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Where Are the Patriots?

by Christine Smith

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness — That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed....

—The Declaration of Independence

A strong, bold, and clear definition of the proper form of government, one deriving its power from the citizens solely to protect the rights each person is born with. Fifty years later, in a letter to Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson described the Declaration of Independence as “an appeal to the tribunal of the world,” and “intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion.”

Continuing from the Declaration of Independence,

Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose Character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the Ruler of a free People.

Fifty-six signers put their lives on the line for a vision Americans celebrate every Fourth of July.

They were men unafraid to challenge the injustices imposed on the people, bold enough to declare the existence of 13 sovereign states, and courageous in stating clearly that people should be governed by the rule of law, not by the words and control of a man with dictatorial rule, unrestrained by law, unjust, a usurper of sovereignty — in short, a tyrant.

Yet, is that spirit of courage present today? Where are such patriots? Where are men who truly love freedom and will fight to ensure that the liberties we hold so dear are not taken from us? Certainly not in the halls of Congress (with rare exceptions). And most certainly not in the White House — and January 2009 will do nothing to change that sad fact. As a nation, Americans

willingly participate in a huge farce. A dark comedy. Only without the laughs. For this nation will again install yet another “unfit to be the ruler of a free people.”

But though unfit to rule a “free people” he will be fit to be the ruler of the American people, because the people continue to accept more and more loss of their liberties. Each Fourth of July we’ll see the flags waving, the festive parades, the barbecues, and the fireworks, and hear the patriotic songs. But do we see liberty? We see vestiges of the freedoms Americans once held so dear and were willing to fight for. We see symbols, removed from the truth, enjoyable representations of days and a country (a republic) far gone. Yes, Americans have liberties, but they are losing them at an alarming rate as they continue to elect people who care nothing for liberty.

Celebrating forgotten principles

Celebrating is fine. It’s what the Founders wanted. As John Adams wrote in a letter to his wife on July 3, 1776, when the Declaration of Independence had been approved,

It ought to be commemorated as the Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more. You will think me transported with Enthusiasm but I am not. I am well aware of the Toil and Blood and Treasure, that it will cost Us to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States. Yet through all the Gloom I can see the Rays of ravishing Light and Glory.

Today, we’ve got the “pomp and parade” and the sports and all the other festivities, but Americans have omitted the “toil” and all that goes with it, as well as the “solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty.” In doing so, they have not maintained the spirit of the Declaration of Independence, but rather have permitted the government to become huge, unresponsive, unjust, immoral, authoritarian, burdensome, and oppressive, wielding power without regard to the wishes of the people any longer.

Most Americans have brought so little solemnity to defending the Republic that they don’t even grasp that which they’re celebrating on the Fourth of July, and they certainly don’t give it a thought until the next holiday they can celebrate and feel patriotic about. If the enormous number of Americans having a good time during all the holidays channeled just some of that energy into challenging the corrupt status quo by refusing to ever again vote for politicians who don’t uphold the U.S. Constitution in all their policies and decisions, things would change. No longer would the lying politicians have a mandate from the people to continue as they are — giving lip service to all things patriotic while being antitheses to liberty.

I'm all for having a celebratory, enjoyable time with friends in honor of our nation's independence, but I am well aware that "those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it" (Thomas Paine). I don't see most Americans doing anything to support it. Instead they treat politics like a game, the biggest example of that being the political party conventions which are just big parties, while the rest of Americans who don't attend hype themselves up emotionally over their preferred dictator.

What has happened to the liberty we are celebrating when we have a government that has assumed an essentially dictatorial rule since 9/11, a president exercising unprecedented power and a meek and submissive Congress that rubber-stamps it all?

Moreover, consider the decades of oppressive taxation by the federal government, not to mention the never-ending regulation of our lives. Why do millions of Americans go to the polls and cast a vote for anyone, "left" or "right," who seeks not only to continue the oppression but to increase it?

Recognize that any candidate who has supported or defended the Iraq war, the war in Afghanistan, the "war on terror," or the USA PATRIOT Act; who pledges to increase foreign aid; who refers to foreign nations that have not attacked the United States as America's "enemies"; who supports using the military for any purpose other than defense of America; who maintains the use of embargoes; who supports the war on drugs; who advocates a windfall-profits tax; who supports expanding the government for "campaign finance reform," Medicare, airline bailouts, federal regulation of sports, education, or any other "good cause" at taxpayer expense; or who advocates any number of other unconstitutional positions, is "unfit to be the ruler of a free people."

Any candidate who does not openly and boldly state he will cease the imperialistic agenda of the U.S. government by ending all meddling in the affairs of other nations — no exceptions — or who seeks to use and increase "legal plunder," as Frédéric Bastiat called programs to "help" people by taking from others, is "unfit to be the ruler of a free people." In my opinion, the majority of candidates Americans are presented are not patriots; I do not believe they would always endeavor to put the true best interest of the American people (the upholding of the U.S. Constitution) above all political agendas, or that they would respect individual liberty and a truly free market, or that they would at least try to rein in the out-of-control taxation or government infringements on civil liberties, much less end the interventionist assaults on sovereign peoples worldwide.

Resolve to rededicate yourself to really trying to make a difference for the cause of liberty. Vow to withhold your time, money, and work from all political candidates for any office whom you distrust. Past voting records, empty words, vacillation on issues, and outright declarations of unconstitutional positions prove to me that a candidate is unworthy of my support. I will cast a vote only for a candidate, who, if he wins the office, would swear to uphold the Constitution and

the fundamental principles of liberty — and who I believe would do it. I vow to be always a voter of integrity. I will cast my vote as if it would determine who will be in that office. As a voter of integrity, your candidate may not win this time, but neither will you have again been a part of giving “a democratically elected dictator” a mandate from the people.

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