



# REPUBLICS & DEMOCRACIES

Robert Welch

Founder of The John Birch Society



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By Robert Welch

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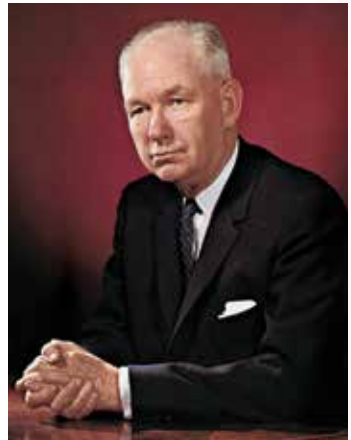
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The first scene in this drama on which the curtain clearly lifts is Greece of the sixth century BC. The city of Athens was having so much strife and turmoil, primarily as between its various classes, that the wisest citizens felt something of a more permanent nature, rather than just a temporary remedy, had to be developed to make possible that stability, internal peace, and prosperity which they had already come to expect of life in a civilized society. And through one of those fortunate accidents of history, which surprise us on one side by their rarity and on the other side by ever having happened at all, these citizens of Athens chose an already distinguished fellow citizen named Solon to resolve the problem for both their present and their future. They saw that Solon was given full power over every aspect of government and of



economic life in Athens. And Solon, applying himself to the specific job, time, and circumstances, and perhaps without any surmise that he might be laboring for lands and centuries other than his own, proceeded to establish in “the laws of Solon” what amounted to, so far as we know, the first written regulations whereby men ever proposed to govern themselves.

Undoubtedly even Solon’s decisions and his laws were but projections and syntheses of theories and practices which had already been in existence for a long time. And yet his election as *archon* of Athens in 594 BC can justly be considered as the date of a whole new and huge approach to man’s eternal problem of government.

There is no question that the laws and principles which Solon laid down both foreshadowed and prepared the way for all republics of later ages, including our own. He introduced, into the visible record of man’s efforts and progress, the very principle of “government by written and permanent law” instead of “government by incalculable and changeable decrees.” (Will Durant) And he himself set forth one of the soundest axioms of all times, that it was a well-governed state “when the people obey the rulers and the rulers obey the laws.” This concept, that there were laws which even kings and dictators must observe, was not only new; I think it can be correctly described as “Western.”

Here was a sharp and important cleavage at the very beginning of our Western civilization from the basic concept that always had prevailed in Asia, which concept still prevailed in Solon’s day, and which in fact remained unquestioned in the Asiatic mind and empires until long after the fall of the Roman Empire of the East, when Solon had been dead two thousand years.



Modern photo of the ancient buildings of Athens

## **Tyrants of Democracy**

Unfortunately, while Solon's laws remained in effect in Athens in varying degrees of theory and practice for five centuries, neither Athens nor any of the Greek city-states ever achieved the form of a republic, primarily for two reasons. First, Solon introduced the permanent legal basis for a republican government, but not the framework for its establishment and continuation. The execution, observance, and perpetuation of Solon's laws fell naturally and almost automatically into the hands of tyrants, who ruled Athens for long but uncertain periods of time, through changing forms and administrative procedures for their respective governments. And second, the Greek temperament was too volatile, the whole principle of self-government was too exciting — even through a dictator who might have to be overthrown by force — for the Athenians ever to finish the job Solon had begun, and bind themselves as well as their rulers down to the chains of an unchanging constitution. Even the authority of Solon's laws had to be enforced and thus established by successive tyrants like Pisistratus and Cleisthenes, or they might never have amounted to anything more than a passing dream. The ideal was there, of rule according to written laws; and the fact that

those laws were at times and to some extent honored or observed constituted one huge step towards — and fulfilled one prerequisite of — a true republic.

But the second great step of a government framework as fixed and permanent as the basic laws were supposed to be remained for the Romans and other heirs of Greece to achieve. As a consequence Athens — and the other Greek city-states which emulated it — remained politically as democracies, and eventually learned from their own experiences that it was probably the worst of all forms of government.

But out of the democracies of Greece, as tempered somewhat by the laws of Solon, there came as a direct spiritual descendant the first true republic the world knew. This was Rome in its earlier centuries after the monarchy had been replaced. The period is usually given as from 509 BC to 49 BC, Rome having got rid of its kings by the first of those dates, and having turned to the Caesars by the second.

But the really important early date is 454 BC, when the Roman Senate sent a commission to Greece to study and report on the legislation of Solon. The commission, consisting of three men, did its work well. On its return the Roman Assembly chose ten men — and hence called the *Decemviri* — to rule with supreme power while formulating a new code of laws for Rome. And in 454 BC they proposed, and the Assembly adopted, what were called *The Twelve Tables*. This code, based on Solon's laws, became the written constitution of the Roman Republic.

*The Twelve Tables*, “amended and supplemented again and again — by legislation, praetorial edicts, *senatus consulta*, and imperial





Modern photo of the ancient buildings of Rome

decrees — remained for nine hundred years the basic law of Rome.” (Durant) At least they were in theory, and always to some extent in practice, even after Julius Caesar had founded the empire which was recognized as an empire from the time of Augustus. What was equally important, even before the adoption of *The Twelve Tables*, Rome had already established the framework, with firm periodicity for its public servants, of a republic in which those laws could be, and for a while would be, impartially and faithfully administered.

For, as a Roman named Gaius (and otherwise unknown) was to write in about 160 AD, “All law pertains to persons, to property, and to procedure.” And for a satisfactory government you need as much concern about the implementation of those laws, the governmental agencies through which they are to be administered, and the whole political framework within which those laws form the basis of order and of justice, as with the laws themselves which constitute the original statute books. And the Romans contrived and — subject to the exceptions and changes inflicted on the pattern by the ambitions and cantankerous restlessness of human nature — maintained such a framework in actual practice for nearly five hundred years.

