

By Gary Porter, National Director, Constitution Leadership Initiative, Inc.

Tyranny: "Arbitrary or despotic exercise of power; the exercise of power over subjects and others with a rigor not authorized by law or justice, or not requisite for the purposes of government." So says Mr. Webster (1828).

Barack Obama recently said: "You've grown up hearing voices that incessantly warn of government as nothing more than some separate, sinister entity that's at the root of all our problems," he said. "They'll warn that tyranny is always lurking just around the corner. You should reject these voices. Because what they suggest is that our brave and creative and unique experiment in self-rule is somehow just a sham with which we can't be trusted."

And then the IRS scandal hit. And then the AP scandal hit. And then it became clear that people in government were lying to us about both of these "little tyrannies." What a shocker.

The Founders were exceedingly fearful of tyranny; having recently separated themselves from one tyrannical government they were not about to set in place a foundation that would facilitate yet another – thus, our system of Constitutional check and balances. But for the check and balances to work properly requires disclosure. Congress cannot check the Executive if they are left in the dark. One wonders how much longer conservative groups and individual would have been singled out for unwarranted scrutiny and patently illegal probing by an IRS that would appear to have been thoroughly, if not completely politicized, if this program had not been "outed." The gall of an IRS agent asking the content of someone's prayers! News about the IRS's illegal activity was clearly withheld until after the election to avoid jeopardizing Mr. Obama's re-election, yet another example of the most politicized government administration in recent history.

So since the IRS's illegal activities would seem to fit Mr. Webster's idea of tyranny, perhaps it is time we took an honest look at whether or not tyranny is "lurking around the corner" or whether, just maybe, it has already arrived.

Some time ago, Joseph Sobran wrote a beautiful essay entitled "How Tyranny Came to America." It's readily available on the internet (start with www.sobran.com) and I recommend everyone read it. I won't even try to summarize the essay in this space. But, notice Sobran's use of the past tense in the title. For Sobran, tyranny has already arrived in America, and long ago (this would, of course, be news to Mr. Obama) yet the American people seem unfazed about the prospect of tyranny here. Why is that?

In their heart-of-hearts, I suspect the average American believes "The Tea Party groups had it coming; I don't blame the IRS for singling them out." While they will profess in public to being mildly annoyed at the IRS's behavior, they are much more concerned with who twisted an ankle on "Dancing with the Stars." Sobran makes clear who he blames for this disconnect.

Americans know so little about their Constitution and government, and are so willfully unengaged with the process of government that one marvels how "the system" is still able to function, seeing as how

“the people” are the source of the government’s power. Yet it does; and day by day, with each new law, with each new regulation, with each new liberal court decision, tyranny grows stronger.

The President went on to say that day: “when we ...abdicate (our) authority (over government), we grant our silent consent to someone who will gladly claim it.” Amen.

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