

Populist #12 Proper Representation in the Legislature

Over the course of the preceding papers, I have aimed, my fellow citizens, to establish for you, with clarity and cogency, the importance and utter necessity of altering our system of government to that of a Constitutional Democracy, in order to ensure our political safety and happiness. The present, and all future generations of Americans have not surrendered their right to share and participate in government, and we ought to exercise it.

I shall now continue to closely examine our current structure of government, and I am convinced it will soon be self-evident that it has little or none of the essential qualities of a free government; that it is neither founded on the principles of proper representation, nor composed of a suitable level of responsibility to its constituents; both of which, in my opinion, provide the greatest level of security for the liberty and happiness of the people.

As stated previously, I firmly believe that the form of government which holds those that we entrust with power to the highest level of responsibility to their constituents, is the best designed for freedom. In such a government, the people are sovereign, and their opinions, understandings and motivations are the benchmarks of every public law. When this is no longer the case, the nature of a free government has truly changed, and despotism is not far from ascending to reality.

The highest level of responsibility to the people is achieved through a simple structure of government. If you complicate it, the people will be confused and alienated in their understanding about the actual source of federal abuse or malfeasance; some will attribute it to the senate, others to the house, others to the president, and so on, and those who have promoted or committed the acts will often go undetected. This is what we so plainly see in our current system. Our politicians have learned to skillfully utilize this principle; thus leaving few in the federal government who will ever take responsibility for their actions, except to aggrandize their own standing.

But, on the other hand, if you place all the legislative power in one body of people, separated from the executive and judicial, elected for a short period, and excluded from permanency by a regular rotation, you then create the most absolute level of responsibility. In such a structure, whenever the people have an objection to the actions of their government, errors in identifying the perpetrators will be so greatly reduced that the people will be able to execute the remedy with confidence and effectiveness, and will remove those responsible in the next election. This bond of responsibility to the people will avert such dangers that currently exist in our national legislature, and will best guarantee the rights of the people.

There was a time when we were taught to believe that breaches of power by our representatives were rarely to be expected; that a sense of common interest would result in a full compliance with the Constitution. In confiding with experience, the least errant guide of human actions, we clearly see that relying purely on the justice and good nature of our legislators to secure our liberties and promote our happiness, is entirely foolish. Government implies the power of making laws, and those that we entrust with such great power are limited by laws as well. It is a widely-accepted maxim that it is essential to the idea of a law that it carries a sanction. In other words, the law must carry a penalty or punishment for disobedience. If there is no penalty associated with disobedience, the laws governing the authorities will become no more than advice or recommendation; the eventual result of which will be despotism. Without creating an increased responsibility of the government to the people, it is this level of depravity to which our entire legislature will most surely sink.

Although the correct level of responsibility is essential to our rights, it alone cannot secure them for us. It is also necessary for freedom that our nation's legislature is formed as to have an

adequate or even proficient knowledge of its constituents, and retain their confidence. To produce these essential qualities, the representatives must be fair, equal, and large enough in number to possess the same interests, feelings, opinions, views, and understandings which the people themselves have. It must also be numerous enough to prevent conspiracy, bribery and subservience to special interests.

We will now examine the current structure of Congress, and bring it to the test of these aforementioned principles; the result of which, will be to demonstrate that it is deficient in every essential quality of a just and proper representation.

Membership in the House of Representatives is fixed at 435 members; which, according to current estimates, is one for every 679,848 citizens in our nation. Two-hundred eighteen representatives make a quorum for conducting business, and one-hundred ten of these, being the majority, determine the intention of the House.

Membership in the Senate is one-hundred, with fifty-one making a quorum; the majority of whom, twenty-six, determines the intention of the senate, except in judging impeachments, making treaties, or removing a Senator, which requires two-thirds, or thirty-four members.

The president's signature is required for enacting laws, adding one more citizen to the number of people ruling over us. Thus, it is clear that the liberty, happiness, interests, and security of the entire United States is left in the hands of just 127 people! This is a wholly inadequate and dangerous representation!

With reason as our guide, we can plainly see that this legislature is completely inadequate, because the views of nearly three-hundred million people can in no way be properly represented by such a small number. It is equally dangerous, because in the exercise of great power, such as that which is entrusted to our government, this small group of leaders is too highly exposed to the enticements of corruption, personal advancement, and excessive influence.

The Constitution of the United States is regularly praised as being the most perfect form of government on earth, but as I examine it closer, I continually find characteristics such as these that appear to me to be not only frightening, but hazardous to our liberty. The Congress was so poorly structured, that your unalienable rights may be renounced by just 127 people; a minority so small that it should never be considered to have the trust and faith of millions!

If continuing under this system, which I refer to as a political apartheid, is the will of the majority of this country, then I must give in, but I have faith that the people, when fully examining their government, will realize its destructive nature and dire future consequences. It must be, by now, apparent to all people of reason, that our current system is so radically corrupt and defective, that amendment alone will not repair it; only an entire change in its dominant features will prevent its complete destruction. Our government's natural death is what we now seem to be on the point of experiencing, if it is not soon reconstituted in a form more conducive to liberty; such as a Constitutional Democracy, by which I mean a form of government where the final check and balance on the power of the federal authorities is directly in the hands of the People with the Bill of Rights serving to protect the liberty of all citizens.

As discussed here in this paper, the organization of congress itself is improper for the protection of our liberties, but this is far from the only weakness of our current federal system. It is this weakness, as well as other dangerously glaring deficiencies in our current federal structure, which will be the focus of my next paper on October 6, 2005.

In the spirit of liberty and prosperity,

Franklin