The Romans themselves referred to their government as having a “mixed constitution.” By this they meant that it had some of the elements of a democracy, some of the elements of an oligarchy, and some of those of an autocracy; but they also meant that the interests of all the various classes of Roman society were taken into consideration by the Roman constitutional government, rather than just the interests of some one class. Already the Romans were familiar with governments which had been founded by, and were responsible to, one class alone: especially democracies, as of Athens, which at times considered the rights of the proletariat as supreme; and oligarchies, as of Sparta, which were equally biased in favor of the aristocrats. Here again the Roman instinct and experience had led them to one of the fundamental requisites of a true republic.

## **Checks and Balances**

In summary, the Romans were opposed to tyranny in any form; and the feature of government to which they gave the most thought was an elaborate system of checks and balances. In the early centuries of their republic, whenever they added to the total offices and officeholders, as often as not they were merely increasing the diffusion of power and trying to forestall the potential tyranny of one set of governmental agents by the guardianship or watchdog powers of another group.

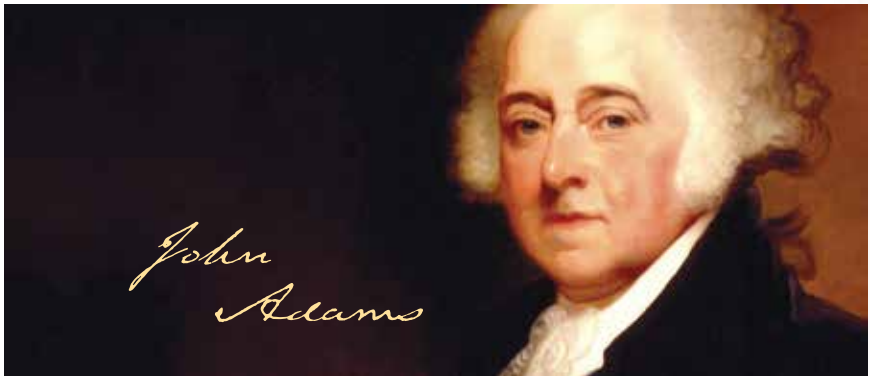
When the tribunes were set up, for instance, around 350 BC, their express purpose and duty was to protect the people of Rome against their own government. This was very much as our Bill of Rights was designed by our Founding Fathers for exactly the same purpose. And other changes in the Roman government had similar aims. The result was a civilization and a government which, by the time

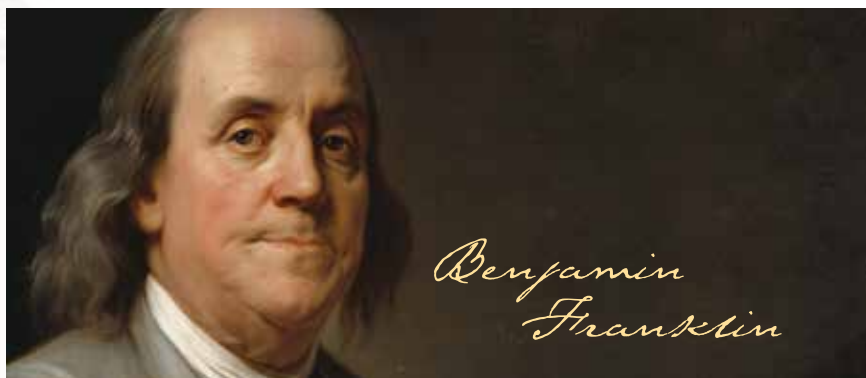
Carthage was destroyed, had become the wonder of the world, and which remained so in memory until the nineteenth century — when its glories began receding in the minds of men, because they were surpassed by those of the rising American republic.

Now it should bring more than smiles, in fact it should bring some very serious reflections, to Americans to realize what the most informed and penetrating Romans, of all eras, thought of their early republic.

It is both interesting, and significantly revealing, to find exactly the same arguments going on during the first centuries BC and AD about the sources of Roman greatness that swirl around us today with regard to the United States. Cicero spoke of their “mixed constitution” as “the best form of government.” Polybius, in the second century BC, had spoken of it in exactly the same terms; and, going further, had ascribed Rome’s greatness and triumphs to its form of government.

Livy, however, during the days of Augustus, wrote of the virtues that had made Rome great before the Romans had reached the evils





of his time, when, as he put it, “We can bear neither our diseases nor their remedies.” And those virtues were, he said, “the unity and holiness of family life, the pietas [or reverential attitude] of children, the sacred relation of men with the gods at every step, the sanctity of the solemnly pledged word, the stoic self-control and gravitas [or serious sense of responsibility].” Doesn’t that sound familiar?

But while many Romans gave full credit to both the Roman character and their early environment exactly as we do with regard to American greatness today, the nature and excellence of their early government, and its contribution to the building of Roman greatness, were widely discussed and thoroughly recognized. And the ablest among them knew exactly what they were talking about. “Democracy,” wrote Seneca, “is more cruel than wars or tyrants.” “Without checks and balances,” Dr. Will Durant summarizes one statement of Cicero, “monarchy becomes despotism, aristocracy becomes oligarchy, democracy becomes mob rule, chaos, and dictatorship.” And he quotes Cicero verbatim about the man usually chosen as leader by an ungoverned populace, as “someone bold and unscrupulous ... who curries favor with the people *by giving them other men’s property.*” (Emphasis added.)

