY IN TIME DEPENDING UPON LOCAL INTERESTS, FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND THE SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL MIX OF THE AREA'S POPULATION. BECAUSE THERE WAS NO SHORTAGE OF LOCAL TOPICS TO EVALUATE, AND BECAUSE CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE HAD TO BE NEGOTIATED, MONITORED AND ENFORCED, SECURING ADMISSION TO THE UNION COULD TAKE YEARS.

FOR AMERICA'S POLITICAL CULTURE, THE STATEHOOD PROCESS WAS ONE OF RENEWAL. IT WAS TRACKED THROUGH ITS VARIOUS STAGES OF ACCOMPLISHMENT BY THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER WHOSE COVERAGE WAS USUALLY POSITIVE, EMPHASIZED NATIONAL ALLEGIANCE AND PATRIOTISM AND INCLUDED HISTORICAL MATERIAL RELATING TO THE GOVERNMENT'S FOUNDING AND THE WAY IT WORKED.

IN A LITTLE MORE THAN A CENTURY WITH THE ADMISSION OF AZ IN 1912, THE THIRTEEN ORIGINAL STATES HAD ADDED THIRTY-FIVE MORE, AND ON EACH OCCASION OUR POLITICAL CULTURE EXPERIENCED AND WAS REINFORCED BY A STATE LEVEL REBIRTH OF THE NATION OFFERING AN OPPORTUNITY TO BLEND LOCAL PRIDE AND PROMOTION WITH NATIONAL PATRIOTISM.

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THERE WAS ANOTHER CIRCUMSTANCE SO ENORMOUSLY POWERFUL AND FORMATIVE OF OUR POLITICAL CULTURE THAT EVEN NOW, OVER A CENTURY LATER, MOST AMERICANS FAIL TO RECOGNIZE ITS IMPORTANCE TO OUR POLITICAL HERITAGE AND DEVELOPMENT. THIS EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCE WAS NO LESS THAN THE FREE AVAILABILITY, IF YOU DISREGARD THE HOST POPULATION OF NATIVE AMERICANS, OF A LAND MASS RICH IN EVERY NECESSARY NATURAL RESOURCE AND WITH A TEMPERATE CLIMATE THAT FAVORED SETTLEMENT.

THIS VAST, OPEN CONTINENT INDELIBLY STAMPED AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE AND OUR CHARACTER IN MANY WAYS — SOME NOW EVIDENT, AND SOME NOT — BUT FOR TIME PERSPECTIVE WE MUST RETURN TO THE 19TH CENTURY AND TRY TO WEAR THE SHOES, TAKE THE STEPS AND VIEW THE PIONEERS’ NEW HOME AS THEY DID.

COMING FROM A EUROPEAN TRADITION OF ENFORCED BOUNDARIES AND LIMITED PERSONAL PROPERTY OWNERSHIP, THE SHEER ABUNDANCE OF AMERICA’S WESTERN TERRITORY CAME AS A MAJOR CULTURE SHOCK. WHAT WAS OFFERED WAS SO DAZZLING AND TEMPTING THAT THE PROCESS OF MOVING THE NATION’S BORDERS TO THE PACIFIC BECAME ONE OF, IF NOT THE MOST, IMPORTANT ACTIONS OF OUR HISTORY.

HOW DO WE SUPPORT SUCH A BROAD CLAIM ? FIRST, ABUNDANCE, EXCEPT FOR THE VERY FEW AND FORTUNATE, WAS NOT A MEANINGFUL ASPECT OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL LIFE IN THE EUROPE FROM WHICH OUR PIONEERS OR THEIR ANCESTORS HAD EMIGRATED THERE, FOR THE MOST PART, LIFE WAS HARD, WEALTH SCARCE AND LABOR GENERALLY PROVIDED ONLY LIFE’S NECESSITIES. THE CONCEPT OF BEING ABLE TO AMASS WEALTH BEYOND SUSTENANCE, TO ACQUIRE PROPERTY OWNERSHIP AND TO ELEVATE ONE’S SOCIAL/ECONOMIC STATUS FOUND FEW BELIEVERS AND FEWER ACHIEVERS.

BUT THERE WAS FAR MORE THAN PHYSICAL COMFORT TO THE EXPERIENCE OF AMERICA’S EXTRAORDINARY ABUNDANCE. IT WAS FORMATIVE BEYOND ITS GIFT OF PLENTY BECAUSE IT TRANSLATED INTO OTHER ASPECTS OF OUR LIFE AND CULTURE, PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT BEING THAT OF OPPORTUNITY. WHY ? BECAUSE THE PIONEER/SETTLER PROCESS WAS ONE OF CHANGE AND RENEWAL, AS THOSE WHO SETTLED IN ONE PLACE FORMED A COMMUNITY THAT ATTRACTED FURTHER SETTLEMENT AND PROVIDED THE PEOPLE, ANIMALS, EQUIPMENT AND SPIRIT NECESSARY TO TAKE THEMSELVES AND OUR FRONTIER ONE STEP CLOSER TO THE PACIFIC.

OPPORTUNITY APPEARED IN MANY FORMS ON THE FRONTIER — MOST NOTABLY THAT ANYONE WHO SUFFERED AN ECONOMIC OR BEHAVIORAL FAILURE COULD PICK UP WHATEVER PIECES OF LIFE REMAINED AND MOVE WEST TO THE NEXT VALLEY, RANGE LAND, RIVER OR FOREST AND START OVER; AND IT WAS NOT UNUSUAL FOR NEW MOVES TO INCLUDE NEW IDENTITIES.

AND JUST AS IDENTITIES COULD BE LEFT BEHIND, SO TOO COULD OTHER UNWANTED “BAGGAGE”. AS THERE WAS ALWAYS NEW LAND AND RESOURCES AHEAD, A THROW-AWAY CULTURE WAS ENCOURAGED WHICH HAS EXPRESSED ITSELF IN OUR PROFLIGATE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES, WEALTH AND REAL ESTATE.

"...FOUNDATIONAL MARKERS OF OUR POLITICAL CULTURE."

ABUNDANCE, BECAUSE IT WAS FREE TO ALL, ALSO TRANSLATED INTO A FORM OF EQUALITY — A REAL ONE, NOT THE KIND OFFERED BY POLITICAL THEORISTS. EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY WERE, OF COURSE, KEY ELEMENTS IN JEFFERSON’S POLITICALLY GROUND BREAKING AND STARTLING DI, BUT THERE THEY WERE WORDS ON PAPER. IN PRACTICE, IN THE SETTLED PLACES OR IN THE MOVING

GROUPS THAT PUSHED AMERICA WESTWARD, OPPORTUNITY AND EQUALITY WERE A REALITY AND JEFFERSON’S PROMISE WAS FULFILLED. LOOKING BACK, THESE TWO VERY SPECIAL FORMS OF FREEDOM HAVE SERVED AS FOUNDATIONAL MARKERS OF OUR POLITICAL CULTURE.

