



Friday, March 19, 2010

Truth

Don't expect it from Washington. America's politicians are rushing headlong into socialism faster than at any time in our young history. We who send the 'revenues' to Washington know all too well the cost of the last massive rush toward that cowardly form of government. 'Entitlements' such as social security, medicare, and medicaid are in *truth* on pace to swamp our country's economy in the coming decades. The tactics used by Democrats to pass "Healthcare Reform at any price" with their secrecy, unprecedented vote-buying, and outright intimidation, have made it abundantly clear to most American citizens that absolute power has indeed corrupted absolutely.

Charlie Reese of the Orlando Sentinel penned an article in 1995 and updated it in August of 2009. Some poignant questions are highlighted below:

Politicians are the only people in the world who create problems and then campaign against them. Have you ever wondered, if both the Democrats and the Republicans are against deficits, WHY do we have deficits? Have you ever wondered, if all the politicians are against inflation and high taxes, WHY do we have inflation and high taxes? You and I don't propose a federal budget. The president does. You and I don't have the Constitutional authority to vote on appropriations. The House of Representatives does. You and I don't write the tax code, Congress does. You and I don't set fiscal policy, Congress does. You and I don't control monetary policy, the Federal Reserve Bank does. One hundred senators, 435 congressmen, one president, and nine Supreme Court justices equates to 545 apparently inept selfish human beings out of the 300 million are directly, legally, morally, and individually responsible for the domestic problems that plague this country.

Truth is, we in our apathetic passivity continue to send the same batch of 545 self-interested human beings to a cancerous Washington DC only to become increasingly proficient at destroying the very foundations of this country.

We've talked about America's innovativeness and her unparalleled system of patent and copyright laws to protect intellectual capital, individual initiative and risk-taking as the bulwarks of our success as a nation. While true as far as it goes, this view does not come close to explaining the real reason for this country's phenomenal economic success.

America was founded by a brave and passionate people in search of freedom from oppression of many sorts. But beyond any doubt or revisionist's view of history, their greatest fervor was for religious freedom, specifically Christian Protestantism. We spring from a people who rebelled against the STATE in Europe and its plutocracy. For those early pilgrims and settlers, the STATE was in large part the Catholic Church; firmly controlled by men and not by God. One need only read the first paragraph of our Declaration of Independence to see how important God was to our forefathers.

"When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

The Protestant Reformation had a huge and fundamental impact on the young America even more so than in Europe where it began. There was no established Church (Catholic Church) or STATE in America to restrain its revolutionary ideas of reform, particularly in the area of work. At the heart of the reform was the understanding that we do not gain salvation from God through religious works. The Roman Catholic Church assured salvation to individuals who accepted the church's sacraments and submitted to its clerical authority. Work was viewed in a radical new way. While hidden in the Latin from all but the most learned of the time, the Bible reveals a God who deeply values work as a calling, not for salvation, but as a means to reveal His love to a broken world.

In his 1904 book The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism Max Weber, a German sociologist and economist wrote that the Protestant, Calvinist 'work ethic' influenced people to "engage in work in the secular world, developing their own enterprises and engaging in trade and the accumulation of wealth for investment" as summarized by Wikipedia. Robert Lewis, a Christian teacher and speaker notes Weber's observations that the reformation endorsed all work with an equal dignity, encouraged honesty and diligence, and rather than consume profits, invest them for growth and the welfare of future generations. Weber identifies Martin Luther's conclusions that a "vocation" from God was no longer limited to the clergy or church, but applied to any occupation or trade.

Weber studied the apparent paradox that religious devotion was usually accompanied by a rejection of worldly affairs, including the pursuit of wealth and possessions. Why was that not the case with Protestantism? To illustrate he quoted one of the ethical writings of Benjamin Franklin:

"Remember, that time is money. He that can earn ten shillings a day by his labor, and goes abroad, or sits idle, one half of that day, though he spends but sixpence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon that the only expense; he has really spent, or rather thrown away, five shillings besides. . . . Remember, that money is the prolific, generating nature. Money can beget money, and its offspring can beget more, and so on. Five shillings turned is six, turned again is seven and threepence, and so on, till it becomes a hundred pounds. The more there is of it, the more it produces every turning, so that the profits rise quicker and quicker. He that kills a breeding sow, destroys all her offspring to the thousandth generation. He that murders a crown, destroys all that it might have produced, even scores of pounds."

Weber notes that this is not a philosophy of mere greed, but a statement laden with moral language. Indeed, Franklin claims that God revealed to him the usefulness of virtue.

"To emphasize the work ethic in Protestantism relative to Catholics, [Weber] notes a common problem that industrialists face when employing pre-capitalist laborers: Agricultural entrepreneurs will try to encourage time spent harvesting by offering a higher wage, with the expectation that laborers will see time spent working as more valuable and so engage it longer. However, in pre-capitalist societies this often results in laborers spending *less* time harvesting. Laborers judge that they can earn the same, while spending less time working and having more leisure. [sound familiar?] Weber also notes that societies having more Protestants are those that have a more developed capitalist economy." Wikipedia

But if American capitalism has its roots in the Protestant Reformation and indeed the Bible itself, we find ourselves far from that view today. The pursuit of good work has largely given way to the pursuit of greed. As pointed out in the Wikipedia reference, "at some point the Calvinist rationale informing the "spirit" of capitalism became un-reliant on the underlying religious movement behind it, leaving only rational capitalism."

The increasing void of reliance on self and on God is being filled by a growing faith and reliance on the STATE – at least that is where we are allowing our politicians to take us. Whether you call it Democratic ideals, Socialism, or Statism; they are all the same – the STATE will take care of our every need.

There is a large and fast-growing number of “disenfranchised” people in this country who have largely given up or never really engaged in the opportunities of this country. The Protestant Reformation was a powerful force for that opportunity, but in our maturity it now faces a very destructive threat. Philosopher Eric Hoffer said “Those who see their lives as spoiled and wasted crave equality and fraternity more than they do freedom. . . . The passion for equality is partly a passion for anonymity: to be one thread of many which make up a tunic; one thread not distinguishable from the others. No one can then point us out, measure us against others and expose our inferiority.” This idea is the heart of Socialism and of the modern Democratic platform.

James Madison recognized humanity as flawed and needing to be governed. In Federalist 51 he wrote “But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.”

While the Democrats have all the power now and appear to be totally corrupted by it, they by no means are entirely to blame for our nation’s woes, past, present or future. As Mr. Reese aptly points out, we 300,000,000 citizens send 545 humans every two years to “govern and to lead” us. We alone are responsible for the outcome. If we keep sending the same arrogant politicians year after year then we will keep getting the same results year after year.

In my view, the next significant economic indicator for the American economy will come on the evening of November 2, 2010. Will the voters of this country endorse or reject what is clearly a socialist vision for America? Businesses can make money and economies can grow in Socialist countries, as they do in Europe; just not as fast or as broadly as they can when properly governed like say America of the 50’s, 60’s, 70’s, 80’s and 90’s.

Will Americans vote to take the road less travelled; one of good and meaningful work for those who want it, and acceptance of personal responsibility, a fiscally responsible government, or will we vote for the illusion of *comfort* and *equality* while growing evermore dependent on a swelling government for our basic needs? It is not only an ideological question, but an economic one. Our next best indicator as to the economic direction of this country will come November 2nd.

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