

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **The People's Manners Are Now Corrupt**

Two hundred years ago the United States Constitution was written as a guide for America's unique experiment in freedom. Today the free society that the Founders envisaged is barely identifiable.

America is no longer a bastion of freedom. prevailing ideology, grounded in economic ignorance and careless disregard for individual liberty, is nurtured by a multitude of self-serving, power-seeking politicians spouting platitudes of compassion for the poor who are created by their own philosophy. Reelection is paramount in the minds of most of those who represent us, while freedom and constitutional restraint of power are considered old-fashioned and unwise.

The feeling of frustration prevalent in the country today is certainly understandable. Government is so big and the bureaucracy so cumbersome that the average person has little to say about his economic destiny unless he resorts to the underground economy. In a free society, of course, individual initiative and ability are the principle factors in determining one's economic well-being.

Not surprisingly, half of the people don't register to vote and less than half of those who do rarely vote. When permitted on the ballot, "None Of The Above" is the most attractive candidate.

Something certainly has gone wrong. The role of government and the people's attitude toward government have changed dramatically since 1787, with most of the changes occurring in the twentieth century. It appears that we are in the waning days of the American Republic.

Has America become known for lies? Our presidents lie about foreign affairs while secretly carrying out activities never approved by Congress. Scientists falsify records for career purposes. Wall Street is filled with stories of lies and scandals. Sadly, lying and deceit have become a way of life for many in America today.

Samuel Adams, at the time of the Constitutional Convention, accurately warned: “Neither the wisest constitution nor the wisest laws will secure the liberty and happiness of a people whose manners are universally corrupt.”

We certainly are blessed with a unique and inspired Constitution, probably the best in the history of man, despite its shortcomings. Yet today, two hundred years since its ratification, the Constitution doesn’t restrain the pernicious and steady growth of government at the expense of personal liberty. Our manners are now corrupt.

We have been conditioned to accept debt as part of every aspect of our lives. Individuals, corporations, and nations are swimming in debt so great that no one ever expects repayment. The short-term benefit of government borrowing is a political expediency that, in spite of the rhetoric of the balanced budget, is growing ever more popular.

Sadly, we rarely hear serious proposals for limiting the role of government to that of protecting liberty. Both liberals and conservatives give lip service to limited government ideas, but only to serve some special view of government that they might endorse, rather than to promote consistently the principles of freedom.

In the twentieth century we have come to accept demands and needs as rights at the expense of someone else’s rights. Responsibility for our own acts and livelihood has been replaced by lawsuits demanding and getting unrealistic settlements.

We have a massive government, passing out wealth stolen from one group and giving it to another. Those with clout in Washington do well, while those who do not understand the lobbying system and seek only their individual freedom are left out. The survival of a car company like Chrysler is now more dependent on lobbying tactics than on management skills.

Government has come to mean something entirely different than what was intended by the writers of the Constitution. It is an entity capable of confiscating and distributing wealth ad infinitum. Government no longer serves the people by guaranteeing equal rights to all. Government is now expected to provide profits, medical care, jobs, homes, and food whenever the people demand these benefits as a right. Most

people today fail to accept the obvious fact that government largesse can come only as a result of a systematic scheme of government theft.

Compromise is universally accepted as the only tool for political stability, while the leaders argue that anything less is rigid and confrontational and will inevitably lead to chaos. Yet this so-called tool of compromise, on each occasion it is used, is an attack on someone's freedom. Most fail to see that interventionism, welfarism, and socialism are very rigid philosophies. Continued sacrifice of a portion of one's rights has led to a disintegration of self reliance in America today.

The latter part of the twentieth century has permitted the acceptance of the idea that "society" owes everyone a living. Vandalism by many is no longer seen as a crime, but only as an opportunity to get what is deserved or owed to them. Once the principle of government wealth-distribution is accepted at face value, it is logical to expect some individuals to bypass the slow-moving bureaucracy, especially in a time of crisis, and take what they claim is rightfully theirs.

This principle is the reverse of Frederic Bastiat's moral law. Bastiat stated that a law is immoral if it does something that an individual himself is not allowed to do (such as transfer wealth from one to another). Once we accept, as we have these past 75 years, that it's a proper function of government to transfer wealth, it's not difficult to understand the "logic" of the vandal who breaks windows during storms, floods, or power outages and takes whatever he needs without a sense of guilt.

