

IN PURSUIT

OF THE VISION EXPRESSED IN THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

No. 8
July 2012

The Dangerous Delusion of Bipartisanship

By Dr. Edward Gutteling

Once upon a time in a government long long ago and far far away, enlightened politicians held hands across the aisle, making wise bipartisan compromises, and the people rejoiced in the harmony, and they all lived happily ever after.

Unfortunately, good gentle voter, if that is your expectation then you should stop right now and read no further, as our reality is not such a happy ending. In fact there wasn't much happy in the beginning, and truth be told not much happiness in the middle bits either, in our unfortunate, awful, horrid, vile, really bad, no-good, real-life history of governing. This story is true both in Hawaii and nationally as well.

A touch of that unpleasantness of partisan discordance was evident in Hawaiian history, for example. We commemorate Kamehameha Day in honor of the enlightened ruler King Kamehameha (I) "The Great" who "united" the islands into one delightful kingdom of sustainable indigenous bliss.



Former Gov. Linda Lingle (*Hawaii Reporter*)

Once upon a time in a government long "United" by the "partisan" force of fratricide and massed slaughtering armies with modern arms supplied by Europeans, and punctuated by that charming but now lost natural tradition of throwing 400 of your enemies off the Pali cliffs.

Now gentle reader, as I'm sure you are tempted to interject, we in Hawaii are much more enlightened in these modern times, much more refined and evolved from those ancient days. Surely it is long overdue to get past such trivial peccadillos and move along to more significant rainbow-enlightened images of aloha.

The Dangerous Delusion of Partisanship

Recently, we have been disturbed by meaningless calls for "bipartisanship" and "compromise" coming from persons running for public office. Consequently we asked our member and loyal supporter, Dr Ed Gutteling, to address the issue. Included is his wonderful reasoning which essentially says that bipartisanship has to be rooted by both sides in principle. Where might we find such principle? Look no further than the oath of office that each elected official swears to uphold. That oath is designed to stop "tolerance" / "compromise" from eating away the substance of our individual liberty. Thus, it should never be recited as a meaningless step in a process but instead as a deeply meaningful reminder of just where compromise must end if we are to succeed in our continuing pursuit of individual liberty for all.

- Richard Rowland, President

Published by the Grassroot
Institute of Hawaii

In Pursuit is a series of monthly reports hybridizing research and editorial opinion designed to delve deeper into issues where Hawaii and national interest intersect. Nothing in this document should be construed as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any legislation before any legislative body.

If you have any comments or questions about this commentary, please contact us at:

Grassroot Institute of Hawaii
1314 S King Street, Suite 1163
Honolulu, HI 96814
T: 808-591-9193
E: info@grassrootinstitute.org
www.grassrootinstitute.org

Besides, there was indeed peace in the land after those beguiling eccentricities, after all was said and done.

Jolly good then, we'll move on and consider this. America's very birth and existence resulted from events of unavoidable "partisanship", too. Recall that spot of bother we remember as our revolutionary war? That happened because British loyalists felt that their parliamentary monarchy was the pinnacle of enlightened government, that gave everyone all the freedoms they needed, and kept most critical decisions out of the hands of those untrustworthy simpletons prone to emotional mob instincts and the increasingly selfish behavior of those bloody colonialists. That "bipartisan" consensus did not endure, and it took solidly "partisan" actions to reject the concept of state tyranny and cement individual liberty as the enduring core principle of our nation. It took courage, vision, and commitment to principle.

One item that was perhaps just a slight bit of bore, however, was that from out of the process also later came that charming "bipartisan" compromise leaving intact the legality of slavery. It took another 4-score and 7 years before the blatant "partisanship" of radicals in the Republican party achieved the ascendancy of power needed to end that evil and immoral bit of accommodation.

Nearly every major defining trajectory of enduring policy, every milestone in our history, has resulted from "partisan" actions and a rejection of the prior "bipartisan" status-quo.