If that is not an exact description of the leaders of the New Deal, the Fair Deal, and the New Frontier, I don't know where you will find one. What Cicero was bemoaning was the same breakdown of the republic, and of its protection against such demagoguery and increasing "democracy" as we have been experiencing. This breakdown was under exactly the same kind of pressures that have been converting the American republic into a democracy, the only difference being that in Rome those pressures were not so conspiratorially well organized as they are in America today. Virgil and many great Romans like him were, as Will Durant says, well aware that "class war, not Caesar, killed the Roman Republic." In about 50 BC, for instance, Sallust had been charging the Roman Senate with placing property rights above human rights. And we are certain that if Franklin D. Roosevelt had ever heard of Sallust or read one of Sallust's speeches, he would have told somebody to go out and hire this man Sallust for one of his ghost writers at once.

About thirty years ago a man named Harry Atwood, who was one of the first to see clearly what was being done by the demagogues to our form of government, and the tragic significance of the change, wrote a book entitled *Back to the Republic*. It was an excellent book except for one shortcoming. Atwood insisted emphatically, over and over, that ours was the first republic in history; that American greatness was due to our Founding Fathers having given us something entirely new in history, the first republic — which Atwood described as the "standard government," or "the golden mean," towards which all other governments to the right or the left should gravitate in the future.

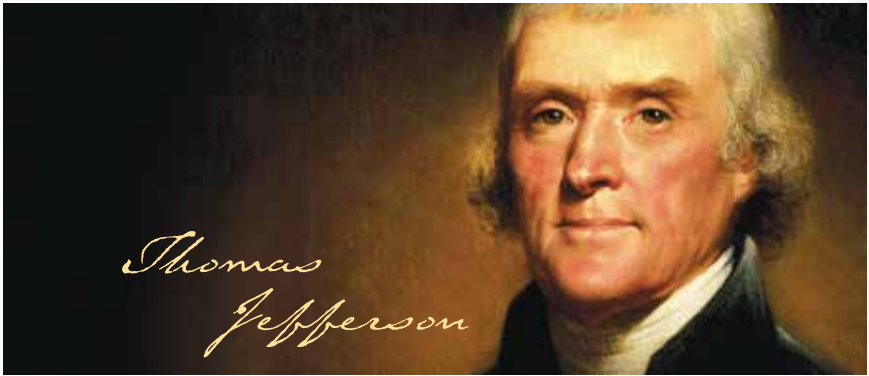
Now the truth is that by merely substituting the name Rome for the

name United States, and making similar changes in nomenclature, Atwood's book could have been written by Virgil or by Seneca, with regard to the conversion of the Roman republic into a democracy. It is only to the extent we are willing to learn from history that we are able to avoid repeating its horrible mistakes. And while Atwood did not sufficiently realize this fact, fortunately our Founding Fathers did. For they were men who knew history well and were determined to profit by that knowledge.

### **Antonyms, Not Synonyms**

Also, by the time of the American Revolution and Constitution, the meanings of the words “republic” and “democracy” had been well established and were readily understood. And most of this accepted meaning derived from the Roman and Greek experiences. The two words are not, as most of today's liberals would have you believe — and as most of them probably believe themselves — parallels in etymology, or history, or meaning. The word “democracy” (in a political rather than a social sense, of course) had always referred to a type of government, as distinguished from monarchy, or autocracy, or oligarchy, or principate. The word “republic,” before 1789, had designated the quality and nature of a government, rather than its structure. When Tacitus complained that “it is easier for a republican form of government to be applauded than realized,” he was living in an empire under the Caesars and knew it. But he was bemoaning the loss of that adherence to the laws and to the protections of the constitution which made the nation no longer a republic; and not to the fact that it was headed by an emperor.

The word “democracy” comes from the Greek and means literally “government by the people.” The word “republic” comes from the



Latin *res publica* and means literally “the public affairs.” The word “commonwealth,” as once widely used, and as still used in the official title of my state, “the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,” is almost an exact translation and continuation of the original meaning of *res publica*. And it was only in this sense that the Greeks, such as Plato, used the term that has been translated as “republic.” Plato was writing about an imaginary “commonwealth,” and while he certainly had strong ideas about the kind of government this Utopia should have, those ideas were not conveyed nor foreshadowed by his title.

The historical development of the meaning of the word republic might be summarized as follows. The Greeks learned that, as Dr. Durant puts it, “man became free when he recognized that he was subject to law.” The Romans applied the formerly general term republic specifically to that system of government in which both the people and their rulers were subject to law. That meaning was recognized throughout all later history, as when the term was applied, however inappropriately in fact and optimistically in self-deception to the “Republic of Venice” or to the “Dutch Republic.”

The meaning was thoroughly understood by our Founding



Fathers. As early as 1775 John Adams had pointed out that Aristotle (representing Greek thought), Livy (whom he chose to represent Roman thought), and Harrington (a British statesman) all “define a republic to be ... a government of laws and not of men.” And it was with this full understanding that our constitution-makers proceeded to establish a government which, by its very structure, would require that both the people and their rulers obey certain basic laws — laws which could not be changed without laborious and deliberate changes in the very structure of that government.

When our Founding Fathers established a republic, in the hope, as Benjamin Franklin said, that we could keep it, and when they guaranteed to every state within that republic a republican form of government, they well knew the significance of the terms they were using. And they were doing all in their power to make the features of government signified by those terms as permanent as possible.

They also knew very well indeed the meaning of the word democracy, and the history of democracies; and they were deliberately doing everything in their power to avoid for their own times, and to prevent for the future, the evils of a democracy.



Let's look at some of the things they said to support and clarify this purpose. On May 31, 1787, Edmund Randolph told his fellow members of the newly assembled Constitutional Convention that the object for which the delegates had met was "to provide a cure for the evils under which the United States labored; that in tracing these evils to their origin every man had found it in the turbulence and trials of democracy."