ABUNDANCE ON THE AMERICAN SCALE TRANSLATED INTO OTHER AREAS OF OUR NATIONAL BEING AS WELL AS POLITICS. WE RECALL THAT THE PILGRIMS AND OTHER EARLY 17TH CENTURY COLONISTS REFERRED TO AMERICA AS “THE NEW EDEN” WHICH WOULD PROVIDE AN EARTHLY HABITAT AND NEW BEGINNING FOR THE CHRISTIAN PROMISE OF REDEEMED SPIRITUAL LIFE. THIS BELIEF WAS LOST IN THE COLONIES’ POPULATION AND COMMERCIAL GROWTH AND THE INTENSE POLITICAL MOOD LEADING UP TO INDEPENDENCE, BUT RESURFACED IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY AS SETTLERS CROSSED THE APPALACHIANS INTO THE MIDWEST. THERE AGAIN, IN THE NEW EDEN REVIVAL MOVEMENT, ABUNDANCE WAS SEEN AS THE KEEPING OF THE BIBLE'S PRIOR PROMISE.

THIS, HOWEVER, WAS ONLY A BEGINNING. THE NEW EDEN REVIVAL, WHILE INTENSE, DID NOT SURVIVE FOR MORE THAN A FEW DECADES, BUT ITS VIEW OF AMERICA AS A RELIGIOUSLY FAVORED EVENT IN HISTORY FOUND ACCEPTANCE AMONG FRONTIER FOLK WHO OFTEN CLAIMED DIVINE FAVOR OR CHOICE AS THE SOURCE OF THEIR EFFORT. THE NEXT STEP WAS TO AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM, WHICH IS STILL WITH US TODAY AND, AGAIN, WE COME TO UNDERSTAND HOW BOTH DIVINE FAVOR AND AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM ARE EXPRESSIONS OF FREEDOM THAT PLACE OUR COUNTRY ABOVE CARES OR CONCERNS THAT HAVE TROUBLED OTHER NATIONS FOR CENTURIES.

POLITICAL CULTURES ARE OFTEN AND EASILY INFLUENCED BY THE ACCIDENTS OF TIME AND PLACE, AND OURS IS NO EXCEPTION. WHAT IS UNIQUE, THOUGH, IS HOW THE NATURAL ABUNDANCE OF OUR GEOGRAPHY FOSTERED A CENTURY OF EXTENSION AND SETTLEMENT IN WAYS THAT TIED TOGETHER THE MANY STRANDS OF THE VALUES OF OUR DI AND THE PROMISES OF OUR CONSTITUTION.

BIRTH AND REBIRTH

WHERE ARE WE NOW ? DID WE GET IT ALL RIGHT ? CERTAINLY, NOT. WE IGNORED CLEAR SIGNS OF DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES AND FOLLOWED FALSE DIRECTIONS THAT RESULTED FROM OUR DECISIONS, BUT BECAUSE OF THE MORE FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE NATURE OF OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM, WE ENJOYED A PROCESS OF BIRTH AND REBIRTH THAT OUR MONARCHICAL EUROPEAN FOREBEARS LACKED. STILL, BIRTH AND REBIRTH ARE PAINFUL, MESSY AND SOMETIMES DIFFICULT, OR EVEN FATAL, PROCEDURES. THE QUESTION “WHERE ARE WE NOW ?” IS BOOK-ENDED BY TWO OTHERS, “WHERE DID WE ERR ?” AND “WHAT MUST WE DO TO RESTORE OUR POLITICAL CULTURE’S EARLIER STRENGTH AND VIBRANCY ?”

WITH REGARD TO THE LATTER, WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT OUR FOUNDERS EXISTED IN A VERY BRIEF AND SPECIAL POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCE WHICH AFFORDED THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEPARATE FROM ONE GOVERNMENT AND THEN CREATE A NEW AND DIFFERENT ONE. THROUGHOUT THEIR EFFORTS THEY WERE CHALLENGED BY THE MANY DIFFICULTIES AND DIVISIONS POSED BY THEIR GOAL AND, AT THE SAME TIME, DRIVEN TO SUCCESS BY THEIR

COMBINED SENSE OF MISSION, HOPE, INNOVATION AND UNION. THERE WAS NEVER A REALISTIC POSSIBILITY THAT OUR POLITICAL CULTURE COULD SUSTAIN THE UNIQUE ATMOSPHERE OF ITS BIRTH. WE TRIED, BUT TIME AND TECHNOLOGY CHANGE EVERYTHING AND IN THE END WE BECAME VICTIMS OF OUR OWN SUCCESS. THIS MAY SOUND LIKE AN OVERSIMPLIFICATION, BUT IT OFFERS IN CAPSULE FORM AN EXPLANATION OF HOW OUR POLITICAL CULTURE WAS TRANSFORMED FROM THE WELL INTENTIONED ENTHUSIASM OF ITS BEGINNINGS TO THE PERVERSIVE CYNICISM OF OUR STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS TODAY.

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IN THE ALMOST 250 YEARS SINCE OUR POLITICAL CULTURE ANNOUNCED ITS BIRTH IN THE DI, ITS FORM AND FUTURE HAVE BEEN IN OUR CARE. FOR THE MOST PART, OUR EFFORTS ON ITS BEHALF HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN ENABLING THE NATION TO CONTINUE ON THE PATH OF ITS FOUNDING, BUT WE HAVE ALSO COMMITTED GRIEVOUS ERRORS THAT HAVE LEFT DEEP HUMAN AND POLITICAL SCARS.

FROM ANY PERSPECTIVE, SLAVERY WAS SUCH A WOUND — SELF-INFLICTED FOR THE SAKE OF EXPEDIENCY. WE WATCHED IT FESTER, GROW AND SPREAD ITS POISON UNTIL OUR FOUNDERS’ BEAUTIFUL POLITICAL DREAM WAS SHATTERED AND THEIR UNION NEARLY DESTROYED. IT’S STILL A SHOCK TO REALIZE THAT WE DID THIS TO OURSELVES, UNSEEING, AS IF IN A TRANCE.

AND THEN THERE’S THE AFTER-SHOCK — THAT THE INSTITUTION OF THE OLD SLAVERY IS GONE, BUT THAT MANY OF THE MORAL, SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC QUESTIONS IT RAISED ARE STILL WITH US IN ALTERED FORM UNDER THE LABEL OF OUR “RACE ISSUE”, WHICH HAS BEEN PRESENT CONTINUOUSLY FOR 150 YEARS SINCE THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD FOLLOWING THE CW.

MANY ASPECTS OF OUR POLITICAL LIFE AND CULTURE ARE DIFFERENT NOW, BUT ONE THING IS NOT — OUR AVOIDANCE OF URGENT POLITICAL REALITY VIA EXPEDIENCY WILL NOT RESOLVE MAJOR ISSUES FOR THE OBVIOUS REASON THAT, WHEN POSTPONED, THEY BECOME SUBJECT TO FURTHER PRESSURE FROM THE INCREASING DEMANDS OF OUR SOCIETY’S NUMBERS, DOLLARS, FACTIONS AND MEDIA COVERAGE.

NEITHER TIME NOR SPACE ALLOWS US TO COVER ALL THE WAYS BY WHICH WE HAVE DISAPPOINTED OUR POLITICAL CULTURE, BUT THOSE WE LIST BELOW SHOW HOW READILY WE CAN FOREGO PRINCIPLE FOR EXPEDIENCY.

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TODAY, MORAL JUDGMENTS NO LONGER SEEM APPLICABLE TO OUR POLITICAL CULTURE AND IT IS ROUTINE, WHEN THEY ARE MADE, FOR OUR POLITICIANS TO DISMISS OR EVADE THEM. SUCH TACTICS ARE NOT LIMITED TO EITHER PARTY, BUT ONE RECENT EXAMPLE STANDS OUT.

