

The Breakfast Club
Constitutional Minute for 5 October 2021

Choosing Good Candidates For Office

I end my Constitution seminar with a Ten-Step "Action Plan" -- ten steps I think are prudent to help lead us back toward constitutional government in this country. The first step is:

"Build a local group of citizens who understand Constitutional principles of government and who agree to not elect anyone to public office who does not respect those principles."

Breakfast Club is becoming such a group. My Constitutional Minutes are intended to help you understand Constitutional principles of government. But at the rate of 1-2 minutes per week it will take a considerably long time. Getting more of you through my Constitution Seminar will help.

Step 3 in the Action Plan states: *"take positive action to determine who is a 'better representative?' Instead of asking candidates how they will 'fix potholes,' ask these (questions) instead:"* and then there follows a list of ten questions which will help determine whether the candidate has a reliable, conservative view -- a Founder's view of law and government.

A suggestion was made that it would be helpful to explain to the Breakfast Club some of the questions I pose in the Action Plan. Why did I choose this question and what sort of answer by a candidate would be appropriate? So here goes:

We begin with a rather simple, innocuous question, but it lies at the heart of what's wrong with America today: *"Mr. Candidate, what would you say is the purpose of government?"*

Simple, right? Any school child could answer this, if they have been taught the Declaration of Independence, that is. But this is an important question because if the candidate doesn't know this, if he/she can't articulate an acceptable answer (or offers the wrong answer) then we shouldn't send this person to Washington, or Richmond or even to City Council. George Washington warns us: *"Government is not reason, it is not eloquence — it is force. Like fire it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master; never for a moment should it be left to irresponsible action."* If our representatives do not know the true purpose of government, they can, literally, unleash a monster.

The framers of the Constitution knew the right answer; they and other Founders discussed and wrote about this often. Pastors knew the answer, preaching on the topic as they approached every election.

Jefferson provides the most succinct answer: *"To secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."* There are many ways to say this of course. And there is clearly more to the purpose of government than simply securing rights, but government's purpose is certainly not unlimited. The Constitution's preamble provides a more extensive list of purposes of government:

Forming a more perfect union of the states

Establishing justice (wherever it is lacking)
Ensuring our domestic tranquility
Providing for the defense of our country
Promoting the general welfare of *all* Americans (this one requires more explanation)
Securing the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity

Ben Franklin said it this way *"Men and their Properties are protected by joining in Societies and establishing Government."*

James Madison, in a famous 1792 essay said it this way: *"Government is instituted to protect property of every sort; as well that which lies in the various rights of individuals.... This being the end of government, that alone is a just government which impartially secures to every man whatever is his own."*

Madison again, this time on the floor of Congress: *"It is sufficiently obvious, that persons and property are the two great subjects on which Governments are to act; and that the rights of persons, and the rights of property, are the objects, for the protection of which Government was instituted."*

Declaration Signer and Supreme Court Justice James Wilson: *"Government, in my humble opinion, should be formed to secure and to enlarge the exercise of the natural rights of its members; and every government, which has not this in view, as its principal object, is not a government of the legitimate kind."*

Progressives have taken a different view of the purpose of government. President Woodrow Wilson thought government should control all aspects our lives. The process of governing was, to him, a science to be administered by experts. He helped originate the administrative state we "enjoy" today.

FDR sought to get around the limited set of rights government should protect by adding to the list. His ["Second Bill of Rights"](#) included a right to:

- Employment, food, clothing and leisure with enough income to support them.
- Farmers' rights to a fair income.
- Freedom from unfair competition and monopolies.
- Housing.
- Medical care.
- Social security.
- Education.

Of course, if a citizen were unable to provide these comforts for his or herself, government would do so. Today we are close to making education completely free from Kindergarten through an Associates Degree, if not a Bachelors.

So, if a candidate answers that the purpose of government is to take care of us, run, run like the wind from such a candidate.