The delegates to the convention were clearly in accord with this statement. At about the same time another delegate, Elbridge Gerry, said: "The evils we experience flow from the excess of democracy. The people do not want [that is, do not lack] virtue; but are the dupes of pretended patriots." And on June 21, 1788, Alexander Hamilton made a speech in which he stated:

It had been observed that a pure democracy if it were practicable would be the most perfect government. Experience had proved that no position is more false than this. The ancient democracies in which the people themselves deliberated never possessed one good feature of government. Their very character was tyranny; their figure deformity.

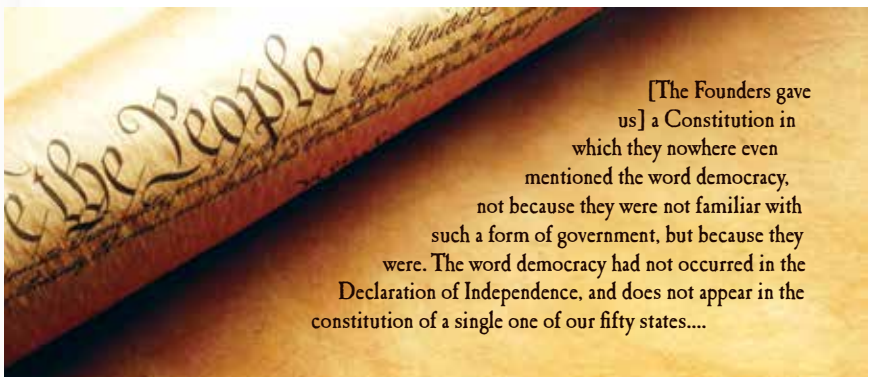
At another time Hamilton said: "We are a Republican Government. Real liberty is never found in despotism or in the extremes of Democracy." And John Adams warned: "Remember, Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself! There never was a democracy that 'did not commit suicide.'"

James Madison, one of the members of the convention who was charged with drawing up our Constitution, wrote as follows:

Democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security, or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths.

## **Establishing a Republic**

Madison and Hamilton and Jay and their compatriots of the convention prepared and adopted a constitution in which they nowhere even mentioned the word democracy, not because they were not familiar with such a form of government, but because they were. The word democracy had not occurred in the Declaration of Independence, and does not appear in the constitution of a single one of our fifty states — which constitutions are derived mainly from the thinking of the Founding Fathers of the Republic — for the same reason. They knew all about democracies, and if they had wanted one for themselves and their posterity, they would have founded one. Look at all the elaborate system of checks and balances which they established; at the carefully worked-out protective clauses of the Constitution itself, and especially of the first ten amendments, known as the Bill of Rights; at the effort, as



Jefferson put it, to “bind men down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution,” and thus to solidify the rule not of men but of laws. All of these steps were taken deliberately to avoid and to prevent a democracy, or any of the worst features of a democracy, in the United States of America.

And so our republic was started on its way. And for well over a hundred years our politicians, statesmen, and people remembered that this was a republic, not a democracy, and knew what they meant when they made that distinction. Again, let’s look briefly at some of the evidence.

Washington, in his first inaugural address, dedicated himself to “the preservation ... of the republican model of government.” Thomas Jefferson, our third president, was the founder of the Democratic Party; but in his first inaugural address, although he referred several times to the Republic or the republican form of government, he did not use the word “democracy” a single time. And John Marshall, who was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court from 1801 to 1835, said: “Between a balanced republic and a democracy, the difference is like that between order and chaos.”

Throughout all of the nineteenth century and the very early part of the twentieth, while America as a republic was growing great and becoming the envy of the whole world, there were plenty of wise men, both in our country and outside of it, who pointed to the advantages of a republic, which we were enjoying, and warned against the horrors of a democracy, into which we might fall. Around the middle of that century, Herbert Spencer, the great English philosopher, wrote, in an article on “The Americans”: “The Republican form of government is the highest form of government;

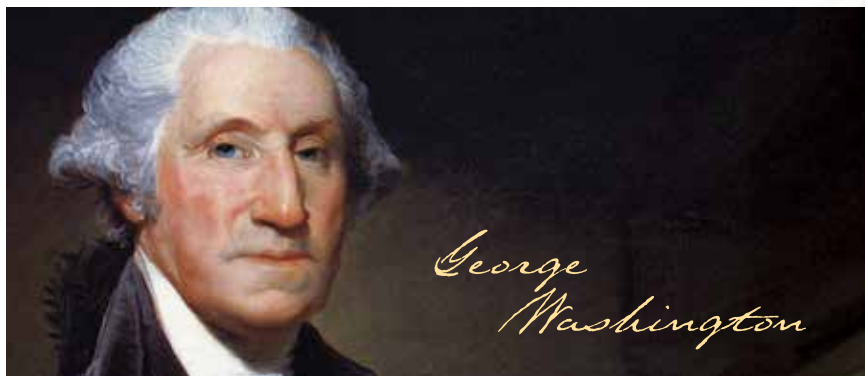
but because of this it requires the highest type of human nature — a type nowhere at present existing.” And in truth we have not been a high enough type to preserve the republic we then had, which is exactly what he was prophesying.

## **Famous Prophecies**

Thomas Babington Macaulay said: “I have long been convinced that institutions purely democratic must, sooner or later, destroy liberty or civilization, or both.” And we certainly seem to be in a fair way today to fulfill his dire prophecy. Nor was Macaulay’s contention a mere personal opinion without intellectual roots and substance in the thought of his times. Nearly two centuries before, Dryden had already lamented that “no government had ever been, or ever can be, wherein time-servers and blockheads will not be uppermost.” And as a result, he had spoken of nations being “drawn to the dregs of a democracy.” While in 1795 Immanuel Kant had written: “Democracy is necessarily despotism.”

