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Our mission is to restore, perfect and maintain our government as a constitutional republic that is dedicated to defending our unalienable rights as individuals to life, liberty and property.

"O Brother, Where Art Thou?"

If the people are to govern, they had better get it right.

by Bob Bowman

The worldwide economic collapse, the inevitable result of twenty years of misguided government, accelerated in the United States in September 2008 and propelled Senator Barack Obama to the national presidency in the November election. Now our current times are compared with the Great Depression of the 1930s. If government is tempted to look back for solutions to that crisis, we feel an honest review of that era needs to be presented. That history, of course, was embedded in hundreds of years of prior history, which first needs at least a nod.

The thirteen English colonies that were the first 13 states of the United States of America inherited mostly from the English form of government. The great turning point for England's government was the Magna Carta, the document by which the English barons, the noble class under the King, bound their King to the rule of law. The King was no longer supreme. The law was.

The U.S. Form of government rested on that rock, the rule of law. Just as the Magna Carta put restraints on the rule of the king, the federal constitution put restraints on the rule of the federal government. The founding fathers had learned the hard way to fear the power of a central government. Therefore they bound it tightly, as had England, by the rule of law.

They also feared the power of a democracy, the absolute unfettered power of the majority, because their ultimate ideals, expressed in their defining document, their Declaration of Independence, was that all humans, not just the majority, were created free and equal before the law. The sole legitimate role of government, their declaration said, was to protect the life, liberty and property of the individual citizens of the nation as they each exercised their pursuit of happiness. Government existed by the consent of the governed. Just so, the democratic power by which that consent was expressed was bound down, as was the government, by the rule of law, that the majority not be able to tyrannize the individual.

To ensure that the rule of law had enough strength to bind the twin monsters of the state and the majority, the founders erected barriers: (1) they enumerated the people's rights in the constitution; (2) they laid upon the courts the duty to protect and defend the constitution; and (3) they required a super-majority vote to change the

constitution. As we now know, that was not enough. Well, our founders also knew that it was not enough. More than once, the founders stated that our form of government was designed for "a moral people." The citizens of a republic must be of the proper "moral" character, in order to preserve the republic.

The moral character they had in mind did not require a belief in God, since they expressed their Declaration of Independence in terms of the "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." In a word, the "Laws of Nature" acted to secure the morality.

The "Laws of Nature" viewpoint has been persuasively buttressed in modern times by the work of Friedrich August von Hayek. Read that compilation of his essays titled *The Fatal Conceit: the Errors of Socialism*. It requires a solid education in arts and sciences to read it, but it is basic to the education of our electorate. Short of that, read Hayek's classic, *The Road to Serfdom*; it is accessible to readers with an average background.

With that preamble, and of pertinence here, are three recent and compelling books that report on the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. FDR was elected over Herbert Hoover in 1932, at the beginning of our Great Depression, despite but minor differences in their policies. Hoover, like FDR, believed in and actively pursued central planning and the major expansion of the federal government into the private life of the nation.

Amity Schlaes, in her book, *The Forgotten Man* (HarperCollins, N. Y., 2007), puts human faces into her account of FDR's first two terms as POTUS (President of the United States). She gives thumbnail bios of the major actors on the political scene. From the personal memoirs of those who interacted with FDR, she obtains a picture of him, warts and all, and it is human and not flattering. The man did not know what he was doing, and admitted it. He publicly declared that he and his government were "experimenting" with the economy and the people and their governance, to try to get out of the depression. Running for reelection in 1936, and the depression still in its depths, despite all his efforts, he brazenly used the publicly paid employees of the WPA (Works Progress Administration) as campaign workers for the election of he and his fellow Democrats. It was not illegal then, but it was immoral and unethical. The State of Wisconsin recently put elected officials in prison for doing the equivalent.

— More next issue on FDR and his times. —

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