



Land of Obama

"A CORRUPT SOCIETY has many laws," observed the Roman historian Tacitus.

The Founding Fathers knew this aphorism, and their work reflects it, from the Articles of Confederation to the *Federalist* to the Tenth Amendment. They designed these documents to save this country from the plague of "many laws." And the inaugural addresses of nearly all the first 15 presidents assured their countrymen that the federal government would usurp no powers not assigned to it in the Constitution.

All this changed with the accession of our 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, now regarded by nearly everyone as the very model of a "great" president—in other words, a chief executive uninhibited by the mere letter of the Constitution.

By now time has wiped away the old scruples, so much so that we tend to forget that Thomas Jefferson seriously doubted that he had the authority to make the Louisiana Purchase (and by now it may be too late to set it right; what's done is done), and even Lincoln himself doubted his power to free any slave. (A plausible wartime pretext—punishing Southern rebels—had to be found; and this, too, may defy correction.)

How many American politicians now bother asking themselves whether the Constitution authorizes a given act? Did Barack Obama give a moment's thought to this when considering his national-health-care scheme? I would rather not ask; it seems almost pedantic now to raise the

first questions that would have occurred to our forebears. But I'm afraid we already know the answers.

We now consider it a duty to legislate, as if passing laws were a productive activity, like raising crops. And Harry Truman spoke bitterly of a "do-nothing Congress," as if declining to legislate were a dereliction of the legislator's obvious duty to meet his regular quota of piping-hot statutes.

I found it amusing, when Teddy Kennedy died, that he should be lauded as a selfless public servant after a lifetime as a notoriously active roué. His eulogists spoke as if his "legislative record" amounted to some sort of service to humanity. Can't we dispense with the fiction that politics, a famously venal calling, which has to be hedged with safeguards against bribery, graft, fraud, conspiracy, treason, and the like, has some natural affinity to altruism? Have we all forgotten that the politician can only give to Peter what the tax collector has extorted from Paul?

ANOTHER APHORISM I am fond of is Richard Whately's: "He who is unaware of his ignorance will be only misled by his knowledge." A world of wisdom in those words!

Men in our age seem to have forgotten that the state can only keep its promises by force. No wonder it promises so generously. Obama, another selfless public servant, excels in this sort of bounty.

A century ago, as someone has quipped, we taught Greek and Latin in high school,

whereas today we teach remedial English in college. So much for progress in education. And the pols promise to give us even more of this.

Our young President, so beloved by our intellectuals, identifies himself as a Christian and names among his favorite Bible stories the one about "Christians in the lion's den." I gather that he was not speaking in jest. Let us henceforth judge George W. Bush with clemency. Lincoln, for all his faults and crimes, could never presume a population so ignorant and gullible. It figures that Obama should be hailed as one of our brainiest leaders. Well. If we had to choose between him and John McCain, maybe his election can claim some slim excuse.

Actually, Obama has all the eloquence of a parrot, and a self-taught parrot at that. Can anyone cite a single fresh thought or phrase we owe to him? I can't think of even one time when he has caused me to say, "Hmm, I never thought of that," or even, "Well said!" Obama has benefited from what Bush would call "the soft bigotry of low expectations." Yet his rooters talk of him as if they were discussing a new Cicero.

In the future, will Illinois boast on its license plates that it is the "land of Obama"? The man partly credits his presidency to Martin Luther King, Jr., but surely King already has enough to answer for.

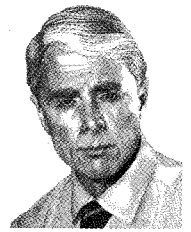
Can any rational man believe we might improve this country by passing even more laws, rather than by repealing thousands of them? That depends on whether you consider Obama rational. To spend more trillions on new entitlements argues a crazed conception of political reality that should give even the most reckless Democrat pause. If termites could talk, no doubt they would call what they are doing to the house Progress. ♦



NEARLY EVERYONE KNOWS that in 1927 Charles Lindbergh made the first nonstop solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean, lifting off from a field on Long Island and touching down in Paris 33 hours and 3,600 miles later. He instantly became an American hero of proportions never before seen. He was termed "Lucky Lindy," but luck had little to do with it. Although only 25 years old, the lanky and handsome Lindbergh was one of America's most skilled and accomplished pilots. His airplane, *Spirit of St. Louis*, built on a shoestring budget by Ryan Aircraft in San Diego, was genius in its simplicity. Working with company president Frank Mahoney, chief engineer Don Hall, and chief mechanic Doug Corrigan, Lindbergh had the plane together in record time.