In 1850 Benjamin Disraeli, worried as was Herbert Spencer at what was already being foreshadowed in England, made a speech to the British House of Commons in which he said:

If you establish a democracy, you must in due time reap the fruits of a democracy. You will in due season have great impatience of public burdens, combined in due season with great increase of public expenditure. You will in due season have wars entered into from passion and not from reason; and you will in due season submit to peace ignominiously sought and ignominiously obtained, which will diminish your authority and perhaps endanger your independence. You



will in due season find your property is less valuable,  
and your freedom less complete.

Disraeli could have made that speech with even more appropriateness before a joint session of the American Congress in 1935. And in 1870 he had already come up with an epigram which is strikingly true for the United States today. “The world is weary,” he said, “of statesmen whom democracy has degraded into politicians.”

But even in Disraeli’s day there were similarly prophetic voices on this side of the Atlantic. In our own country James Russell Lowell showed that he recognized the danger of unlimited majority rule by writing: “Democracy gives every man the right to be his own oppressor.”

W. H. Seward pointed out that “democracies are prone to war, and war consumes them.” This is an observation certainly borne out during the past fifty years exactly to the extent that we have been becoming a democracy and fighting wars, with each trend as both a cause and an effect of the other one. And Ralph Waldo Emerson issued a most prophetic warning when he said: “Democracy becomes a government of bullies tempered by editors.” If Emerson



could have looked ahead to the time when so many of the editors would themselves be a part of, or sympathetic to, the gang of bullies as they are today, he would have been even more disturbed. And in the 1880s, Governor Seymour of New York said that the merit of our Constitution was not that it promotes democracy, but checks it.

Across the Atlantic again, a little later, Oscar Wilde once contributed this epigram to the discussion: “Democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people, by the people, for the people.” While on this side, and after the First World War had made the degenerative trend in our government so visible to any penetrating observer, H.L. Mencken wrote: “The most popular man under a democracy is not the most democratic man, but the most despotic man. The common folk delight in the exactions of such a man. They like him to boss them. Their natural gait is the goose step.” While Ludwig Lewisohn observed: “Democracy, which began by liberating man politically, has developed a dangerous tendency to enslave him through the tyranny of majorities and the deadly power of their opinion.”



## **Prerequisite for Revolution**

But it was a great Englishman, G.K. Chesterton, who put his finger on the basic reasoning behind all the continued and determined efforts of the Communists to convert our republic into a democracy. “You can never have a revolution,” he said, “in order to establish a democracy. You must have a democracy in order to have a revolution.”

And in 1931 the Duke of Northumberland, in his booklet *The History of World Revolution*, stated: “The adoption of Democracy as a form of Government by all European nations is fatal to good Government, to liberty, to law and order, to respect for authority, and to religion, and must eventually produce a state of chaos from which a new world tyranny will arise.”

While an even more recent analyst, Archibald E. Stevenson, summarized the situation as follows:

De Tocqueville once warned us that: “If ever the free institutions of America are destroyed, that event will arise from the unlimited tyranny of the majority.” But a majority will never be permitted to exercise such “unlimited tyranny” so long as we cling to the American

ideals of republican liberty and turn a deaf ear to the siren voices now calling us to democracy. This is not a question relating to the form of government. That can always be changed by constitutional amendment. It is one affecting the underlying philosophy of our system — a philosophy which brought new dignity to the individual, more safety for minorities and greater justice in the administration of government. We are in grave danger of dissipating this splendid heritage through mistaking it for democracy.

And there have been plenty of other voices to warn us.

So how did it happen that we have been allowing this gradual destruction of our inheritance to take place? And when did it start? The two questions are closely related.

For not only every democracy, but certainly every republic, bears within itself the seeds of its own destruction. The difference is that for a soundly conceived and solidly endowed republic it takes a great deal longer for those seeds to germinate and the plants to grow. The American republic was bound — is still bound — to follow in the centuries to come the same course to destruction as did Rome. But our real ground of complaint is that we have been pushed down the demagogic road to disaster by conspiratorial hands far sooner and far faster than would have been the results of natural political evolution.

## **Fabian Deception**

These conspiratorial hands first got seriously to work in this country in the earliest years of the twentieth century. The Fabian philosophy and strategy was imported to America from England, as it had been



earlier to England from Germany. Some of the members of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, founded in 1905, and some of the members of the League for Industrial Democracy into which it grew, were already a part of, or affiliated with, an international Communist conspiracy planning to make the United States a portion of a one-world communist state. Others saw it as possible and desirable merely to make the United States a separate socialist Utopia. But they all knew and agreed that to do either they would have to destroy both the constitutional safeguards and the underlying philosophy which made it a republic. So from the very beginning the whole drive to convert our republic into a democracy was in two parts. One part was to make our people come to believe that we had, and were supposed to have, a democracy. The second part was actually and insidiously to be changing the republic into a democracy.

The first appreciable and effective progress in both directions began with the election of Woodrow Wilson. Of Wilson it could accurately have been said, as Tacitus had said of some Roman counterpart: “By common consent, he would have been deemed capable of governing had he never governed.” Since he did become the president of the United States for two terms, however, it is hard to tell how much of the tragic disaster of those years was due to the conscious support by



This 1910 stained glass window depicts Fabian founders building “the new world.”

Wilson himself of communist purposes, and how much to his being merely a dupe and a tool of Colonel Edward Mandell House. But at any rate it is under Wilson that, for the first time, we see the power of the American presidency being used to support communist schemers and communist schemes in other countries — as especially, for instance, in Mexico, and throughout Latin America.

