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Marx – or Madison? “Rob Thy Neighbor” – or Share the Price Tag for Freedom

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Today, America finds herself at a clearly defined and extremely dangerous crossroads. Whether we will survive as a free nation will hinge to a large extent on the choices voters make in the November 2010 elections. It comes down to a choice between two options: Will we choose the principles of government espoused by our Founding Fathers and set forth in the United States Constitution—or will we continue down the seductive—and ultimately destructive—path of big government, huge entitlements, and the welfare state?

We have been moving toward the creation of a permanent welfare underclass since the days of FDR. One by one, entitlement programs have become the pay-back to voters—who support the politicians—who promised them the entitlements. Politicians continue to get elected as long as they keep the gravy train flowing. Along with the office come the lavish perks and benefits, the very generous pensions, and even millions in “war chest” funds that may be left over when a politician finally retires or is forced out of office.

This is a disgustingly corrupt system. It is also dangerous, because—as in all things—*destruction* is the inevitable result of corruption.

At no time in our history has there been a more bitterly divided populace when it comes to political philosophy. The ferocity of this division, I believe, is largely derived from one central economic fact: Nearly half of U.S. households today pay no federal income tax.

Stephen Ohlemacher of the Associated Press reported on April 7: “About 47 percent will pay no federal income taxes at all for 2009. Either their incomes were too low, or they qualified for enough credits, deductions and exemptions to eliminate their liability. That's according to projections by the Tax Policy Center, a Washington research organization.”¹

“*Tax Day is a dreaded deadline for millions,*” Ohlemacher wrote, “*but for nearly half of U.S. households it's simply somebody else's problem.*”

That says it all. Why would voters who do not pay federal income taxes be concerned when taxes continue to go up for those who do?

The American people are divided between those who see their heritage of freedom being rapidly destroyed and are angry and frightened—and those who will willingly (but unwittingly) submit to the chains of slavery, believing Marxism is a better model of government because of all the “free stuff” it provides for them.

When the welfare underclass (which has grown steadily, thanks to power-hungry politicians) reaches critical mass, honest government cannot survive. Thomas Jefferson and others warned early in the history of our nation that when a people discovers it can vote itself benefits from the Treasury, that nation will soon cease to exist as a free society.

So, it comes down to this: Do Americans value freedom enough to fight for its survival? Which will they choose? Marx? Or Madison?

“28 Great Ideas that Changed the World”

During the days of America's Founders, it was popular in Europe to proclaim that the role of government was to take from the “haves” and give to the “have-nots” so that all might be truly “equal.” However, the American Founders perceived that this proposition contained a huge fallacy.

Our Founders were remarkably well read. Although the level of their formal training varied, the debates that took place in the Constitutional Convention, along with the writings of the Founders, reflect a broad knowledge of religious, political, historical, economic, and philosophical studies. Their understanding of the essential elements of sound nation building was gleaned from their study of Greek, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, European, and English history. Even though some

¹ Stephen Ohlemacher, “Nearly Half of US Households Escape Federal Income Tax,” Assoc. Press, 4/7/2010.

did not belong to any Christian denomination, our Founders held the teachings of Jesus in universal respect and admiration.

Their cumulative understanding of the principles of sound government for the new nation was distilled into 28 Basic Principles which these remarkable men believed could change the world. Those principles were presented two centuries later in a book entitled, *The 5000 Year Leap: A Miracle That Changed the World*, written by W. Cleon Skousen, a gifted teacher and a fervent patriot.²

In the Preface to his book, Skousen writes, “Many Americans in the early years of the Republic truly regarded the Constitution as a miracle. Not only did they praise the competence, wisdom, and motivations of those who served in the federal convention of 1787, but they declared that the formation and adoption of our new system of federal government represented a political achievement, unprecedented in human history. They looked upon it, moreover, as an event that was actually ‘influenced, guided and governed’ by the hand of God.”

The Seventh Principle

The 7th principle of sound government outlined in *The 5000 Year Leap* states, “*The proper role of government is to protect equal rights, not provide equal things.*”

Skousen uses a simple illustration. Suppose a kind-hearted man decides to ask the mayor and city council to force a man with two cars to give one to his neighbor, who has no car. Is that a legitimate use of power? If the mayor and city council do this in the name of the “law,” the man who loses his car loses not only the right to his property, but the right to appeal under law for help in protecting his property. The American Founders recognized that when government begins to level the material possessions of the rich in order to have an “equal distribution of goods,” the government thereafter has the power to deprive ANY of the people of their “equal” rights to enjoy their lives, liberties, and property.

Those on the receiving end of the redistribution program may think it is “just” to take from the “haves” and give to the “have-nots.” Their argument is that this is the way the government provides “equal justice for all.” But what happens when the government starts taking from those who consider themselves “poor”? I can tell you. They will declare that they have “rights” to the property the government gave them. And the government will reply, “WE decide who has rights in things.”

When we open the door for government to infringe on anyone’s rights, then no-one’s rights will be secure.

I read a statement recently that put the Founders’ vision in one tidy statement: “American Democracy flowed from the pursuit of opportunity, governed by respect for the Law.”³ Our Founders’ approach was to guarantee the equal protection of all the people’s rights and thus insure that all would have the freedom to prosper. Of course, some would prosper more than others. But the American concept of “freedom to prosper” was based on the belief that man’s instinctive will to succeed in a climate of liberty would result in the whole people prospering together.

While our Founders recognized that it is a mandate of God to help the poor and underprivileged, they had a strong aversion to the idea of forced redistribution of wealth. It was their conviction, first of all, that no Constitutional authority exists for the federal government to participate in charity or welfare. But they also understood that forced redistribution seriously undermines society by breeding debilitating dependency, blunting the desire or necessity to work for a living, smothering the instinct to strive and excel—and finally, by destroying the charitable instinct itself.

Skousen provided a stark illustration of the folly of believing that forced redistribution of wealth will provide “equal justice for all”:

When the Communists seized power in Hungary, the peasants were delighted with the “justice” of having the large farms confiscated from their owners and given to the peasants. Later, the Communist leaders seized three-fourths of the peasant land and took it back to set up government communal farms. Immediately, the peasants howled in protest about their property “rights.” Those who protested too loudly or too long soon found that they not only lost their land, but also their liberty. If they continued to protest, they lost their lives.⁴

Those who are ignorant of history or choose to ignore it will conveniently deny the fact that a government big enough to provide you with everything you want or need has the power to take from you everything that you have.

² W. Cleon Skousen, *The 5,000 Year Leap*, published originally in 1981. Copyrighted 1991 and 2006, National Center for Constitutional Studies.

³ Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen, *A Patriot’s History of the United States*, Sentinel Publishing (New York) 2007, p. 828.

⁴ Skousen, p. 117.