SHORTLY AFTER PRES. TRUMP’S INAUGURATION HIS NEWLY APPOINTED ATTORNEY GENERAL (AG) ISSUED A SERIES OF DIRECTIVES TO THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE’S

(DOJ) PROSECUTORIAL, INVESTIGATIVE AND ENFORCEMENT STAFFS SPECIFYING IMPORTANT CHANGES FROM THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION’S PRACTICES IN THEIR CONDUCT AND METHODS OF OPERATION. ALL THESE CHANGES WERE CONSISTENT WITH AND DESIGNED TO ENFORCE OUR EXISTING IMMIGRATION LAWS.

PREDICTABLY, THESE ORDERS ELICITED A HIGHLY EMOTIONAL RESPONSE OF HOWLS OF MOSTLY MORAL OUTRAGE AND OBJECTION WHICH PILLORIED AG SESSIONS FOR TEARING FAMILIES APART, FOR MISTREATING HELPLESS, BUT LOYAL, IMMIGRANTS AND FOR FAILING OUR OBLIGATIONS TO HONOR THE “HUMAN RIGHTS” OF PEOPLE FROM ALL NATIONS TO “IMPROVE THEIR LIVES” BY EMIGRATING TO THE U.S. AND BEING SUPPORTED AT THE TAXPAYER’S EXPENSE. AGAIN, IT’S WORTH NOTING THAT THESE MOSTLY DEMOCRATIC OBJECTIONS WERE NOT BASED ON CUSTOMARY IMMIGRATION TOPICS SUCH AS NUMBER, YEAR, SERVICES, SKILLS, HEALTH, ETC. THEY WERE BASED ON AND OFFERED IN THE LANGUAGE OF MORAL INDIGNATION.

CONTRAST THIS REACTION TO THAT OF CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATS IN THE FIRST OBAMA ADMINISTRATION WHEN THE DOJ UNDER AG ERIC HOLDER CONDUCTED A CLANDESTINE, ILLEGAL GUN SMUGGLING OPERATION WHICH EMPLOYED DOJ TIME, PERSONNEL AND FUNDS TO DELIVER WEAPONS TO MEXICAN DRUG CARTELS AND IN WHICH ONE US AGENT’S LIFE WAS LOST. AS CALLS FOR AN INQUIRY MOUNTED, PRES. OBAMA SEALED ALL THE RECORDS AND HOLDER RESIGNED WITHOUT FACING QUESTIONS OR CHARGES.

THIS WAS A CLEAR LEGAL AND MORAL ISSUE, WITH NO CRITICISMS OR OBJECTIONS, HOWEVER, FROM DEMOCRATS WHO SO EAGERLY CONDEMNED AG SESSIONS. THE POINT OF THIS COMPARISON IS NOT TO CAST THE GOP IN A BETTER LIGHT THAN THE DEMOCRATS, BUT TO SHOW THAT THE MORAL PATH IN OUR POLITICS IS ONE FROM WHICH BOTH PARTIES FIND IT EASY TO STRAY.

IT WASN’T ALWAYS AS IT IS NOW. IN THE TIME OF OUR COUNTRY’S YOUTH OUR POLITICAL CULTURE ASSERTED THE VALUES OF CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS MORALITY TO WHICH MOST INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES AND INSTITUTIONS ASPIRED. TODAY, THAT IS NO LONGER TRUE, AS THAT ELEMENTAL UNITY IS, LIKE OTHER ASPECTS OF OUR CULTURE, RIVEN BY SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIVISIONS.

WHAT DOES OUR POLITICAL CULTURE NOW OFFER ? WELL, GENERALLY SPEAKING, DESPITE A FEW SIGNS OF ENCOURAGEMENT, THE VIEW AROUND US AND AHEAD IS A BLEAK ONE PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF OUR POLITICAL CLASS’ INABILITY TO RECOGNIZE AND ADAPT TO THE BROAD AND RAPID CHANGES IN OUR SOCIETY BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE NEW TECHNOLOGY, WEALTH AND POWER OF OUR LAST HALF CENTURY.

REGARDLESS OF PARTY, OUR POLITICAL CULTURE IS UNIFIED BY ONE PRIMAL FACT. IN OUR ELECTORAL SYSTEM EVERY POSITION HAS A STATED “SELL BY”, OR ELECTION, DATE AFTER WHICH TO CONTINUE IN OFFICE THE POLITICIAN MUST BE REELECTED. THIS HAS BEEN TRUE SINCE THE NATION’S BEGINNING. WHAT HAS CHANGED IS THE WAY CANDIDATES CAMPAIGN TO SECURE REELECTION.

TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF VISIBILITY AND PERFORMANCE NECESSARY FOR REELECTION ALL POLITICIANS MUST KEEP THEMSELVES IN THE PUBLIC EYE VIA TV AND, MORE RECENTLY,

ONLINE VIEWING. THIS SHIFT TO ELECTRONIC MESSAGING HAS DRASTICALLY ALTERED CAMPAIGNING. THE IMMEDIACY OF THE SMALL TOWN SPEECH IS GONE, AS CANDIDATES CAN BE QUESTIONED AT ANY PLACE OR TIME OF DAY AND AUDIO OR VISUAL MESSAGES ARE INSTANT AND UBIQUITOUS.

THE BRIEF “WHISTLE STOP” MIGHT HAVE TAKEN FROM 15-30 MINUTES IN WHICH THE CANDIDATE WOULD HAVE HAD TIME TO MENTION A COUPLE EACH OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL ISSUES. NOT SO NOW; AS MEDIA SOURCES INTERVIEW POLITICIANS IN CONGRESS, ON THE RUN OR IN STUDIO, A NEW FORM OF COMMUNICATIONS HAS EMERGED. IT IS THE SOUND-BYTE — A QUICK, CAPSULE VERSION OF THE EARLIER FORM THAT SERVED “WIND BAG” POLITICIANS SO WELL.

OUR NEW TECHNOLOGY HAS CHANGED EVERYTHING IN WASHINGTON’S POLITICAL LIFE AND CULTURE. LET’S SAY THAT A MEMBER OF CONGRESS HAS A TWELVE HOUR WORKING DAY WHICH HAS TO ACCOMMODATE HIS LEGISLATIVE, COMMITTEE AND PARTY ACTIVITIES AND WHICH MUST ALSO MAKE TIME FOR TRAVEL, FUND RAISING AND MEDIA APPEARANCES. FAMILY, CHURCH, SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL INTERESTS ALSO HAVE TO BE SERVED IN SOME INGENIOUS WAY AND TIME, BUT THAT IS NOT OUR FOCUS.

WE ARE CONCERNED WITH THE THREE BASIC MOVING PARTS OF THE WORKING DAY — CONGRESSIONAL DUTIES, FUND RAISING AND MEDIA COVERAGE — WHICH MOST DIRECTLY DETERMINE THE LIKELIHOOD OF REELECTION. AMONG THESE THERE IS LITTLE WIGGLE ROOM. FUND RAISING AND MEDIA COVERAGE IN THAT ORDER ARE NECESSITIES, WITH A GOOD LEGISLATIVE RECORD AN OPTIONAL ADD-ON BENEFIT, ALTHOUGH MANY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS HAVE SERVED MULTIPLE TERMS WITHOUT ANY NOTICEABLE LEGISLATIVE IMPACT.