It was under Wilson, of course, that the first huge parts of the Marxian program, such as the progressive income tax, were incorporated into the American system. It was under Wilson that the first huge legislative steps to break down what the Romans would have called our “mixed constitution” of a republic, and convert it into the homogenous jelly of a democracy, got under way with such measures as the direct election of senators. And it was under Wilson that the first great propaganda slogan was coined and emblazoned everywhere to make Americans start thinking favorably of democracies and forget that we had a republic. This was, of course, the slogan of the first World War: “To make the world safe for democracy.” If enough Americans had, by those years, remembered enough of their own history, they would have been worrying about how to make the world safe *from* democracy. But the great deception and the great conspiracy were already well under way.

The conspirators had to proceed slowly and patiently, nevertheless, and to have their allies and dupes do the same. For in the first place, the American people could not have been swept too fast and too far in this movement without enough alarms being sounded to be heard and heeded. And in the second place, after the excitement of World War I had sunk into the past, and America was returning to what Harding called “normalcy,” there was a strong revulsion against the



Colonel Edward Mandell House with Woodrow Wilson

whole binge of demagoguery and crackpot idealism which had been created under Woodrow Wilson, and which had been used to give us this initial push on the road towards ultimate disaster.

And during this period from 1920 until the so-called great depression could be deliberately accentuated, extended, and increased to suit the purposes of the Fabian conspirators, there was simply a germination period for the seeds of destruction which the conspirators had planted. Not until Franklin D. Roosevelt came to power in 1933 did the whole Communist-propelled and Communist-managed drive again begin to take visible and tangible and positive steps in their program to make the United States ultimately succumb to a one-world communist tyranny.

Most conservative Americans are today well aware of many of those steps and of their significance. But there are still not enough who realize how important to communist plans was the two-pronged drive to convert the American republic into a democracy and to make the American people accept the change without even knowing there had been one. From 1933 on, however, that drive and that change moved into high gear, and have been kept there ever since.

Let's look briefly at just two important and specific pieces of tangible evidence of this drive, and of its success in even those early years.

## **Changing Definition**

In 1928 the *U.S. Army Training Manual*, used for all of our men in army uniform, gave the following quite accurate definition of a democracy:

A government of the masses. Authority derived through mass meeting or any form of "direct" expression. Results in mobocracy. Attitude toward property is communistic — negating property rights. Attitude toward law is that the will of the majority shall regulate, whether it be based upon deliberation or governed by passion, prejudice, and impulse, without restraint or regard to consequences. Results in demagogism, license, agitation, discontent, anarchy.

That was in 1928. Just when that true explanation was dropped, and through what intermediate changes the definition went, I have not had sufficient time and opportunity to learn. But compare that 1928 statement with what was being said in the same place for the same use by 1952. In *The Soldiers Guide, Department of the Army Field Manual*, issued in June 1952, we find the following:

Meaning of democracy. *Because the United States is a democracy*, the majority of the people decide how our government will be organized and run — and that includes the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The people do this by electing representatives, and these men and

women then carry out the wishes of the people. [Emphasis added.]

Now obviously this change from basic truth to superficial demagoguery, in the one medium for mass indoctrination of our youth which has been available to the federal government until such time as it achieves control over public education, did not just happen by accident. It was part of an overall design, which became both extensive in its reach and rapid in its execution from 1933 on. Let's look at another less important but equally striking illustration.

Former Governor Lehman of New York, in his first inaugural message in 1933, did not once use the word democracy. The poison had not yet reached into the reservoirs from which flowed his political thoughts. In his inaugural message of 1935 he used the word democracy twice. The poison was beginning to work. In his similar message of 1939 he used the word democracy, or a derivative thereof, 25 times. And less than a year later, on January 3, 1940, in his annual message to the New York legislature he used it 33 times. The poison was now permeating every stream of his political philosophy.

By today that same poison has been diffused in an effective dosage through almost the whole body of American thought about government. Newspapers write ringing editorials declaring that this is and always was a democracy. In pamphlets and books and speeches, in classrooms and pulpits and over the air, we are besieged with the shouts of the liberals and their political henchmen, all pointing with pride to our being a democracy. Many of them even believe it. Here we have a clear-cut sample of the Big Lie which has been repeated so often and so long that it is increasingly accepted

as truth. And never was a Big Lie spread more deliberately for more subversive purposes.

What is even worse, because of their unceasing efforts to destroy the safeguards, traditions, and policies which made us a republic, and partly because of this very propaganda of deception, what they have been shouting so long is gradually becoming truth. Despite Warren and his Supreme Court and all of their allies, dupes, and bosses, we are not yet a democracy. But the fingers in the dike are rapidly becoming fewer and less effective. And a great many of the pillars of our republic have already been washed away.

Since 1912 we have seen the imposition of a graduated income tax, as already mentioned. Also, as mentioned, the direct election of senators. We have seen the Federal Reserve System established and then become the means of giving our central government absolute power over credit, interest rates, and the quantity and value of our money; and we have seen the federal government increasingly use this means and this power to take money from the pockets of the thrifty and put it in the hands of the thriftless, to expand bureaucracy, increase its huge debts and deficits, and to promote socialistic purposes of every kind.

