

~ From One Inquiring Mind to Another ~

“Happiness is not the absence of problems but the ability to deal with them.” – [H. Jackson Brown](#) #10 November 2, 2011

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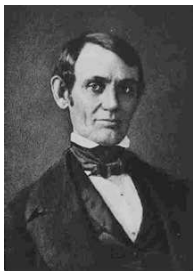
SINK OR SWIM SITUATIONS: BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE?

A friend and one of the most optimistic guys I know, Jim B, responds to his landing in a bunker on the golf course with, “Great, an opportunity to practice my sand shot.”

I have a similar odd upbeat feeling about all the many deep and severe challenges facing our cities, states, nation, and in many cases our global community: “Great, these are opportunities to finally face up to our problems and start solving them.”

The intensity of the struggle has convinced many Americans that painful compromises and sacrifices are necessary for everyone. It not like our recent wars where the burden was disproportionately placed on a few. It’s more like World War II when everyone was called to be part of the solution and sacrifice. Congress is also being called upon to move past their petty squabbling and their loyalties to lobbyists, and to lead the nation.

Two quotes come to mind: Lincoln, borrowing from Matt 3:23, said, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” And “Necessity is the mother of Invention.” May we listen and learn from both, and sow and reap a new future for a brave new world.



A younger, beardless Abe

LISTING OUR OPPORTUNITIES (off the top of my head in random order)

Listing these helped me see the number of the issues at hand.

1. JOBS AND IMPROVED ECONOMY
2. AFFORDABLE HOUSING
3. ENERGY: TRANSPORTATION
4. ENERGY: HEATING/COOLING
5. AFFORDABLE HIGHER EDUCATION
6. IMPROVED K-12 EDUCATION
7. GOOD ECO. ENVIRONMENT
8. IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE
9. FAIR IMMIGRATION POLICY
10. FAIR TAXATION POLICY

11. FAIR PENSION / SOC. SECURITY
12. SAFER SOCIETY
13. AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE
14. BALANCED BUDGETS
15. BANKING REFORM
16. ??

Prioritizing might be the next step, and solving one will oftentimes solve others because they’re so interrelated. Nothing will be solved immediately, but having a good plan is the first step.

CONDITIONS FOR COMPROMISE (brainstorming another random list for a start)

- Agree that there is a problem.
- See and understand its many facets-- these two are half of the solution.
- Be open to the various proposed solutions and the rationale behind those solutions.
- Recognize that in times of crisis the common good may trump individual or small group benefits.
- See the other’s point of view, and respect it as a possible solution.
- Try to build an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.
- Keep informed and open-minded.
- Keep communicating.
- Work toward common goals.
- Be willing to share the sacrifice.
- Know that time will out the truth.
- Admit/Learn from one’s mistakes.

ONGOING FORCES IN U.S. HISTORY WHICH SWAY BACK AND FORTH

The following forces are held in tension with each other and come in and out of dominance in our society.

- Common Good vs. Individual rights, or Federal Gov. vs. State
- Free trade (laissez faire) vs regulated trade (incl. unionism)
- Pure capitalism (financial survival of the fittest) vs. social safety nets
- Laws for personal morality vs. laws only to protect others from individual transgressions et al.

The balance of power sways like a pendulum, gathers momentum until it reaches the height of its power. Then opposing forces work in the opposite direction. So, [unionism](#), for example, came into existence in the mid 1800’s to overcome unbridled capitalism and abuses



in the workplace, waned, and resurged in the late 1920’s. Other countries chose communism or strongly socialistic governments to combat the power and abuses of the Industrial Revolution. Later, when unions became too powerful, President Reagan (for one) cramped their style by firing the striking air port controllers. Unions, some of which had too much power to garnish extravagant pensions, etc., have been in decline ever since. And so it goes, seeking a balance of power.

DOES SOCIETY NEED ITS RADICALS AND REACTIONARIES?

I would imagine so because each has its place in defining the length and breadth of any given problem by its extreme parameters.



A younger Henry Thoreau

Also, those who brave the cold, the crowds, and the police reprisals to exercise their right to public protest serve to get the rest of us thinking about their message. Ever since Henry Thoreau, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King there has been a place for protest and/or civil disobedience--as long as it is done civilly.

Society needs us all, protestors and compromisers alike. As contemplative writer Richard Rohr’s book is entitled, *Everything Belongs*. It really does.

OTHER GREAT DYNAMICS IN THE WORLD AROUND US

- subjective and objective knowledge
- self interest and altruism
- passions and the rational mind
- experience and book knowledge
- work and play
- balancing time: past, present, future
- passionate and compassionate love
- male and female

Heaven and harps bore me! Earth’s fray is better than eternal serenity. Be well. -Joe