



WHO IS TO BLAME?! (Part 1, "The Verdict") by Finneus

Americans love to assign blame. Whether it is a fender bender or a slip on the ice, we have to assign blame, usually to someone other than ourselves. It seems to be part of our culture. The current state of our Government is no different. We have a huge tax burden, out of control government spending, a failing economy, and fewer freedoms each day. If you are a Republican, you blame Democrats. If you are a Democrat, you blame Republicans. Given the approval numbers of Congress, currently hovering around 20% (1), almost all of us seem to blame Congress. But who is really at fault for the mess we are in? Who is really to blame?

Upon leaving Independence Hall at the close of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Benjamin Franklin was confronted by a woman. She asked, "Well Doctor Franklin, what have we got, a Republic or a Monarchy?" He replied, "A Republic, if you can keep it." (2).

The founders of this nation, including Dr. Franklin, had just fought a long and expensive war, in money and lives, to be free of the tyranny of English kings. They knew first-hand how absolute power in one person's hand could ruin a people. In writing the Constitution, the Founders toiled to distribute power among as many entities as possible, giving the greatest power, that of the vote, to We The People. Our form of government (Representative Republic) relies on us, the governed, to take part in directing our Federal destiny by electing those who will represent our wishes and stay within the bounds of the Constitution. That is what Dr. Franklin meant by, "...if you can keep it." We The People have the power! We The People are running this country! We The People are responsible! We The People are to blame!

Our current national debt, the amount our Government has borrowed, is over \$13.1 trillion, which equals \$42,540 per citizen, or \$119,152 per taxpayer (since only 35% of citizens pay Federal income taxes). We have agreed to pay out an additional \$109.5 trillion, or \$990,210 per taxpayer in "unfunded liabilities" (3). These are things like Social Security, the Prescription Drug Program, and Medicare. Our representatives do not include this in the national debt (it might make them look bad). Adding the national debt and the unfunded liabilities together totals \$1,109,306 per taxpayer! (*Authors Note: The numbers above came from usdebtclock.org about a month ago. I just checked the numbers again and found that in those 4 weeks my portion of the combined national debt and unfunded mandates went up about the same amount that I drew in salary (before taxes). The Government is spending my money almost as fast as I can make it! That really scares me!*) It looks like We The People are not doing so well at running our country's finances.

The original construct of the Constitution was that individual States would have more power over us than the Federal Government. That was the idea of limited Federalism. The Federal Government would simply represent, protect, and mediate the States. Now, there isn't a single aspect of our lives that isn't influenced in some way by the Federal Government. So We The People have again allowed the Founder's vision to be lost.

As well, all Americans have lost basic individual freedoms. With every session of Congress there are more regulations and prohibitive taxation limiting our freedoms and opportunities. We The People allow ourselves to lose freedoms and pay more not to have them!

I don't think I need to cite more examples. Just about every aspect of our Constitution has been under attack. From Article One to the Tenth Amendment, We The People have allowed the Constitution to be dropped in the dirt and walked on. Dr. Franklin was a wise man and foresaw the possibility of this happening. We The People are proving him right! But what can we do? Understanding how we have failed is the key to knowing how to solve the problem. Part Two, "Restitution", will explore how we got here and what we can do to reverse the fall.

1. FoxNews.com "Real Clear" Poll (August 8-12, 2010).
2. *The American Historical Review*, vol. 11, 1906, p. 618.
3. usdebtclock.org