FDR's entire "New Deal" governmental legacy resulted from Democratic partisan dominance during the tragic government-induced poverty of the depression of the 1930s.

By pure partisan dominance, that enlightened Democratic progressive vision of centralizing government power into every aspect of business, labor, markets, banking, finance, trade, and taxation was the mantra that would lead to the promised land of economic recovery, fairness and prosperity. We'll move quickly past the unpleasant item about how America only recovered 12 years later and after a World War sacrificed globally 25 million working age military men, 50 million civilians and trashed every significant competing economy on the planet except the United States before this miracle of enlightened government philosophy succeeded.

Congress: by necessity divided?



Harper's Magazine, Sept. 23, 2007

Whatever, centralized government power was the established "in" thing, and after it's "partisan" birth it endured.

Since then, both parties have pretty much been on a balanced "bipartisan" glide path for the expansion of federal power. Republicans and Democrats compromised in serial harmonial rapturous actions resulting in the steady inexorable growth in government spending, laws, regulations and control. Individual liberties got nibbled away bit by bit as well.

Since then, both parties have pretty much been on a balanced "bipartisan" glide path for the expansion of federal power. Republicans and Democrats compromised in serial harmonial rapturous actions resulting in the steady inexorable growth in government spending, laws, regulations and control. Individual liberties got nibbled away bit by bit as well.

"There are two parties— the stupid party and the evil party. Every once in awhile the stupid party and the evil party get together and do something that is both stupid and evil. In Washington, that is called bipartisanship." said former Republican Senate Leader Everett Dirksen.

This worked as long as our economy grew enough wealth for the government to increase spending. Until it broke. The trend is your friend until the end, when it bends. Can we now all join hands together and say "unsustainable"? That "bipartisan" stuff don't work anymore, and it never really did.

"If you just set out to be liked, you would be prepared to compromise on anything at any time, and you would achieve nothing." Margaret Thatcher

The June 2012 ABC News/Washington Post poll is quite revealing : only 13% of Americans approve of the job performance of Congress, and 84% disapprove – its worst ever ratings since they first began in 1974. Legislative and policy gridlock prevails. In much of the more traditional and so clearly more thoughtful, erudite and wise media, voices are raised forlornly looking for “moderates” who will “make compromises” and “just get the job done”.

Many nostalgically remind us of President-elect Obama’s election night speech of November 4, 2008

“Let’s resist the temptation to fall back on the same partisanship and pettiness and immaturity that has poisoned our politics for so long.”

But then he said this, too: *“Elections have consequences, and at the end of the day, I won.”* That was three days later.

“I don’t want the folks who created the mess to do a lot of talking. I want them to get out of the way so we can clean up the mess.” That was August 2009. That didn’t take long.

Where’s the love, the aloha, the kumbaya?

As “motorist” Rodney King said in 1992, after his beating sparked the weeks of riots and arson in Los Angeles, *“Can we all get along?”*

We have similar quaint dynamics here in Hawaii, too.

“I don’t understand both political parties - here at home and in Washington – who oppose bipartisanship, compromise and collaboration. I don’t understand them because the problems we face are not Democrat problems, they are not Republican problems, they are American problems and we will have to come together to solve them. This is what the people of Hawaii expect and this is what the people all across America expect,” ...I am running for the U.S. Senate because we need to stop creating Congressional gridlock which then becomes crises,” former Governor Linda Lingle said at the May 12, 2012 Hawaii GOP convention.

Bipartisanship for many, however, reminds us of what Gertrude Stein said about going back to Oakland, her home town: *“there’s no there, there”*. I’m sure this appeal to bipartisanship and compromise is a multi-nodal poll-tested demographically finessed, stochastically significant and media polished approach that Gov. Lingle and many others feel will be a path to electoral victory for a Republican behind the lines in the People’s Democratic Republic of Hawaii. It implies that the key portion of the electorate wants harmony above all else, that “bipartisanship” and “compromise” are the goals that will win their votes, not any boorish déclassé partisan principled policy unpleasantness.