Most people also know that Lindbergh's first child was kidnapped and murdered. Far fewer know that he became one of the leading spokesmen for the America First Committee, incurring the wrath of FDR. Vindictive as always, Roosevelt conspired to destroy Lindbergh's reputation, having friendly scribes pen poisonous stories about the Lone Eagle, often lifting words from Lindbergh's speeches out of context and distorting his views beyond recognition. In protest against the relentless and venomous attacks inspired by FDR, Lindbergh, a colonel in the Army Air Corps Reserve, resigned his commission in April 1941.

The great majority of the American people agreed with Lindbergh. Every Gallup poll, right up until the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, found 70 percent or more of Americans against our entry into the war. When Americans learned of the dastardly attack, though, "Remember Pearl Harbor" became the rallying cry. Recruitment stations were besieged. I have photocopied pages from a high-school annual that include an entry under the photo of each graduating senior titled "Secret Ambition": "To kill a Jap," "To get a few Japs," "To blast a Jap."



Lucky Lindy

Sharing the sentiment, Lindbergh requested reinstatement in the Air Corps. President Roosevelt, however, let it be known through the chain of command that Lindbergh was prohibited from serving. Lindbergh wrote to everyone he knew in high command. He even met with Secretary of War Henry Stimson. Finally, realizing his rejection was orchestrated by Roosevelt himself, Lindbergh quietly went to work for an aircraft manufacturer, consulting and test-flying bombers and fighters. Thanks to friends at the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics, he was approved as a technical representative of United Aircraft, manufacturer of the F4U Corsair. He worked on the design and development of the fighter and trained pilots. An executive with United said Lindbergh "out-guessed, outflew, and outshot" the crack Marine pilots he was training. But Lindbergh wanted more. He was eventually cleared to fly a Corsair as a "tech rep" civilian observer in the Pacific.

Lindbergh hitched rides on military planes across the Pacific to Guadalcanal. The Marines assigned him a Corsair, and he was soon flying combat missions—strafing and bombing Japanese targets, including Rabaul. All this was strictly against regulations, but Marine aviators considered Lindbergh their hero. Senior officers learned of Lindbergh's combat, but they, too, kept silent.

After 25 missions with the Marines, Lindbergh caught a ride to New Guinea to observe an Army Air Corps unit. A

general gave him a P-38 Lightning to fly, and off he went on more than 30 combat missions. He taught his fellow pilots how to conserve fuel, increasing the range of the P-38 and causing many Japanese to be taken by surprise. He was flying with Col. Charles MacDonald's 475th Fighter Group—"Satan's Angels"—when the Americans intercepted a flight of Japanese fighters. One of them banked sharply and came straight at Lindbergh with guns blazing. Lindbergh fired back as the two fighters closed at a combined speed of 600 mph. He saw his tracers slam into the Japanese fighter before pulling up at the last possible moment to avoid a collision. A split-second later the enemy plane exploded, then winged over and spiraled into the sea. Radios crackled, "Lindbergh got a Jap." The news ran through the ranks, quickly reaching Gen. Douglas MacArthur, commander of the Pacific theater, but went no higher. MacArthur later met with Lindbergh and told him, "I'm glad you got one."

Neither this kill nor any of Lindbergh's other combat became part of the official record. "Lindbergh was indefatigable," remarked MacDonald. "He flew more missions than was normally expected of a regular combat pilot. He dive-bombed enemy positions, sank barges and patrolled our landing forces. . . . He was shot at by almost every antiaircraft gun the Nips had in western New Guinea." Not bad for a civilian. In 1954 President Eisenhower restored Lindbergh's commission and promoted him to brigadier general. ♦