ADMITTEDLY, CONGRESS HAS EASED THIS PRESSURE ON ITS MEMBERS’ TIME BY GENEROUSLY EXTENDING THE PERIODS WHEN IT IS NOT IN SESSION. DURING THESE, MEMBERS RETURN TO THEIR HOME DISTRICTS WHERE THEY CAN SECURE LOCAL FUNDING AND MEDIA COVERAGE, BUT UNLESS HOME DISTRICTS ARE LOCATED IN MAJOR POPULATION AND MEDIA CENTERS, THEIR YIELD FOR TIME AND EFFORT SPENT IS FAR LESS THAN THAT OF DC, WHICH BRINGS US TO PERHAPS THE MOST UNPUBLICIZED AND YET FORMIDABLE ELEMENT OF POSTWAR CHANGE IN OUR POLITICAL CULTURE — THE ARRIVAL, APPEAL AND PROLIFERATION OF CORPORATE LOBBYISTS.

AS RECENTLY AS THE YEARS IMMEDIATELY AFTER WW II, THE WASHINGTON LOBBYING OFFICE OF A MAJOR US CORPORATION CONSISTED OF ONE OF ITS RETIRED EXECUTIVES, A SECRETARY, DESK AND PHONE. THE LOBBYIST’S FUNCTION WAS TO EXPLAIN CORPORATE POLICY AND PROGRESS TO THE CORPORATION’S HOME STATE’S SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO CONSULT WITH MEMBERS OF KEY COMMITTEES TO WHICH IMPORTANT LEGISLATION WAS ASSIGNED. IT WAS AN INFORMAL, ALMOST COLLEGIAL, PROCESS IN WHICH INFORMATION, NOT MONEY, WAS EXCHANGED.

IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT OUR SUPER WEALTH AND POWER OF THE POSTWAR WORLD WOULD FIND WAYS TO CHANGE OUR POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT, AND CONGRESS WAS THE LOGICAL FIRST TARGET. A RISING TIDE OF LAW FIRMS SETTLED ON K STREET AND THEIR ATTORNEYS LAID SIEGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS. THEY OFFERED ADVICE ON THEIR PREFERRED LEGISLATIVE DIRECTIONS, ENTERTAINED EXTENSIVELY, CONDUCTED RESEARCH, ACTUALLY WROTE LANGUAGE FOR BILLS, PROVIDED

INTRODUCTIONS, OUTINGS AND TICKETS; AND THEY PAID WELL, MOSTLY BY CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS, RETIREMENT JOBS AND CHARITABLE DONATIONS, BUT ALSO BY OTHER INDIRECT METHODS.

ALTHOUGH THE STATUS OF CONGRESSIONAL COMPENSATION HAD LONG LAGGED BEHIND CORPORATE LEVELS, THE GROWING PRESENCE IN DC OF LOBBYISTS AND THEIR FUNDS, ALONG WITH CONGRESS’ CLOSER CONTACT WITH THE CORPORATE SECTOR, AIDED IN DEVELOPING A NEW IMAGE OF GOVERNMENT SERVICE HIGHLIGHTED BY FREQUENT INCREASES IN COMPENSATION. PRIOR TO WW II, MEMBERS MIGHT MANAGE THE EXPENSES OF THEIR BEING IN WASHINGTON WHEN CONGRESS WAS IN SESSION BY SHARING A HOTEL ROOM AND ACCEPTING AS MANY SOCIAL INVITATIONS AS THEY RECEIVED. NO MORE; HOUSES, OR AT LEAST YEAR ROUND APARTMENTS ARE PRETTY MUCH THE NORM.

WHILE THE CORPORATE SECTOR HAS NEVER BEEN HESITANT ABOUT EXPRESSING ITS PREFERENCES AND HAVING ITS WAY IN WASHINGTON, THERE’S A NEW COZINESS TO THE PRESENT STATUS WITH LOBBYISTS SERVING AS GO-BETWEENS AND PROVIDING SERVICES/ASSISTANCE WELCOMED BY MOST CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES.

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LOOKING BACK, WE FIND OTHER INSTANCES OF MORAL BEHAVIOR INCONSISTENT WITH THE HUMAN AND POLITICAL PRINCIPLES OF OUR DI AND CONSTITUTION. THE MOST DURABLE OF THESE, LIKE SLAVERY, WAS THE MISTREATMENT OF OTHER HUMANS; SPECIFICALLY, THE ORIGINAL NATIVE AMERICAN INHABITANTS OF THE CONTINENT WHOM, OVER THE WHOLE OF OUR WESTWARD EXPANSION, WE SUBJECTED TO A RELENTLESS DENIAL OF THEIR POLITICAL, LEGAL, PROPERTY AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS THAT COULD BE CONSIDERED GENOCIDE TODAY. SUCH A VIEW IS STRENGTHENED BY THE FACT THAT OUR EFFORTS TO EXTEND OUR FRONTIER WESTWARD INCLUDED TAKING NOT ONLY THE NATIVE TRIBES’ LANDS, BUT ALSO THE SLAUGHTER AND NEAR EXTINCTION OF THE MILLIONS OF BISON THAT GRAZED ON THE OPEN RANGE AND SERVED AS THEIR PRIMARY FOOD SOURCE.

WHY AND HOW DID WE ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN ? THE MOST OBVIOUS ANSWER IS THAT 19TH CENTURY WCIV’S ATTITUDES REGARDING THE TREATMENT OF ANIMALS AND PEOPLE WERE FAR DIFFERENT FROM OUR PRESENT ONES. THAT SAID, THERE WERE OTHER LINES OF CULTURAL CONNECTION THAT SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED. OUR PROCESS OF WESTWARD EXPANSION WAS BASED ON TAKING TERRITORY OCCUPIED BY OTHERS. THIS, IN ITSELF, IS A POLITICAL ACTION WHICH OUR GOVERNMENT MIGHT HAVE RECOGNIZED AS VIOLATING OUR PROCLAIMED VALUES, BUT THOSE VALUES WERE OVERPOWERED BY A NATIONALISTIC AND POLITICAL FERVOR THAT SAW OUR MOVE WESTWARD AS AN ESSENTIAL STEP TOWARDS OUR NATIONAL DESTINY.

STILL, IN OUR MORE RELIGIOUS PAST AMONG THE DAILY DANGERS OF THE PIONEERS LIVES, WHEN THE WAGONS WERE CIRCLED AT NIGHT, HOLY SCRIPTURE WAS READ AND GOD WAS INVOKED, THEREBY BUILDING STRENGTH OF SPIRIT AND MISSION FOR THE UNKNOWN PERILS OF TOMORROW. THE NATURAL CHALLENGES THE SETTLORS FACED DAILY, AS DESCRIBED IN THEIR RECORDS AND THE ACCOUNT OF THE LEWIS AND CLARKE

EXPEDITION, ARE EXTRAORDINARY, AND IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THEY CAME TO SEE NATURE IN ITS VARIED FORMS AS BOTH PROVIDER AND OBSTACLE.

"THE PRIZE WOULD BE AT THE END. AND SO IT WAS."

THE NEW EDEN COMMUNITIES IN OH AND IN FOUND THEIR PRISTINE LANDS BECOMING ENCIRCLED BY OTHER COMMUNITIES BASED ON COMMERCE AS WELL AS AGRICULTURE, AND WHERE LIFE WAS MOVING AWAY FROM THEIR BIBLICAL MODEL. THESE NEW COMMUNITIES, AS OUR PIONEERS MOVED WESTWARD, FORMED THE BASES FROM WHICH THE NATION’S BORDER MOVED WEST WITH FAITH IN ULTIMATE SUCCESS, NO MATTER THE HARDSHIPS. THE PRIZE WOULD BE AT THE END. AND SO IT WAS.