Is that really what we are all about, gentle voters? Is that the heart of the matter?

Lingle emphasizes that when she was a Republican governor with a Democratically controlled legislature, they were “able to work together to get things done”. We’ll just airbrush out memories such as when her Superferry promotion, probably the biggest potential boost to struggling neighbor island economies and agriculture, got squashed by liberal-progressive-eco partisan activists and was abandoned by the Democratic party and their passive-aggressive business and union patrons. And who can forget the heartwarming “bipartisanship” for Republican Senator Fred Hemmings’ proposed Duke Kahanamoku Surfing Reserve? The Senate passed it unanimously, but the House killed it because no Republican could be allowed to take credit for such a beloved and popular act. Governor Lingle was forced to declare it by executive order.

As Sam Slom, the Hawaii State Senate’s sole Republican commented, politics may be the art of compromise but he had never seen “bipartisan” on any election ballot, never heard pleas for “bipartisanship” in any Hawaii Democratic Party convention speech, and he was puzzled to hear such talk at the Hawaii GOP Convention.

“Compromise and collaboration, does not mean turning away from liberty, limited government, individual responsibility, fiscal accountability, and equality of opportunity. In fact, I believe these are same values shared by almost everyone in the state of Hawaii,” Lingle said.

Ed Case, Democrat also running for US Senate said *“...the sooner we get beyond the gladiatorial circus and get down to work together, the sooner we’ll forge sustainable and workable solutions...”*

Good luck with that.

This is the big divide right now: do we as a nation move forward with bigger, costlier, more indebted and more powerful government, or do we go the other direction to smaller and more efficient and less controlling government?



A bipartisan meeting, *opensecrets.com*

Do you want the government to run your life more, and run it into the ground as it has been lately, or do you want to run your own life, and run the government too?

How does one compromise on that?

One cannot, and still be true to core principles.

Leadership is all about describing your vision and goals, and then persuading others to follow your cause and so empower you to achieve them.

“All government, indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue, and every prudent act, is founded on compromise and barter.” Edmund Burke (1790)

“It is only in regard to concretes or particulars, implementing a mutually accepted basic principle, that one may compromise. For instance, one may bargain with a buyer over the price one wants to receive for one’s product, and agree on a sum somewhere between one’s demand and his offer. The mutually accepted basic principle, in such case, is the principle of trade, namely: that the buyer must pay the seller for his product. But if one wanted to be paid and the alleged buyer wanted to obtain one’s product for nothing, no compromise, agreement or discussion would be possible, only the total surrender of one or the other.

There can be no compromise between a property owner and a burglar; offering the burglar a single teaspoon of one’s silverware would not be a compromise, but a total surrender—the recognition of his right to one’s property... There can be no compromise on basic principles. There can be no compromise on moral issues. There can be no compromise on matters of knowledge, of truth, of rational conviction.” Ayn Rand (1966)

“An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile -- hoping it will eat him last.”
Winston Churchill (1938)

If business as usual is the road to destruction, then gridlock is not a bad thing.

The next elections cannot come too soon.
Embrace liberty.

Dr. Gutteling is Vice-President of the Conservative Forum for Hawaii

The Debt Ceiling Committee: a key failing of bipartisanship.



PHOTO: ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

About the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

The Grassroot Institute of Hawaii is an independent, nonprofit research and educational institution devoted to promoting the principles of individual liberty, the free market, and limited and accountable government throughout the state of Hawaii. Through the publication of accurate and timely research and commentaries, as well as by organizing conferences and seminars, the Institute seeks to educate and inform Hawaii's policymakers, news media and the public at large on key statewide public policy issues.

Founded in 2001, the Institute's research and conferences have helped provide the ideological foundations for many public policy debates.



GRASSROOT
I n s t i t u t e o f H a w a i i