Throughout the twentieth century, the trend has been away from limited government and toward big government's intervening in every aspect of our lives. It has been financed with borrowed money and a fraudulent paper money system. We have come a long way from the Republic envisioned by the Founders. Today, by majority vote, government can easily cancel out the earnings or rights of individuals without any debate as to constitutionality. The only debate is between the competing special interests, deciding who will benefit and who will suffer. We are witnessing the end stage of the Republic as we drift closer and closer to pure democracy.

Dictatorship of the majority is every bit as oppressive as the dictatorship of the few. It is also more difficult to attack, since so many accept the notion that the majority has the authority to redefine rights.

Political leaders today are more interested in opinion polls than they are in the Constitution and freedom principles. Any event of importance is quickly analyzed by a poll, which the politician takes to heart

and responds to in an appropriate way.

Keeping up with computer assessments of the people's superficial feelings has been the road to success for many modern politicians. Individuals seeking leadership are prodded to answer incessant and continuous surveys. The leaderless, disorganized, disinterested masses, through poll results, are collectively and unknowingly leading the leaders. These instantaneous recordings, designed to tell the politician what to do, cannot provide reassurance that our rights will be protected in the foreseeable future.

The main problem we face today is that we lack enough champions of freedom. Leadership in the freedom movement has always come from intellectuals who have studied natural law and understood the benefits of the free market. When political oppression is accompanied by serious economic problems, the people will frequently, after years of suffering, overthrow the tyrants. But a wealthy nation, grown soft on the prosperity produced by a previously free generation, tends to vote for that individual who promises the biggest piece of the pie to his constituents. Ironically the prosperity that comes from a free society is the fuel that feeds the fire which brings on the demise of that society. Materially we are much better off today than people were in 1776, but our philosophy of freedom is in much worse shape.

During the twentieth century, America has gone through a transition that has radically changed the political system established by the Founding Fathers. Although many seeds of statism were sown in the nineteenth century, they have matured in the twentieth century.

The trends in legislation in this century are clearly anti-free-market, starting with the Sherman Antitrust Act passed in 1890 to the strong federal control over trade with the Clayton Act of 1914. With the establishment of the FTC to current-day regulations, this century has certainly witnessed a loss of confidence in a truly free market. Even the term "laissez faire" is universally shunned by all politicians who fear that in championing capitalism, support will be lost.

Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson revolutionized foreign policy, dramatically changing our traditional belief in neutrality to one of perpetual meddling in the affairs of every nation throughout the world. Today it is mind-boggling that extensive emergency powers are available to the President. Literal dictatorial control of the country is available to an aggressive president faced with a contrived or real crisis. The executive orders, which have the force of law, are issued on a routine basis. Secret agreements and commitments by our presidents

are routine and no longer considered unconstitutional. The usual thing is that Congress almost always accepts the secret and dangerous agreements as if they were law.

The year 1913 certainly was a banner year for the anti-constitutional movement. The Sixteenth Amendment, the Personal Income Tax, and the Federal Reserve Act were all passed. The central bank monopoly guaranteed the destruction of our gold dollar. The recessions, depressions, and inflations of the twentieth century can be laid at the doorstep of the Federal Reserve.

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The Founding Fathers intended that the federal government be totally dependent on the individual states and their legislatures for the collection of taxes and the election of Senators. Since that time, we have abandoned the concept of sovereign individual states and accepted a strong centralized federal government. The Senate was intended to protect states rights and impede the natural tendency of government to grow large, abusive, and centralized. In 1915 the popular election of senators changed our attitudes regarding the protection of the sovereignty of the states. The power of state legislatures to call a constitutional convention, although never used, fortunately is still available to us to circumvent the obstructionist federal Congress. The electoral college emphasized the importance of state power over central authority. This feature, although considered important by the writers of the Constitution, was never a practical part of the election process.

The twentieth century's near deathblow to the concept of individual liberty has today produced a multitude of problems. The people's manners are now universally corrupt. Violent crime continues to grow at a rapid rate and can be expected to continue as economic conditions worsen. One thousand new prisoners are sentenced each week. Many of those who are sentenced should not be, and many of those who are out on the streets, tragically, should be in prison.