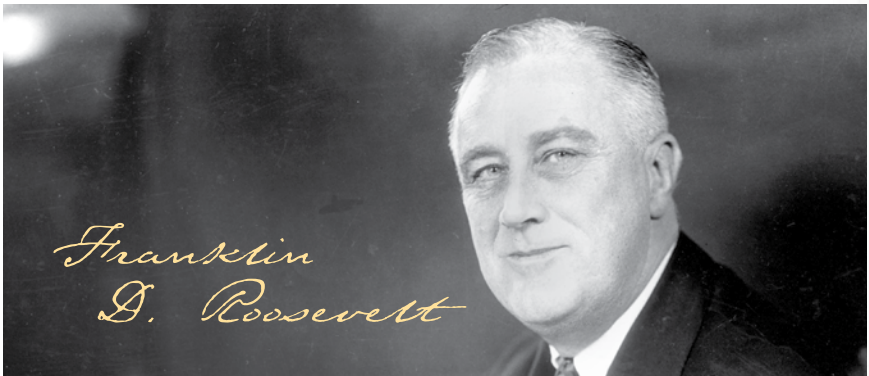
We have seen the federal government increase its holdings of land by tens of millions of acres, and go into business as a substitute for and in competition with private industry to the extent that in many fields it is now the largest — and in every case the most inefficient — producer of goods and services in the nation. And we have seen it carry the socialistic control of agriculture to such extremes that the once vaunted independence of our farmers is now a vanished dream. We have seen a central government taking more and more control

over public education, over communications, over transportation, over every detail of our daily lives.

## **Gradual Destruction**

We have seen a central government promote the power of labor union bosses, and in turn be supported by that power, until it has become entirely too much a government of and for one class, which is exactly what our Founding Fathers wanted most to prevent.

We have seen the firm periodicity of the tenure of public office terrifically weakened by the four terms as president of Franklin D. Roosevelt, something which would justly have horrified and terrified the Founders of our Republic. It was the fact that in Greece the chief executive officer stayed in power for long periods which did much to prevent the Greeks ever achieving a republic. In Rome it was the rise of the same tendency, under Marius and Sulla and Pompey, and as finally carried to its logical state of life rule under Julius Caesar, which at last destroyed the republic even though its forms were left. And that, of course, is precisely one reason why the Communists and so many of their liberal dupes wanted third and fourth terms for FDR. They knew they were thus helping to destroy the American republic.



We have seen both the executive department and the Supreme Court override and break down the clearly established rights of the states and state governments, of municipal governments, and of so many of those diffusers of power so carefully protected by the Constitution. Imagine, for instance, what James Madison would have thought of the federal government telling the city of Newburgh, New York, that it had no control over the abuse by the shiftless of its welfare handouts.

We have seen an utterly unbelievable increase in government by appointive officials and bureaucratic agencies — a development entirely contrary to the very concept of government expounded and materialized by our Constitution. And we have seen the effective checking and balancing of one department of our government by another department almost completely disappear.

James Madison, in trying to give us a republic instead of a democracy, wrote that “the accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judicial, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be denounced as the very definition of tyranny.” The whole problem for the liberal establishment that runs our government today, and has been running it for many years regardless of the labels worn by successive administrations, has not been any divergence of beliefs or of purposes between the controlling elements of our executive, legislative, or judicial branches. For twenty years, despite the heroic efforts of men like [Robert] Taft to stop the trend, these branches have been acting increasingly in complete accord, and obviously according to designs laid down for them by the schemers and plotters behind the scenes. And their only question has been as to how fast



the whole tribe dared to go in advancing the grand design. We do not yet have a democracy simply because it takes a lot of time and infinite pressures to sweep the American people all of the way into so disastrous an abandonment of their governmental heritage.

## **Centralized Power**

In the Constitution of the American republic there was a deliberate and very extensive and emphatic division of governmental power for the very purpose of preventing unbridled majority rule. In our Constitution, governmental power is divided among three separate branches of the national government, three separate branches of state governments, and the peoples of the several states. And the governmental power, which is so divided, is sometimes exclusive, sometimes concurrent, sometimes limited, at all times specific, and sometimes reserved. Ours was truly, and purposely, a “mixed constitution.”

In a democracy there is a centralization of governmental power

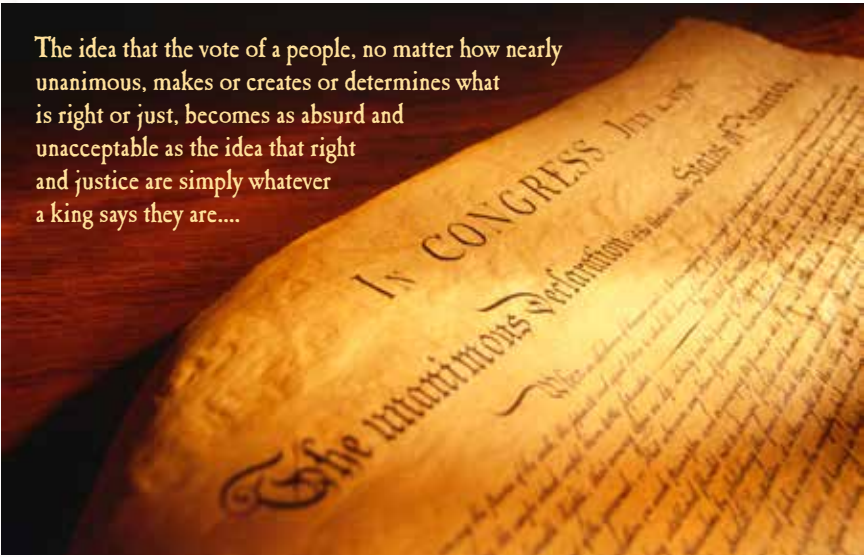


U.S. Capitol

in a simple majority. And that, visibly, is the system of government which the enemies of our republic are seeking to impose on us today. Nor are we “drifting” into that system, as Harry Atwood said in 1933, and as many would still have us believe. We are being insidiously, conspiratorially, and treasonously led by deception, by bribery, by coercion, and by fear to destroy a republic that was the envy and model for all of the civilized world.

