

WEDNESDAY MORNING QUARTERBACK

by Vic Berecz

November 3: Election Day plus One. Last evening at about 11PM, when it was obvious the Republicans would have a huge victory in the House, commentator George Will noted on *PBS* that this was “the third electoral convulsion in only four years.” The political pendulum has clearly swung to the right after strong leftward shifts in 2006 and 2008. Like every pendulum, the political one seeks the safe-harbor of the middle, but overshoots that goal by virtue of its energy. As Will and Poor’s both warn, overly short swings of the pendulum do not bode well. Perhaps we should ask this question:

Have we Americans become too impatient?

Within a few weeks of President Obama’s inauguration, many in our society were complaining that he’d failed to solve the financial crisis. Now it’s 21 months later, and it’s still not solved. The blame for that failure is probably a major part of the huge Republican sweep of yesterday’s election. We ... the American people ... blame the crisis on our government, specifically the President and the Congress. Is that blame deserved?

The “great recession” was almost a decade in the making. It wasn’t caused by President Bush and the Republican Congress, but they were deserving of part of the blame. It wasn’t caused by Wall Street, but they were deserving of part of the blame. It wasn’t caused by the Federal Reserve, but they were deserving of part of the blame. It certainly wasn’t caused by President Obama and the Democratic Congress elected with him in 2008 ... the worst was over when they inherited the mess, but since we’re throwing blame around they might as well get some too.

But, the reality is that the financial crisis that manifested itself in 2008 was caused by the greed of all too many every-day middle-class Americans. These were the folks who bought *McMansions* for their first home, because living in an apartment or a tiny house was “below” them. These were the folks who bought Florida or Arizona or Las Vegas condos on “spec” so they could “flip” them for huge profits. These were the folks who availed themselves of “liar loans” on the premise that prices of real estate could only go up. These were the folks who felt season sports tickets were their birthright ... as were every other imaginable luxury. Many of these folks are young and were horribly spoiled by their baby-boomer parents. But, many are themselves boomers and some are even old coots like me, who’ve lived long enough to know better, but have fallen to the evil that has plagued mankind from time immemorial ... GREED! So, we in truth have only ourselves to blame for the mess we’re in.

Next comes greed combined with entitlement. We have developed a cult of entitlement. Sure, say the *Tea Bags*: “They’re lazy and opt for welfare. Let’s drug test all welfare recipients and then” ... well you know! The reality folks is, schtunks and druggies (substitute your least favorite minority for “schtunks”) aren’t the only ones dependent on entitlements. Out of work? You think you should get unemployment compensation forever. Fat and happy from overindulgence? You think everyone should qualify for health insurance. Drive a gas-guzzlin’ pickup? That’s the sign of a “real man” but, it’s unfair for the government to take my money to build roads. And, old coots like me? Don’t touch our Medicare, we earned it over our work lives. And there are many more. We’ve all become dependent on entitlements. We just prefer to call the ones that are especially dear to us “our due.”

Finally, combine greed, the entitlement mentality, and impatience ... and what do you get. Too damn many modern Americans who expect instant gratification. They're the ones hollering: Cut taxes now! Make jobs available now! Bailout my underwater mortgage now! Stop spending my tax money on smellies now! (where "smellies" are anything you dislike or don't need). These are the people who blame Obama for everything, because right now he's the *whipping boy d'jour*. To these folks, the pendulum swings very quickly, so be prepared to duck. Watch out John Boehner, you may be next.

A final point to all you greedy, entitled, and impatient Americans. Remember, God didn't put us on this earth to serve and worship you!

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