Our government routinely lies to us and uses "disinformation. " The luxuries of the current generation are financed by the sweat and blood of the next. Yet flowery slogans are used to describe the wonderful prosperity we enjoy, with few realizing the seriousness of the in-

debtedness incurred in the process. In the midst of a market glut, more and more people each year get pushed into the poverty class.

Liberty has become a term that offends establishment intellectual leaders. Feeble attempts at fairness in the forceful redistribution of wealth is considered noble, but principles that guarantee free-market incentive systems are considered immoral and selfish. Even the businessman today is more accustomed to getting special privileges or contracts from the government than in minimizing the role of government. Difficult choices by our national leaders are postponed, and gimmicks are devised to further consume the wealth and capital of the country instead.

Passion for liberty has faded from the hearts of most Americans and is now cherished only by a remnant diligently working to reestablish its rightful place as one of our most important concerns. The challenge to keep alive the legacy of the Founding Fathers is overwhelming. The Bicentennial Celebration of the Constitution is certainly an appropriate time to restate and emphasize the importance of the freedoms embodied in this great document.

The erosion of freedom seems of little concern where the promise of government security motivates the people and encourages the politicians' extravagant ways. Living for immediate material benefits has replaced concern for long-term freedom principles necessary to guarantee peace and prosperity for the next generation.

American society is characterized by hopelessness and operates without a moral, constitutional, or monetary standard. The early Reagan years permitted a temporary reprieve by glossing over the problems of debt, inflation, and runaway government spending.

A basic understanding of the problems we face is vital if we expect to reestablish the constitutional principle of equal rights:

Loss of hope in the future has driven many to think only of the present, making a drug induced high the first priority in many people's lives. Young people feel helpless against their government's inability to provide economic prosperity or safety from a nuclear holocaust. Teenage suicide statistics are a frightening revelation of this feeling of hopelessness.

The drug craze reflects the desperate feeling of many. Young people remain skeptical of a generation that kills ten times as many with alcohol as with hard drugs and yet pontificates about the dangers

of smoking marijuana. Lack of consistency never contributes to credibility.

Young people cannot help being confused and discouraged if they are fortunate enough to be able to follow the daily newspapers. A 1986 report showed that the federal government ran a 30 year test of radiation exposure experiments on unsuspecting human subjects, making them "nuclear calibration devices."

A lack of understanding of the importance of productivity, savings, and freedom to contract has led to a confused notion of the role of government. Government now operates a \$10 billion lottery business, with unrealistic glorification of instant wealth for the lucky (and very rare) winners, while little old ladies who like to play bingo are arrested for breaking anti-gambling laws.

Gambling when done by free citizens without government control is said to be a vicious crime against the state that must be stopped before it destroys the families involved. And yet a government lottery has on numerous occasions in this century been used to decide which 18 year olds will be placed on the front lines of no-win, undeclared, unconstitutional, immoral wars Eke Vietnam and Korea. Is it any wonder that young people often are confused and angry and lack long-term goals for the future when their fate can be casually determined by overwhelmingly powerful forces?

Young people, as a result of the welfare ethic accepted today, are not disciplined in the work ethic. Self reliance is not considered important anymore. Somewhere along the way a significant event occurred in our high schools. In the second half of the twentieth century, high school coaches took all the decision-making power from their high school quarterbacks. Although this sounds rather simplistic and irrelevant, it is a reflection of the attitude society has developed regarding the importance of self reliance and responsibility for one's own actions. Today on the high school football fields, only the coaches call the plays. In real life, only the government calls the plays.

America's \$10 billion pornographic industry involves the coercive and violent use of children. This industry thrives, while the

numbers of hungry and unemployed steadily rise. A nation without standards will see such industries thrive while farmers go bankrupt, oil wells are turned off, and steel mills are closed, and while foreigners outperform us in every industry.

Amazingly, 256,000 millionaires receive Medicare benefits, while the numbers of indigents receiving no care are growing. This is happening in spite of the billions spent with the supposed intention of helping the poor and the down-trodden. The failure of these programs never seems to awaken the people.

Another recent trend reflects a decaying, sick society. Government agencies are bribing citizens to turn in others to law enforcement agencies. Children are encouraged to turn in their parents, employees their employers, and friends their neighbors. Spying for the government is a despicable act and something that should never exist in a free and just society.