Finally, let’s look briefly at two or three important characteristics of our republic, and of our lives under the republic, which were unique in all history up to the present time.

First, our republic has offered the greatest opportunity and encouragement to social democracy the world has ever known. Just as the Greeks found that obedience to law made them free, so Americans found that social democracy flourished best in the absence of political democracy. And for sound reasons. For the



The idea that the vote of a people, no matter how nearly unanimous, makes or creates or determines what is right or just, becomes as absurd and unacceptable as the idea that right and justice are simply whatever a king says they are....

safeguards to person and property afforded by a republic, the stable framework which it supplied for life and labor at all levels, and the resulting constant flux of individuals from one class into another made caste impossible and snobbery a joke.

In the best days of our republic, Americans were fiercely proud of the fact that rich and poor met on such equal terms in so many ways, and without the slightest trace of hostility. The whole thought expressed by Burns in his famous line “a man’s a man for a’ that” has never been accepted more unquestioningly, nor lived up to more truly, than in America in those wonderful decades before the intellectual snobs and power-drunk bureaucrats of our recent years set out to make everybody theoretically equal (except to themselves) by legislation and coercion. And I can tell you this. When you begin to find that Jew and Gentile, white and colored, rich and poor, scholar and laborer, are genuinely and almost universally friendly to one another again — instead of going through all the silly motions of a phony equality forced upon them by increasing political democracy — you can be sure that we have already made great strides in the restoration of our once glorious republic.

And for a very last thought, let me point out what seems to me to be something about the underlying principles of the American Republic which really was new in the whole philosophy of government. In man’s earlier history, and especially in the Asiatic civilizations, all authority rested in the king or the conqueror by virtue of sheer military power. The subjects of the king had absolutely no rights except those given them by the king. And such laws or constitutional provisions as did grow up were concessions wrested from the king or given by him out of his own supposedly ultimate authority. In more

modern European states, where the complete military subjugation of one nation by another was not so normal, that ultimate authority of the ruler came to rest on the theory of the divine right of kings, or in some instances and to some extent on power specifically bestowed on rulers by a pope as the representative of divinity.

In the meantime the truly Western current of thought, which had begun in Greece, was recurrently, intermittently, and haltingly gaining strength. It was that the people of any nation owed their rights to the government which they themselves had established and which owed its power ultimately to their consent. Just what rights any individual citizen had was properly determined by the government which all of the citizens had established, and those rights were subject to a great deal of variations in different times and places under different regimes. In other words, the rights of individuals were still changeable rights, derived from government, even though the power and authority and rights of the government were themselves derived from the total body of the people.

### **God's Ultimate Authority**

Then both of these basic theories of government, the Eastern and the Western, were really amended for all time by certain principles enunciated in the American Declaration of Independence. Those principles became a part of the very foundation of our republic. And they said that man has certain unalienable rights which do not derive from government at all. Under this theory not only the sovereign conqueror, but the sovereign people, are restricted in their power and authority by man's natural rights, or by the divine rights of the individual man. And those certain unalienable and divine rights cannot be abrogated by the vote of a majority any more than they can

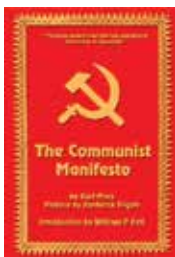
by the decree of a conqueror. The idea that the vote of a people, no matter how nearly unanimous, makes or creates or determines what is right or just becomes as absurd and unacceptable as the idea that right and justice are simply whatever a king says they are. Just as the early Greeks learned to try to have their rulers and themselves abide by the laws they had themselves established, so man has now been painfully learning that there are more permanent and lasting laws which cannot be changed by either sovereign kings or sovereign people, but which must be observed by both. And that government is merely a convenience, superimposed on Divine Commandments and on the natural laws that flow only from the Creator of man and man's universe.

Now that principle seems to me to be the most important addition to the theory of government in all history. And it has, as I said, at least tacitly been recognized as a foundation stone and cardinal tenet of the American Republic. But of course any such idea that there are unchangeable limitations on the power of the people themselves is utterly foreign to the theory of a democracy, and even more impossible in the practices of one. And this principle may ultimately be by far the most significant of all the many differences between a republic and a democracy. For in time, under any government, without that principle slavery is inevitable, while with it slavery is impossible. And the American Republic has been the first great example of that principle at work.

In summary, I personally think that, as I said in *The Blue Book of The John Birch Society*, democracy is a weapon of demagoguery and a perennial fraud. I think that a constitutional republic is the best of all forms of government man has yet devised. Our Founding

Fathers thought so too, and the wisest Romans had already come to that same conclusion. So I am in excellent company. It is company which we hope more and more Americans will join. To that end we are saying everywhere we can, and asking all of you and tens of thousands to say with us: This is a Republic, not a Democracy. Let's keep it that way!

*Robert Welch (1899-1985), founder of The John Birch Society, wrote what is arguably the best description ever of the fundamental differences between a government based upon law and one based upon men. His classic "Republics and Democracies," slightly condensed above, was first delivered as a speech at the Constitution Day luncheon of We, The People, in Chicago, on September 17, 1961.*



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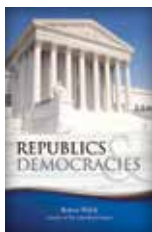
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## Republics & Democracies

This essay was first delivered as a speech at the Constitution Day luncheon of ‘We, The People’ in Chicago on September 17, 1961. The principles he espoused in that speech are timeless. The American Republic will endure only so long as those principles are sufficiently understood by each succeeding generation of Americans. (2021ed, 34pp, 1-9/\$2.95ea; 10-24/\$2.00ea; 25-49/\$1.50ea; 50-99/\$1.00ea; 100+/\$0.75ea) **BKLTRAD**

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