PROBABLY THE GREATEST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE NATIVE AMERICANS’ CULTURE AND OUR OWN HAS BEEN THEIR DIFFERING ATTITUDES TOWARDS NATURE. ALL THE NATIVE TRIBES, LIVING AS THEY DID OFF THE LAND, DESPITE THEIR MANY DIFFERENCES, DISPLAYED A STRONG REVERENCE FOR NATURE WHICH THEY HAVE MAINTAINED EVEN AS THEY MUST LIVE IN THE NOISE AND TECHNOLOGY OF OUR TIME.

STRANGELY, OUR CULTURE’S VIEW OF NATURE, WHICH BEGAN WITH THE NEW EDEN IMAGE, HAS TAKEN A VERY DIFFERENT COURSE. WE TREAT IT AS SOMETHING TO BE CONQUERED (THIS ALSO HAS A BIBLICAL ORIGIN), MOLDED, ALTERED IN FORM OR FUNCTION, DIVERTED AND SUBJECT TO WHATEVER SCIENTIFIC OR COMMERCIAL PURPOSE SEEMS APPROPRIATE.

THE EDEN METAPHOR HAS BEEN WITH US FOR 400 YEARS. ORIGINALLY RELIGIOUS, IT JOINED OUR POLITICAL CULTURE AND SUBSEQUENTLY SENT SHOOTS OUT TO OUR ECONOMIC, ATHLETIC, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL CULTURES. BUT LOOK AROUND. WHERE IS IT? EXCEPT FOR OCCASIONAL ADS FOR REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENTS IT DOESN’T GET MUCH MENTION. WE HAVE GONE FROM NEW EDEN TO NO EDEN.

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OUR POLITICAL CULTURE HAS BEEN INFLUENCED IN OTHER WAYS BY OUR WESTERN EXPANSION AND THE SENSE OF DIVINE FAVOR AND EXCEPTIONALISM THAT FLOWED FROM IT. THESE WAYS ARE EVIDENT IN THE CHANGES IN PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF PATRIOTISM THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN THE PAST HALF CENTURY. THINK BACK TO THE RALLIES OF WWS I AND II WHEN CROWDS CHEERED THE AMERICAN FLAG AND/OR SERVICE MEN IN UNIFORM; AND BANDS PLAYED ROMANTIC BALLADS (“THERE’S A LONG, LONG TRAIL A WINDING”), SPIRITED MARCHES (“OVER THERE”) AND THE SONGS OF OUR NAVY, ARMY, MARINES AND AIR FORCE.

NOW, PERHAPS TO BETTER SUIT THE MOOD AND PACE OF OUR TECHNOLOGICAL AGE, AUDIENCE RESPONSE MOSTLY TAKES THE FORM OF REPETITIVE AND LOUD CHANTS OF “WE’RE NUMBER 1” OR “USA, USA, USA”. IF THIS IS PATRIOTISM, IT IS CERTAINLY A DIFFERENT FORM WHICH CELEBRATES STATUS RATHER THAN A CAUSE.

MUSIC IS A WAY OF REVEALING OURSELVES, OF TALKING ABOUT OUR NATION, OUR VALUES, OUR PEOPLE AND CULTURE. IT IS A CONTINUING PART OF OUR NATIONAL CULTURE AND THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY UNTIL THE END OF WW II PROVIDED A WAY FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO REACT TO THE PAIN AND JOY OF WARTIME BY PRODUCING MEMORABLE WORDS AND MUSIC FOR THOSE AT HOME AND AT THE FRONT. NO POPULAR MUSIC OR SONG, HOWEVER, HAS RESULTED FROM OUR WARS FROM KOREA TO THE PRESENT ! CULTURALLY, IT'S AS IF OUR MUSICAL CLOCK STOPPED IN 1945. THE SILENCE IS DEAFENING, BUT EVEN WITHOUT WORDS OR MUSIC, IT SOUNDS A CAUTIONARY NOTE ABOUT OUR CULTURE, OUR WARS AND OURSELVES.

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FINALLY, NO VALID ASSESSMENT OF AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE IN OUR TIME IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT EXAMINING THE SOURCES, EXTENT AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE CORRUPTION THAT IS NOW THE NORM IN OUR SYSTEM OF LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. WHETHER IT HAS COME ABOUT VIA A BOTTOM-UP OR TOP-DOWN PROCESS IS IMMATERIAL. IT IS WITH US; IT FLOURISHES AND WILL OVER TIME, LIKE A CANCER, DISABLE AND THEN DESTROY THE REPRESENTATIVE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND GOVERNMENT PROCLAIMED BY OUR FOUNDERS IN THE DI AND CONSTITUTION.

WE DO NOT REFER TO THE PERVERSIVE, PETTY, INDIVIDUAL CORRUPTION OF POLITICIANS THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE WORLD WHO ROUTINELY EXTRACT A SHARE OF THE FEES OR TRANSACTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THEIR POSITION. THIS IS AN ACCEPTED PRACTICE IN MANY COUNTRIES. IT CAN SAVE TIME BY ACCELERATING THE BUREAUCRATIC PROCESS; IT CAN ALSO COST LIVES BY PERMITTING SHODDY CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS; AND IT LOWERS THE WAGE SCALE FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. IT OFFERS BOTH PLUSES AND MINUSES AND IS SO WIDELY IN USE THAT IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE ANY CONSTITUENCY THAT COULD EVEN HOPE TO DO AWAY WITH IT.

NO; WE ARE NOW FACING SOMETHING IN OUR GOVERNMENT FAR GREATER IN ITS SIZE AND IMPACT THAN MERE BUREAUCRATIC GRATUITIES. WE ARE REFERRING TO THE MASSIVE CORRUPTION THAT NOW SURROUNDS AND DETERMINES MUCH OF OUR GOVERNMENT’S CONDUCT AND PERFORMANCE.

THE REASON THIS CORRUPTION IS SO FEARSOME IS THAT IT TRANSCENDS THE USUAL FORMS OF CORRUPTION — THOSE IN WHICH MONEY OR POWER OR BOTH, IS EXCHANGED IN RETURN FOR A SPECIFIC OUTCOME. AMERICA’S CURRENT CRISIS OF CORRUPTION INCLUDES ACTIONS BY WHICH BOTH INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS BENEFIT, BUT IT ALSO REACHES BEYOND THEM. WHAT WE ARE WITNESSING IN OUR GOVERNMENT, AND MOST NOTABLY IN CONGRESS, IS THE CORRUPTION OF ITS MIND AND SPIRIT.

IT COMES IN MANY DIFFERENT SIZES, SHAPES AND FORMS — ALL WITH SEEMINGLY UNLIMITED APPEAL AND POWER TO REWARD OUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES FOR ERRANT THINKING AND FOR ACTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN DIRECTED TO EVERY ASPECT OF OUR GOVERNMENT AND BEAR THE PRIME RESPONSIBILITY FOR ITS GROWING DECLINE OVER THE PAST HALF CENTURY.

