“It is not the function of our Government to keep the citizen from falling into error; it is the function of the citizen to keep the Government from falling into error.”

- Justice Robert H. Jackson

Essayist and retired president and CEO of the Pennsylvania Manufacturers' Association Jim Panyard recently reported that:

"As of June 2009, 155 million people were laboring in the shrinking private sector of the American Empire with a per capita income of $39,751 and a per household income of $50,740.

In addition to supporting themselves and their dependents on those earnings, they were also supporting:

- 22.5 million government employees at the federal, state and local levels. The average pay of those on the federal government payroll is $75,419 this year, according to Econwatch. The story is much the same at the state and local levels. In Pennsylvania, for example, the average state employee has a pay package of
about $68,000 per year, while the state’s household income is $48,576. (As an aside, there are only about 20 million jobs in the nation’s manufacturing and construction sectors, combined.)

- 39 million welfare recipients
- 46.5 million Social Security recipients, a number projected to rise to about 72 million in the next 20 years.
- 14.7 million Americans drawing unemployment benefits, with that number expected to rise consistently in the foreseeable future.

The productive sector workers are also paying for everything the Leviathan State does, such as wars, roads, Imperial adventures, private stadiums, bailouts, counterfeiting, ad infinitum. They also pick up the soaring tabs for 47 million Medicaid and 42 million Medicare recipients."

Panyard goes on to ask the question, "How can 155 million productive workers support themselves, nearly 100 million nonproductive others and a seemingly endless list of government endeavors?"

Darn good question...

The simple and obvious answer is, "They can't." The simple follow-up observation is, "They don't have to keep trying to do so, either, nor should they."

It is almost impossible to conceive of a shorter road to catastrophe for any society than its being successfully conditioned to tolerate the riding of some on the backs of others under any protocol other than 100% voluntarism-- by which I mean voluntarism on an individual level, whereby the individual "mount" is free to say "No more" to the "mounted", and
individually shuck off the load. Anything else is serfdom of the productive, and results in the inevitable collapse of the society overall as the unproductive ranks swell. The dynamic is simple: Each additional increment of burden on the productive causes more from that group to fall off the edge into beneficiary status (as a welfare recipient of some kind), thus increasing the burden on the remainder yet further, which causes more to fall off... You see how this goes.

(In 1990, my brother and I created the board game 'Lose', which modeled this dynamic. Each player struggles to be the last one standing while supporting the ever-increasing welfare load of bankrupt players who have succumbed to the bleeding inflicted upon them by routine demands of the state and the regulatory and tax burdens imposed on them by other players' manipulation of the political process during the course of the game. See a short news blurb on 'Lose' at www.losthorizons.com/Newsletter/LoseNews.wmv.)

Happily, our Founding Fathers anticipated precisely this dynamic, which their close study of history had demonstrated to them time and again. That's why they equipped the people with individual control over their individual wealth, prohibiting capitations and other direct taxes except by the mechanism of apportionment, which are therefore very difficult to successfully abuse, due to the political accountability and competing interests of the state governments which that mechanism invokes. (See 'Cracking the Code- The Fascinating Truth About Taxation In America'.)

The whole point of that provision, aside from its necessity as a matter of respect for individual rights, is to serve as a governor on the political system, starving it of fuel when its excesses grow inconvenient (or at least protecting the wise from the expenses of the foolish). As even so ardent a statist as Alexander Hamilton pointed out in Federalist #21:
"Imposts, excises, and, in general, all duties upon articles of consumption, may be compared to a fluid, which will, in time, find its level with the means of paying them. The amount to be contributed by each citizen will in a degree be at his own option, and can be regulated by an attention to his resources."

However, that prescient provision isn't self-actuating, of course. Its protection requires each individual that would enjoy it to have enough brains and gumption to stand up and say, "The rest of you do what you wish-- it's a free country. But you can pay for your universal health care, and the golden parachutes you want to give away, and the missiles you want to unload against unoffending foreigners, and your "Second Deputy Under Secretaries for Natural Resources and Environment", and your Bridges to Nowhere and all the rest of your demented excesses and corruptions yourself. For my part, no more."

Hard as it sometimes is to step out of the crowd like this, there is no other way, and morality and self-respect allow no alternative, anyway. As Thomas Jefferson said, "In matters of style, swim with the current. In matters of principle, STAND LIKE A ROCK."

