

Populist #8 The Consequences of our Growing Centralized Power

"A Constitution of Government once changed from Freedom, can never be restored. Liberty, once lost, is lost forever."
- John Adams

Assuming it is an established truth that the citizens of the United States, in the case that we are to remain under our current system of government, or in any similar republic, would be subject to a continuing concentration of power in the hands of the few that rule over us in the federal government, let us examine in further detail some of the consequences that would be present in such a situation. Experience, the least fallible judge of human actions, has shown us an overabundance of events in which the federal authorities have concentrated power, usurped authority from the states, and attacked liberty or even eliminated much of it from the people.

We have seen our federal government act as an untiring enemy to liberty; it has used force to prevent individual states from withdrawing from their voluntary Union; it has kept voting rights away from citizens based on race or gender; it has established an unequal system of coerced taxation under highly conspicuous circumstances; it has taken away the power of the people, through their representatives, to declare war, and has given it to the executive on multiple occasions; it has suspended habeas corpus; it has used slavery both for labor and military service, which finally ended barely thirty years ago; it has allowed intelligence agencies to spy on the activities of citizens; it has taken away the power of the people, through their representatives, to regulate trade, and turned it over to the executive; it has plunged our nation into nearly irreparable debt; it has refused to protect our borders; it has enacted and upheld laws and actions that violate the first, second, fourth, fifth, sixth, and tenth amendments to the Constitution; with all these actions and many more, it has perverted the role of the federal government itself as well as all of its branches, and it is no longer the servant of the people, but rather, it has become their master.

Long extinct are the times when we believed that abuses by the federal government should not be expected, and that when they would occur they would be promptly corrected by our representatives. This manner of thought, in present times, would appear to be entirely foolish.

In considering this long, yet far-from-complete litany of abuses by the federal government, would it not be obvious what our future will hold, as well as what the consequences would be of allowing the structure of our government to remain in its current form? Although both logic and experience tell us that such a long history of abuses without a change in structure would only result in additional abuses with greater severity, this topic does deserve further examination.

It is a widely accepted maxim that power will always be liable to abuse, and that those in power will often seek to increase it through illicit means. It is also widely accepted that one of the greatest weaknesses of republics is that they allow an easy opportunity for corruption and consolidation; solely due to the fact that the fewer there are in power, the easier it is for individuals or groups to gain further power. History has plainly shown us that many of the greatest tyrants in the world have arisen from such a situation; from a republic instituted amongst the people. Republics in France, Germany, Italy and elsewhere have led to some of the greatest tyrants and atrocities in the history of the world.

A government that is prone to war and conflict with other nations, as the federal government of the United States has *proven* to be, does not change its course merely by a change of those in power; but rather, its predatory nature can only be altered through a remodeling of the structure that permits such actions. Without a change in our form of government, it is only logical to predict that further acts of imperialism in the name of freedom and democracy will continue.

Bloated federal governments and military establishments always create an ever-growing dependency of the people on them. Laws become increasingly relaxed in favor of the military, and increasingly stronger in favor of federal control over the people. Nations with a need for huge military establishments will not long have the virtue of good national credit, and will ultimately be plunged into a state of unending debt. Actions such as these always result in the citizens becoming much less than a match for the authorities, and they end up looking to these institutions for direction, control and protection. The result is that they no longer see either as a necessary evil, but alternatively, they see them as powerful masters that can exert their strength to the prejudice of the people's rights at any time.

Situations such as these are most dangerous to our liberty. As we have plainly seen both in the past and in our own day, it is in the very nature of war to increase the power of the executive at the expense of the legislative authority. It is through the calls from the government for additional security at the expense of our liberty, that we are manipulated into accepting what we think will be merely temporary abridgements of our freedoms. But, as John Adams so clearly observed through an exhaustive study of world history, once liberty is lost, it is lost forever. The world has many times seen liberty gained through struggle, but has rarely, if ever, seen it returned to the people merely as a gift by government once it has been taken away. Only when such governments collapse have the people been able to regain any of their freedoms.

This is the future of the United States. The natural implosion of the government is what we now seem to be on the verge of experiencing if the federal system is not expeditiously recreated in a more democratic form. Simply put, what cure can there be for this situation, but in a change of the system which has produced it! Since the right of the people to "alter or abolish" their government was so incontrovertibly stated in the Declaration of Independence, we should also to take into genuine consideration, the words of Alexander Hamilton:

"If the federal government should overpass the just bounds of its authority and make a tyrannical use of its powers, the people, whose creature it is, must appeal to the standard they have formed, and take such measures to redress the injury done to the Constitution as the exigency may suggest and prudence justify."

We have arrived at a time in our history that only through the establishment of a Constitutional Democracy can this inevitable course can be altered. This political system, by which I mean a government in which the final checks and balances of power over the federal authorities are directly in the hands of the people, with the Bill of Rights serving to protect the liberty of every citizen, offers a new prospect and guarantees the cure which we are pursuing.

Do not follow those who fractiously tell you that this form of government is impossible or a novelty in the political world; that it has never earned a place of respect amongst the philosophers of government; that it madly attempts what is impossible to accomplish. No, my American brothers and sisters, lift yourselves above these profane words! If innovations are to be despised, believe me, the most fearful of all innovations, the most uncivilized of all efforts, and the most tyrannical of all actions by any government, is that of continuously engaging in war and taking away our liberty in order to preserve our liberties and advance our prosperity!

Let us, rather, turn to the great canon of self-preservation which affirms that ensuring the freedom, safety and prosperity of a nation is the sole purpose for the existence of government; and the lack of which is the justification for which any such government *must* be sacrificed.

I will continue this discussion on the necessity of changing our system of government to that of a Constitutional Democracy in my next paper on August 11, 2005.

In the spirit of liberty and prosperity,

Franklin