There are times when it seems like we get our system of values from television productions. Professional wrestling is one of the few programs which started on TV in the late 1940s and now claims more viewers than ever. There are no rules, and it is associated with contrived (but unreal) violence: mockery of the referee, racism, absence of sportsmanship, yelling, screaming, and hatred. Reasonable rules of decency are totally ignored. The shows get worse every year; belts, chains, and cages are now part of the acts. Twenty wrestlers are put into a ring without a referee and a free-for-all erupts -- the more violent, the more the crowd cheers the ridiculous charade.

The twentieth century has been characterized increasingly by guilt. Social planners have conditioned many to believe that problems exist and that we are all responsible. Ideas of collectivism ignore the importance of individual rights and imply social wrongs are “everyone's” fault.

The unbelievable burden of government bureaucracy is enough to depress anyone concerned about freedom.

Madison warned us:

It will be of little avail to the people that the laws are made by men of their own choice if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read or so incoherent that they cannot be understood.

Madison would be apoplectic if he had been forced to witness the writing of the 2,000-page 1986 Tax "Simplification" Act, which no one fully understands. A decade will be required to decipher the thousands of pages of yet-to-be-written regulations. The chaos is not accidental: the taxing authorities can rule any way they wish with those they choose to imprison as long as the tax code is incomprehensible. When our government officials call it "simplification," we can be confident that it is exactly the opposite.

The welfare ethic has destroyed the proper and traditional American role of government's guaranteeing liberty. It has also caused unrealistic and unbelievable litigation that has brought the production of some goods and services to a standstill.

Schools are sued for poor performance of students. Physicians are sued for less than normal children, whether due to nature or the patients' own habits. An accident with a lawn mower used as a hedge trimmer prompted a successful suit against the manufacturer because the injured parties were not warned against such usage. A psychic won a huge award for losing her "powers" following a CAT scan. Doctors have been sued for failing to kill unborn children in abortion procedures that resulted in so-called wrongful lives. Boards of directors of charities are now receiving judgments against them for innocent errors of employees.

To the majority of Americans, the concept of responsibility for one's own actions, has been replaced by the belief that someone else must pay those who demand a handout. The manufacturer of a microwave oven was held liable for damages after a woman's cat died when she placed it in the oven to dry its hair -- because there was no warning label on the oven! Can you imagine what Thomas Paine's reaction might have been to such an absurdity?

It is inconceivable that the Constitution was intended to protect life and property in this manner. Today a defect in a product is not

required for a successful suit, only the claim that an accident could have been prevented by a specific warning.

Common sense is no longer recognized as something we should expect people to use. Common greed is now the norm in a society that accepts the welfare ethic as a constitutional standard.

The twentieth century has delivered a society totally void of standards. It has created: a chaotic economic system operating on a silly notion about money; a drug craze that involves a large segment of the population, especially the young; a welfare state perpetuated by government theft and considered moral and constitutional, but based on a bizarre concept of rights; and a foreign policy that guarantees perpetual preparation for war and frequently war itself. Without standards of values, a feeling of desperation prevails. We are taught that we cannot know all the answers and that there are no absolutes -- and that certainly there are no absolutes regarding rights.

The fatalism that follows leads to the use of drugs, socialist solutions to all our problems, and a cynical use of government power to serve the material benefit of powerful special-interest groups. Inflation has become the norm, debt continues unabated, and terrorism becomes the most frequent tool of the oppressed. The feeling of hopelessness prompts extreme religious movements that offer truth and prosperity. Liberal theologians promote worldwide socialism and even communism in the name of love, human dignity, and rights, while fundamentalists retaliate by offering economic prosperity for those who believe in the literalness of the biblical message and contribute appropriately.

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The twentieth century has not been good for world prosperity and peace, something that only comes from a free and moral society. We can no longer assume that we will enjoy the benefits of the traditional American system of government that was embodied in the U.S. Constitution. If a fundamental debate and subsequent restoration of sound

constitutional principles do not occur soon, the American way of life cannot continue.

We cannot live forever off the wealth of a previous generation and we cannot enjoy the benefits of liberty if we neither understand nor defend that liberty. If it is true that every generation must earn its freedom, the obligation of this generation is overdue.

Certainly this 200th Anniversary of our Constitution provides an appropriate time to consider the serious discussion of what constitutes a free society and how it can be preserved through constitutional law.