Taking charge of who disposes of your property IS a matter of principle, and not just of pragmatism. For one thing, to relinquish such control is to effectively embrace the principle that the collective (or whoever claims to represent the collective) has acquired the right to control the disposal of your property in your stead. This is just as definitively true whether you say it in so many words, or simply abandon efforts to enforce your own rights. "I can quit anytime" may be technically true, but until you DO quit, the cigarettes are running your show.

There is also the matter of YOU being morally responsible for the consequences of the disposal of your
property. If the product of your labor is being used to facilitate or finance violations of the Constitution with your passive acquiescence, then like it or not, you are participating in what inevitably amounts to a violation of the rights of someone else.

This is not to say that the "pragmatic" consideration is anything to laugh off, either, of course. In addition to the simple practical importance of keeping your own property in order to be able to look after yourself and your family, the things that others will do with it are not confined to mere wastefulness, graft and corruption.

Anyone old enough to be reading these words is able to recite a litany of offenses steadily committed against the rule of law by those who have been allowed to get into the habit of disposing of other people's property for their own purposes. Each such offense brings us closer to the time when the rule of law is entirely abandoned by a population increasingly conditioned to the exercise of arbitrary power, which will then participate without a glimmer of conscience or consciousness in the binding down of themselves and their neighbors at the bidding of a then entirely unbound state.

Here's a harbinger of the sort of thing that lies ahead for a complacent or intimidated America:

DAILY EXPRESS (UK), August 4, 2009: The Children’s Secretary set out £400million plans to put 20,000 problem families under 24-hour CCTV super-vision in their own homes. They will be monitored to ensure that children attend school, go to bed on time and eat proper meals. Private security guards will also be sent round to carry out home checks, while parents will be given help to combat drug and alcohol addiction. Around 2,000 families have gone through these Family Intervention Projects so far. But ministers want to target 20,000 more in the next two years, with each costing between £5,000 and £20,000 – a potential total bill of £400million.
One doesn't have to look into the question of what constitutes a "problem family" for the British government, because it doesn't matter. Whatever it may be, this program--currently in operation in an increasingly degenerate socialist cesspool to which the United States regularly looks for social policy inspirations--is enough to make any sensible person's skin crawl even if the standard is a habit of feeding the kiddies heroin for breakfast.

Does anyone out of diapers doubt that whatever they may be now, the qualifications for "interventions" under this program will constantly expand? If such a program should be implemented here, it would doubtless begin as some kind of "sentencing alternative" in cases everyone agrees involve the dregs of society with whom no one sympathizes, and therefore will seem threatening to no one else. Kind of like "sex offender registration". But like the RICO laws we all were told were created just to deal with the Mafia, this is not where such a program would stop.

Indeed, the Department of Homeland Security recently offered us all a list of what it presently considers to be American "problem people", which basically consisted of everyone who doesn't already love Big Brother... That's ominous enough by itself, of course, but think about this: do you prefer to keep your kids out of government schools? Do you criticize the state (or its clients) in front of them at your dinner table? Even if the justification for such a program of intervention ostensibly remained "protection of the children" I think you might find that sooner or later you'll also qualify as a "problem family" to somebody.

The essay by Jim Panyard with which I began these comments goes on to expressions of despair, based on Panyard's belief that America has already crossed the point of no return. While I grant that we are dangerously far down the road, I disagree with Panyard's conclusion, for two reasons.
First, as individuals, we are never past the point of redemption. We are free moral actors, and can and must do the right thing whenever we become aware of it, whether it offers practical benefit or not.

Secondly, this great country is blessed with a foundational structure of law and tradition in which we can always find support for what is right, and repudiation of what is not. That is, our unique American heritage of liberty, individual rights and limited government properly established solely for the preservation of those rights-- and the logic and historical evidence by which that heritage was chosen for us by our forefathers, is-- and always will be-- on the side of the good guys, and can be invoked on their behalf. The bad guys, on the other hand, must ever resort to a fragile tissue of lies in support of their agenda.

Still, the hour is late. The time to stand up and put your foot down is now.

"Cowardice asks the question - is it safe? Expediency asks the question - is it politic? Vanity asks the question - is it popular? But conscience asks the question - is it right? And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular; but one must take it because it is right."

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.