POLITICAL JUDGEMENTS FREQUENTLY REFLECT OR INCLUDE

SOME DEGREE OF MORAL JUDGEMENT — NOT BECAUSE POLITICIANS ARE MORE MORAL THAN THOSE IN OTHER PURSUITS, BUT BECAUSE THEY SO FREQUENTLY ENTER THE MORAL ARENA BY REFERRING TO AND PROMOTING THEIR LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS AND POLITICAL DIRECTIONS AS BEING “RIGHT”. THE WORD, “RIGHT”, SEEKS TO ESTABLISH MORALITY. THESE TWO WORDS ARE SO STRONGLY JOINED BY THEIR MEANING AND USAGE THAT THEY CAN ONLY OCCASIONALLY BE SEPARATED, AND RARELY, IF EVER, IN THE CLAIMS OF POLITICIANS.

A BILL OF PARTICULARS

OUR CONGRESS IS THE CENTER OF THE GOVERNMENT OUR FOUNDERS FORMED. IT IS THE MEANS BY WHICH THE NATION’S CITIZENS ARE REPRESENTED; IT WRITES OUR LEGISLATION; AND IT HAS THE SOLE RIGHT TO PROVIDE FUNDING TO ENACT ITS LEGISLATION AND TO SUPPORT THE OPERATION OF THE BUREAUCRACY THAT ADMINISTERS ITS PROGRAMS AND POLICIES.

BEFORE WE CONSIDER ANY SPECIFIC ACTIONS BY CONGRESS WE MUST REGARD IT AS A UNIT DESIGNED TO REPRESENT THE PEOPLE. IT HAS A BROAD RANGE OF FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES AND EXTRAORDINARY POWER TO USE THEM TO CREATE THE BODY OF LAW THAT IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY.

THE RATIONALE OF OUR FOUNDERS FOR GRANTING THESE POWERS WAS THAT CONGRESS WOULD EMPLOY THEM FOR THE NATION’S BENEFIT TO CONDUCT ITS GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH THIS PURPOSE WAS SUBJECT TO CHALLENGE BY OUR TWO-PARTY SYSTEM, WE HOPED, AS THE NATION GREW IN POPULATION, TERRITORY AND WEALTH, THAT DIFFERENCES COULD BE RESOLVED OR DISGUISED. THIS IS NO LONGER TRUE.

CONGRESS, TODAY, IS NOT A UNIT. IT IS A BODY OF QUARRELING PARTS WHO SEEM OBSESSED BY THE INTERPARTY CONFLICT THAT THEIR POSITION ALLOWS, BUT DOES NOT REQUIRE. WHILE DIFFERENCES, AND THE OPPOSITION THEY CREATE, ARE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN POLITICAL BODIES, AND ESPECIALLY IN THOSE WHOSE MEMBERS ARE PUBLICLY ELECTED, THE INTENT OF OUR FOUNDERS WAS THAT OUR POLITICAL DIFFERENCES SHOULD LEAD TO BETTER NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, NOT OBSTRUCT IT.

"OUR CONGRESSIONAL DIALOGUE IS, IN SHORT, A CONSTANT GAME OF “GOTCHA”."

MUCH OF OUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES’ ENERGY IS DEVOTED TO THE TIRELESS CRITICISM AND COUNTER-CRITICISM THAT PASSES FOR DIALOGUE IN DC. ITS REAL AIM, SOMETIMES OPENLY STATED AND AT OTHERS OFFERED BY CODED DOG-WHISTLE LANGUAGE, IS TO ELEVATE ONE PARTY WHILE DEPRECATING THE OTHER. OUR CONGRESSIONAL DIALOGUE IS, IN SHORT, A CONSTANT GAME OF “GOTCHA”.

THIS NEED TO ELEVATE, TO MAGNIFY ONE’S BENEFITS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND TO DERIDE THE OPPOSITION, CARRIES OVER EASILY TO THE MEDIA’S COVERAGE OF THE 24/7 POLITICAL TIME FRAME. IT IS THERE AMONG THE DC INTERVIEWS, SPEECHES, PHOTO-OPS, SIGNING CEREMONIES, PRAYER BREAKFASTS,

BANQUETS, NEWS BROADCASTS, ETC. WHERE THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE CAN MOST FREQUENTLY AND ECONOMICALLY MAKE CONTACT VIA MEDIA COVERAGE WITH HIS/HER LOCAL VOTER. AND, AS THIS CONNECTION MUST BE MADE, THE BROADCAST MEDIUM’S CHOICE OF WHOM TO PUT ON THE AIR IS A POWERFUL ONE.

COMPETING FOR VOTER ATTENTION AND MONEY IS AS OLD AS POLITICS ITSELF. AND, JUST AS OUR INSTANT COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY HAS INCREASED ACCESS TO VOTERS, SO HAS THE PRESENCE OF THE NEW LOBBYING INDUSTRY ON K STREET PROVIDED ACCESS TO A CONTINUOUS SOURCE OF FUNDING AND A NEW SENSE OF CONGRESS AS A WILLING, WORKING PARTNER OF AMERICA’S PRIVATE SECTOR AND ITS ROYALTY EXECUTIVE CLASS.

THESE CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY IN THE MEDIA AND IN CORPORATE/GOVERNMENT RELATIONS METHODS SUCCEED BECAUSE THEY SAVE TIME AND CREATE BENEFITS FOR ALL. LIKE MANY OF THE OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT COMMAND ATTENTION FROM OUR REPRESENTATIVES, THEY REQUIRE EFFORT AND, SOMETIMES, EVEN SOMETHING IN RETURN, WHICH BEGS A VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION BECAUSE, AS THESE PERSONAL AND PARTY DEMANDS INCREASE, THEY MUST DETRACT FROM THE EFFORT OR THOUGHT AVAILABLE TO THE NATIONAL INTEREST. WHEN WILL THEY REACH THE POINT WHEN THE NATIONAL INTEREST IS NO LONGER DISCERNIBLE ? AND HOW MUCH TIME REMAINS ? THIS IS AN ONGOING PROCESS THAT DISPLAYS MANY OF THE WARNING SIGNS OF NATIONAL DECLINE. UNLESS REVERSED, OUR CONSTITUTIONAL LIBERTIES AND PROTECTIONS WILL DISAPPEAR AS BOTH THE LEFT AND RIGHT BATTLE OVER HOW TO RESTATE AND REINTERPRET THEM TO THEIR OWN ADVANTAGE.

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NEGLECT IS MOSTLY CASUAL, ‘THOUGH SOMETIMES PURPOSEFUL. USUALLY SLOW AND STEADY, IT CAN EASILY BE IGNORED OR EXCUSED. IN GOVERNMENT IT IS A FORM OF MALFEASANCE, BUT ONE OF LESSER SCALE THAN THE MANY WILLFUL ACTIONS BY CONGRESS IN RECENT YEARS THAT PUT THE NATION’S SAFETY, AND EVEN ITS EXISTENCE, AT RISK.

PROBABLY THE MOST AUDACIOUS OF THESE WAS THE THEFT DURING THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION OF FUNDS PAID INTO THE SOCIAL SECURITY (SS) SYSTEM FOR SENIORS’ RETIREMENT BENEFITS. BILLIONS OF DOLLARS THAT COULD HAVE EARNED INTEREST AND THEN BEEN AVAILABLE IN LATER LIFE DISAPPEARED AND WERE REPLACED BY GOVERNMENT IOUs. THIS CONVERSION OF AN EARNED CASH ASSET INTO A GOVERNMENT GENERAL FUNDS OBLIGATION WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY BETRAYAL OF THE PUBLIC’S TRUST EVEN ‘THOUGH CONGRESS MAY HAVE THOUGHT THAT THE DEMANDS OF JOHNSON’S GREAT SOCIETY WARRANTED IT AND THAT OVER TIME IT COULD BE REPAID.

