

## Yankee Steve's Column

for the Week of December 18, 2008

Dear Interested Reader, My December 4th column contained a book list. I stated that my highest recommendation for Americans to read is *The Federalist Papers*, a compilation of 85 articles which interprets the philosophy and impetus behind the U.S. Constitution. Historian Richard B. Morris said that the Papers are an “incomparable exposition of the Constitution, a classic in political science unsurpassed in both breadth and depth by the product of any later American writer.”

**Classics:** *The Federalist Papers* by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison This is highest on my list of books. Someone has said that children should be nurtured on the Bible and Aesop's Fables. That sounds good to me. At the same time I would add that concerned parents, who believe in liberty, should at some point make a gift of *The Federalist Papers* to their children and grandchildren. A good hard back copy is only about \$15.

After this list appeared, someone asked me to write a brief summary of federalism. Here goes!  
Steve Cakouros

### **Federalism: The Key to Preserving our Democracy**

The American democracy is not like some democracies that can be found in the Swiss cantons, or in a few towns of New England. In those communities everyone is expected to participate in decision-making. America on the other hand is a **representative** democracy. This is a much more practical arrangement and better suited to a nation that numbers some 300 million souls.

In America elected officials do the work of government for us. Of course this is accompanied by certain stipulations. Elected officials are not supposed to implement their own plans. In their official capacity they are charged with the responsibility of carrying out the wishes of their constituents. **The people are sovereign.**

Representation in this form can be found in *The Federalist Papers*, a series published under a pseudonym as if written by one person “Publius.” These articles advocated a **central government with limited powers.**

Federalism is positioned in between what James Madison called “nationalism” (a powerful central government) and what America had before it ratified the Constitution in 1787. Before 1787 the 13 colonies had formed a loose federation of independent states. With that arrangement little could be accomplished, especially since nothing could be approved unless it received the

unanimous support of Congress members. After federalism was put in place, only a two-third's majority was needed for the passage of any bill. More importantly the executive branch of government (the president) had to follow the lead set for it by Congress.

Federalist Paper 45 leaves nothing to doubt. Federalism equals limited government.

In Number 45, Madison says that a federalist has to acknowledge that America is more than a loose federation of independent states, a thing that had been tried and had failed, but at the same time the powers of the central government are limited. The states have inalienable rights just as individuals have inalienable rights. State governments and the federal government are not one and the same. Each state is a republic.

The State governments may be regarded as constituent and essential parts of the federal government: whilst the latter is in no wise essential to the operation or organization of the former . . .

. . . the component parts of the State governments will in no instance be indebted for their appointment to the direct agency of the federal government . . .

Not only that, so that there is no confusion, the **powers invested in the central government are not only limited, they are defined.** No. 45 continues,

The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government *are few and defined.* Those which are to remain in the state governments are numerous and indefinite. The former will be exercised principally on external objects, as war, peace, negotiation, and foreign commerce; with which last the power of taxation will, for the most part, be connected. The powers reserved to the several States will extend to all the objects which in the ordinary course of affairs, concern the lives, liberties, and properties of the people; and the internal order, improvement, and prosperity of the State.  
[emphasis added]

Federalism is democracy on a grand scale. *The Federalist Papers* put forward the idea that not only do citizens have the right to be represented in government, but that each state has that same right. Most Americans know that the Constitution cannot be changed without the two-third's approval of the states. Not only that, **once that two-third's majority has been reached the president must approve the amendment. He cannot veto it, nor can he prevent Congress from calling for a national referendum pertaining to a change in the Constitution.** The president is therefore the executor of Congress. He is not its boss.

When the founders met to decide what kind of government we should have, federalism made good sense then just as it does now. Alexander Hamilton argued that the European powers would be able to use our separate colony system to their advantage. Being divided we could easily become prey for adventurers who had the sanction of foreign governments. However, if federalism was adopted, we would be thought of as a nation, one that could protect itself. When dealing with any one state, the Europeans were in fact dealing with the nation itself.

In 1787 Congress met to form what it called “**a more perfect union.**” The result was federalism. This is that kind of government that today’s left wing establishment of America does not appreciate because leftists are of the school of Plato; they think that they know how others should think because they really believe that they are better at thinking than the rest of us. After all, they are intellectuals. And if they are intellectuals, why should they consult the common folk when making decisions?

In a little noticed addendum to the **Lawrence and Garner v. Texas** decision, in which the Supreme Court ruled that the citizens of Texas are not intelligent enough to rule their own state, Justice Anthony Kennedy showed the true colors of those who sit on the left and despise federalism.

Kennedy represents the voice of pomposity and arrogance and whose hubris could only be dealt with by the goddess Nemesis, the remorseless messenger of the gods to exact retribution for hubris. She was said to have brought down King Xerxes. However, with Kennedy, she really would have her work cut out for her. Hear his contempt!

Representative government is a good notion as far as it goes. But the citizens of Texas clearly lack the mental ability to elect representatives and make laws properly. We'll be keeping eye on them to protect them from themselves . . .  
. . . citizens of many other states probably lack the intellectual capacity to rule themselves as well, which is why the Supreme Court exists, and why none of us can afford to retire. Imagine what would become of this nation without our sovereign rule.  
[Scrapple Face News]

Leftists or what I prefer to call “absolutists” want to control everything from a central headquarters. Taking time to listen to the people is from their standpoint a waste of time. **Liberals do not have the word “referendum” in the dictionary.** Nevertheless, and in spite of the fact that we are at this time surrounded by a horde of absolutists, we should hold on to federalism because it inhibits any and all who want to seize power.

**“The way to have good and safe government is not to trust it all to one: but to divide it among the many . . .” [Thomas Jefferson]**

Ever yours,

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Next Thursday’s (December 25, 2008) column: My Christmas Message