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, BECAUSE OF ITS CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY OVER THE NATION’S LEGISLATIVE AND FUNDING FUNCTIONS, ARE STEWARDS OF OUR GOVERNMENT’S PROPERTY AND WEALTH AND, ESPECIALLY IN CASES IN WHICH FUNDS ARE HELD IN TRUST, THEIR MORAL DUTY IS CLEAR. SADLY, EQUALLY CLEAR IN THIS MATTER IS CONGRESS’ FAILURE AND THE DECLINE IN OUR POLITICAL CULTURE AND GOVERNMENT.

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ANOTHER PROCESS, THAT DEFIED THE PUBLIC TRUST ON A GRAND SCALE, AND BEGAN WITH THE PASSAGE OF THE 1965 REVISION OF OUR IMMIGRATION LAW, WAS CONGRESS' DECISION TO NEITHER FUND NOR ENFORCE THROUGH OTHER MEANS THOSE PARTS OF THE LAW THAT REMAINED IN EFFECT, BUT WERE OPPOSED BY POWERFUL, OPEN BORDER, COMMERCIAL, SOCIAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONSTITUENCIES.

FOR A HALF CENTURY CONGRESS HAS BEEN FACED WITH BOTH A MAJOR MORAL AND POLITICAL DILEMMA, CAUGHT BETWEEN POWERFUL FORCES THAT WANTED TO ENFORCE THE LAW AND THOSE WHO DIDN'T; AND REGARDLESS OF WHICH PARTY HAD NUMERICAL CONTROL, THE ISSUE WAS SUCH AN EMOTIONAL AND DIVISIVE ONE THAT CONGRESS COULD NOT MUSTER SUFFICIENT SUPPORT TO CHANGE THE LAW. THE RESULT WAS THE USUAL "WINK AND NOD" AND CONTINUATION OF THE FLOW OF POLITICAL DONATIONS FROM THE INTERESTS WHO OPPOSED ENFORCEMENT. THIS CHARADE IS NOW 50 YEARS OLD. IN THAT SPAN, HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE HEARD A MEMBER OF CONGRESS PROCLAIM "WE ARE A NATION OF LAWS" ?

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COMBINING ASPECTS OF BOTH THE SS AND THE IMMIGRATION ISSUES, IS THE FIASCO OF OUR NATIONAL DEBT'S STEADY CLIMB TO ITS PRESENT \$20 TRILLION PLUS LEVEL. IF WE LOOK AT OUR NATIONAL DEBT GOING AS FAR BACK AS THE 19TH CENTURY, WE SEE MOVEMENTS UP AND DOWN DUE MOSTLY TO WARS, RECESSIONS, ETC., BUT THE DEBT LEVEL OTHER THAN DURING THESE UNUSUAL EVENTS REMAINS IN RANGES THAT APPEAR STABLE AND UNDER CONTROL.

DURING THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION'S "GUNS AND BUTTER" ECONOMICS THAT SIGNIFICANTLY CUT TAXES AND SIMULTANEOUSLY RAISED DEFENSE SPENDING, OUR DEBT TRIPLED FROM SOMEWHAT LESS THAN \$3 TRILLION TO JUST UNDER \$8 TRILLION WITH ENORMOUS IMPACT ON THEN CURRENT AND FUTURE BUDGETS. THIS TURNED OUT TO BE A SIGNAL THAT CONGRESS COULD NOT IGNORE. IT INDICATED BUDGETS COULD BE "BUSTED" WITHOUT CONSEQUENCE AND IT LED TO CHANGES IN CONGRESS' RULES/PRACTICES WHICH HAVE LARGELY DONE AWAY WITH OUR TRADITIONAL BUDGET PROCEDURE AND REPLACED IT WITH "CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS".

THE DIRECTION OF OUR DEBT'S CURRENT CHART LINE, BOTH ACTUAL AND PROJECTED, IS NEARLY VERTICAL AS DEFICITS CONTINUE, DEBT MOUNTS AND OUR GOVERNMENT MUST DEPEND UPON FREQUENT DEBT LIMIT INCREASES IN ORDER TO OPERATE. AGAIN, IT IS POSSIBLE TO CONVINC ONESELF THAT CONGRESS MAY HAVE BELIEVED IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO REPAY ITS BORROWINGS, BUT THE REALITY IS FAR DIFFERENT, AS THE SCALE OF OUR DEBT PRECLUDES ANY MEANINGFUL REDUCTION AT OUR CURRENT INCOME/EXPENSE LEVELS.

IN OUR POSTWAR PERIOD WE HAVE MANAGED TO TRANSFORM OURSELVES FROM THE RICHEST NATION IN THE WORLD TO ITS LARGEST DEBTOR. AND YET HOW OFTEN DO WE CONTINUE TO HEAR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS REFER TO AMERICA AS "THE RICHEST NATION IN THE WORLD" ?

"...AND WE ARE LEFT ONLY WITH MEMORY — WHICH TOO WILL VANISH."

THESE EXAMPLES ARE HIGHLIGHTS THAT STAND OUT BECAUSE THEIR BETRAYAL SHOCKS OUR CONSCIENCE AND IMPERILS OUR COUNTRY. THEY SHOCK US BECAUSE THEY PUT THE NATURE OF OUR CORRUPTION ON NAKED DISPLAY. WHAT WE SEE IS NOT THE TAKING OF SMALL FUNDS OR FAVORS FROM SOME MINOR BUREAUCRATIC TRANSACTION, BUT THE MUCH GREATER AND CONSTANT CORRUPTION THAT ATTACKS AND DESTROYS THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT. WITH TIME, BUT NO ACTION, COMES RESIGNATION AND THEN ACCEPTANCE. THE ORIGINAL MODEL VANISHES AND WE ARE LEFT ONLY WITH MEMORY — WHICH TOO WILL VANISH.

EPILOGUE

IN GOVERNMENT AND EVERYWHERE ELSE IN OUR SOCIETY THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IS AN ONGOING PROCESS, ENCOURAGED BY THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND AND HONOR IT; AND DEFLECTED OR DENIED BY THOSE WHO DON'T.

WHILE OUR TWO PARTIES CREATE THE SOUNDS AND SIGHTS OF OUR NATION'S POLITICAL MACHINERY IN DC, THEIR EFFORTS DO NOT REACH TO THE NEXT LEVEL — TO CREATE GOOD GOVERNMENT — WHERE THE NATION'S INTERESTS TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER IDEOLOGY. REDUCING THE QUALITY OF GOOD GOVERNMENT TO ITS BASICS, WE SEE IT AS BEING REPRESENTATIVE, TRANSPARENT, PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE. THREE OF THESE ARE CONCERNED MOSTLY WITH ITS OPERATION/ADMINISTRATION; THE FOURTH, AND MOST IMPORTANT, "PRINCIPLED", INCLUDES OUR CONSTITUTIONAL AND MORAL VALUES.

IN THE BRIEF 90 DAYS SINCE OUR PREVIOUS CHAPTER (AND PRES. TRUMP'S INAUGURATION) WE HAVE WITNESSED POLITICAL CIRCUS IN WASHINGTON. THE FAMED RINGLING BROS. BARNUM AND BAILEY SHOW MAY HAVE SUCCEDED TO THE TECHNOLOGY AND TASTES OF OUR TIME, BUT WASHINGTON IS READY WITH ITS OWN CLOWN AND HIGH WIRE ACTS: THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL SECURITY IS FIRED, HIRES ATTORNEYS AND ANNOUNCES HE WILL SEEK IMMUNITY TO TESTIFY BEFORE A CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE; THE PRESIDENT FIRES THE FBI DIRECTOR CONDUCTING AN INVESTIGATION OF HIS CAMPAIGN STAFF'S LEAKS AND CONTACTS; AN INDEPENDENT COUNSEL IS APPOINTED TO LEAD A WIDE INVESTIGATION OF CONFLICTING CHARGES AND COUNTER CHARGES; THE PRESIDENT HIRES AN ATTORNEY; AND INTELLIGENCE LEAKS TEMPORARILY SHUT DOWN ANGLO/US CO-OPERATION ON THE MANCHESTER TERRORIST BOMBING INVESTIGATION.

THIS IS CLEARLY NOT GOOD GOVERNMENT THE TONE FOR WHICH,

REGARDLESS OF THE TWO PARTIES' SNIPING AND HARASSMENT, MUST BE SUPPORTED, IF NOT SET, BY THE WHITE HOUSE. FAILURE IN THIS BY PREVIOUS PRESIDENTS CLINTON, BUSH AND OBAMA HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO OUR PRESENT "CIRCUS", BUT IT IS TRUMP WHO NOW OCCUPIES THE OVAL OFFICE AND WILL SET THE STANDARD, EITHER INTENTIONALLY OR NOT.

IT IS EARLY ENOUGH FOR THE PRESIDENT TO DO AWAY WITH THE CONFUSION THAT HAS PLAGUED THE WHITE HOUSE UNTIL NOW. THE QUESTION TO WHICH THE COUNTRY NEEDS AN ANSWER IS WHETHER HE HAS THE WILL AND ABILITY TO TAKE MEASURED ACTION. IF HE DOESN'T, THE ERRORS WILL COMPOUND TO WHERE THEY MAY WELL OVERSHADOW MORE SUCCESSFUL ASPECTS OF HIS PRESIDENCY.

FINIS

GOP – 2020

JEB BUSH — WE THOUGHT ANOTHER STEP HAD BEEN TAKEN IN JEB BUSH'S PURSUIT OF THE PRESIDENCY WITH HIS ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE HAD JOINED FORCES WITH RETIRED NY YANKEE DEREK JETER TO PURCHASE THE MIAMI MARLINS MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL TEAM FOR A PRICE RUMORED TO BE IN EXCESS OF A BILLION DOLLARS. ACCORDING TO BUSH, HIS PERSONAL INVESTMENT WAS TO BE THE SMALLEST IN HIS GROUP, BUT HE WOULD SERVE AS THE MANAGING PARTNER WITH COMPLETE CONTROL.

SUCH A POSITION CALLS FOR A HEAVY SCHEDULE OF APPEARANCES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, PHOTO-OPS, TEAM EVENTS — THE FULL P.R. MENU WITH THE CONSTANT MEDIA ATTENTION THAT ATTACHES TO "AMERICA'S NATIONAL GAME". THIS ASSURED CELEBRITY WOULD CERTAINLY BE USEFUL TO BUSH IN CAMPAIGNING FOR NOMINATION OR ELECTION AND, BECAUSE BASEBALL IS HOME TO MANY CUBAN, LATIN AND CENTRAL AMERICAN PLAYERS, THE MARLIN'S LOCATION IN FL WOULD FURTHER ENERGIZE HIS BASE THERE.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, HE WOULD ENJOY A NEW PERSONA; HE COULD SAY "GOOD BYE" TO THE DISASTROUS ELECTORAL IMAGES AND RESULTS OF THE PAST AND APPEAR IN THE EXALTED FORM OF A SPORTS FRANCHISE CONTROL FIGURE, COURTESY OF BASEBALL FANS AND WEALTHY PARTNERS.

BECAUSE BUSH HAS NO BASEBALL BACKGROUND AS HIS FATHER AND BROTHER DID (THE FORMER HAVING CAPTAINED HIS ANDOVER AND YALE TEAMS AND "W" HAVING BEEN AN OWNER AND MANAGING PARTNER OF A TEXAS TEAM) HIS CONNECTION TO THE SPORT SEEMS ONE OF OPPORTUNITY. PRESS REPORTS,

WHEN HE ANNOUNCED HIS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE MARLIN BID, INDICATED THAT HIS INSISTENCE ON COMPLETE AUTHORITY DID NOT SIT WELL WITH OTHER INVESTORS, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF JETER'S CONSIDERABLY GREATER KNOWLEDGE AND FINANCIAL INVESTMENT.

A LATE BULLETIN HAS IT THAT BUSH IS NO LONGER PART OF JETER'S EFFORT, BUT HAS JOINED TAGG ROMNEY'S GROUP. AS IT INCLUDES AT LEAST TWO PEOPLE WITH RECOGNIZED EXPERIENCE ON THE FIELD AND IN THE FRONT OFFICE, BUSH'S INSISTENCE ON COMPLETE CONTROL IS NOT LIKELY TO SUCCEED. AND, AS MORE OFFERS ARE REVEALED, THE RUMORED PRICE HAS RISEN FROM \$1.3 TO \$1.6 BILLION.

IN ADDITION TO BEING SIMPLY A MATTER OF POLITICAL SPECULATION, THIS ATTEMPT LAYS BARE HOW DEEPLY COMMITTED TO SPORTS VALUES AND IDENTITY OUR CULTURE HAS BECOME.

JOHN KASICH — ALSO RETURNING FROM THE POLITICAL WILDERNESS OF INACTIVITY, HE HAS AUTHORED A NEW BOOK IN WHICH HE RESTATES SOME OF HIS 2016 ORATORY, ANNOUNCES THAT HE IS AVAILABLE FOR THE 2020 ELECTION AND WILL CAMPAIGN FOR THE GOP NOMINATION.

THIS SUGGESTS THAT ONCE AGAIN THE GOP MAY ALLOW MORE CANDIDATES FOR NOMINATION THAN CAN BE EFFICIENTLY MANAGED. IN OUR OPINION THERE SHOULD BE A MAXIMUM OF SIX CANDIDATES ON THE PRIME TIME DEBATE STAGE, AND FOUR WOULD BE PREFERABLE. MORE ON THIS, AS NOMINATING TIME DRAWS CLOSER.



ECD 6/26/17

END NOTES

- 1) CONSTITUTION OF THE USA, PREAMBLE, SEPTEMBER 17, 1787
- 2) DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, PHILADELPHIA, JULY 4, 1776
- 3) "FROM THE MANY, ONE."

RECOMMENDED SUMMER READING:

REPORTS, WHEN ISSUED, OF THE INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE RECENT COLLISION BETWEEN USN DESTROYER, FITZGERALD, AND 34,000 TON PHILIPPINE CONTAINER CARGO SHIP, ACX CRYSTAL.

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.](#) (2009) ; AND [WHO LOST AMERICA? CAN AMERICA'S DEMOCRATIC IDENTITY AND GOVERNMENT SURVIVE OUR ETHICAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FAILURES?](#) (2011) THE LAST TWO ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE PUBLISHER, AUTHORHOUSE, (888-280-7715 OR AT AUTHORHOUSE.COM.) OR ONLINE AT AMAZON.

