

# CXLVIII – Impeach the American People!

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By Butler Shaffer

Perhaps the sentiments contained in the following pages, are not yet sufficiently fashionable to procure them general favor; a long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives it a superficial appearance of being right, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defence of custom. But the tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason.

~ Tom Paine, Common Sense

Now that George Bush's marbled columns of support have turned to sand, there is talk of impeachment and, perhaps, even his criminal prosecution, along with that of his coterie of unprincipled administration thugs and advisors who helped turn America into the 21st century equivalent of 1939 Germany. If Bill Clinton was to be impeached for lying about his oval office peccadilloes, the bill of particulars against Mr. Bush and his fellow barbarians rises to exponential levels of insistence.

I refuse to take part in this whooping and hollering. It is driven by the same refusal of men and women to examine what they have made of themselves that allowed Mr. Bush to mobilize their u201Cdark sideu201D energies into murderous attacks upon hundreds of thousands of innocent people; to torture and detain — without hopes of trial — anyone the administration saw fit to deprive of their liberties; and to turn America into the kind of dystopian police-state that was beyond the fertile imaginations of Messrs. Orwell and Huxley. It is, in a word, just another collective exercise in scapegoating.

This is not to suggest that Mr. Bush and his fellow butchers and plug-uglies are not deserving of punishment. While u201Cjusticeu201D amounts to little more than the redistribution of violence, those who consider themselves called upon by God to slaughter, torture, and otherwise destroy the lives of their fellow humans, need to be held accountable for their actions. But I resent any notion that they ought to be answerable to the same people who, over the past five years, could not find enough flags to wave, bumper-stickers to attach to their cars, or angry vitriol to direct at what few of their neighbors retained a sufficient sense of maturity and integrity to resist the collective madness that now defines America.

If this gang of criminals is to be held answerable to the rest of humanity, the case against them ought not be advanced by those who, by their lynch-mob enthusiasm, helped facilitate these wrongs. The stench of hypocrisy would be far too suffocating, making a mockery of

the moral principles to which the emerging ersatz outrage appeals for support. It would be like Mafia hit-men wanting to bring the leading figures of organized crime to justice for their violent ways.

No, if anyone is to be impeached for the atrocities of this past semi-decade, it ought to be most members of the American public who should stand in the dock. The politicians and military leaders did no more than what politicians and military leaders always do: use as much violence to accomplish their ends as their victims will allow them to exercise. Like putting a bowlful of candy in front of children, mature adults ought to know what to expect when self-interested pursuits are not checked by an insistence upon the inviolability of the boundaries of others.

I want to make clear that I am not offering any collective indictment of all Americans. From 9/11 onward, there have been numerous voices of opposition to the Bush-leaguers from men and women whose moral principles never lost focus. People like Cindy Sheehan, Lew Rockwell and others at [lewrockwell.com](http://lewrockwell.com), Gore Vidal, Chris Hedges, Justin Raimondo and his associates at [antiwar.com](http://antiwar.com), Lewis Lapham of Harper's, Bob Higgs and his colleagues at the Independent Institute, and Amy Goodman, are just a few of the more prominent voices to just say no to tyranny and butchery. Republican Congressman Ron Paul remains a consistent voice against these practices, while Democratic Senator Russ Feingold stood up early and often to oppose statist measures that his round-heeled fellow legislators were always eager to support.

But most Americans went into a moral slumber, and dreamt the illusions put into their heads by Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, et al., along with members of the mainstream media who, in parroting every word and nuance provided by their establishment masters, confirmed that brothels are not restricted to seamy red-light districts. Founding Fathers such as Thomas Jefferson, Sam Adams, and James Madison, were well aware of the danger of ordinary people coming to trust power. The likes of Alexander Hamilton, however, counted on such weakness, being aware that, in the market for human integrity, it was always wise to sell short. As the Bushites continued to unfold the details of their dictatorship, the words of Ben Franklin echoed. When asked what kind of government the framers had created, Franklin replied: "A republic, if you can keep it."

I have long discounted the myths upon which governments are based. The reality that the state is no more than a product of conquest has long dissipated the fairy-tale of some alleged social contract. Still, if the practitioners of modern government insist upon the fabled version, I shall be pleased to confront them on their own terms. Perhaps it is the lawyer in me that sees the advantage in using the opposition's case to discredit their own arguments.

No more succinct characterization of the social contract theory of the state has been offered than by Edmund Burke, who regarded the state as a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. The U.S. Constitution – in its preamble alleging to be the product of We the People — resorts to this contractual rationalization for state power. The Declaration of Independence, however, is far more explicit about such matters, stating that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it.

If one is to try to justify any relationship on the basis of a contract, it is important to understand what is implicit in a contractual undertaking. Contracts involve what is termed a meeting of the minds of two or more people, each of whom has certain rights and duties as spelled out in the agreement. If the Constitution, for example, is thought of as a bilateral contract between state authorities and the people, the state acquires its legitimacy only by adhering to the terms of the instrument that conferred power upon it. As with any other contract — such as for employment, or the buying and selling of merchandise or real estate — there is a burden upon those who are to be subject to state rule to insist upon adherence to the contractual terms. It is the obligation of members of the public to maintain vigilance over state officials and to make firm and timely objections when they exceed their authority. If I were to purchase a car, I would be obliged to make payment, just as the dealer would have a duty to deliver the car to me. In order to protect my self-interests in the transaction, the onus would be upon me to insist that the dealer deliver to me that which the sales contract prescribed as well as to perform other specified duties.

In recent decades — and particularly during these past five years — most Americans have utterly failed in their contractual undertakings. They have treated this alleged social contract not in bilateral terms — where each have duties to perform — but as a unilateral transaction, in which performance is all one-sided. To most people, government may have been established by contract but, once created, the state became a free agent, able to extend its decision-making authority in any direction it chose, without any check upon its power from those it ruled. The obligation of the people to insist upon its rulers abiding by the terms of the agreement dissolved into the duty to be obedient to whatever state authorities mandated.

I do not discount for a moment the vicious and wicked deeds of the White House sociopaths who have, with only token objection from others, behaved like drunken SS-officers on a holiday for butchers. But it is time not only for Americans, but for the subjects of other nation-states as well, to look themselves in the face and ask why they have been willing not only to sanction such destructiveness, but to insist upon it as the highest expression of the greatness of the society in which they live.

Those who drafted the Declaration of Independence had an inherent distrust of power. Rather than see this as a reason to not create state systems, they believed that members of an enlightened, skeptical, and constantly observant public could and would insist upon state authorities restraining their appetites, lest they be driven from office. If men like Jefferson, Sam Adams, and Franklin were around today, they would understand, perfectly, what those in power were doing and why they were doing it. They would be sadly disappointed, however, in the docility of most of the American sheeple eagerly lining up to be fleeced, proudly sending their children off to be slaughtered on behalf of interests of which they are unaware, and equating obedience to their rulers with social responsibility.

Most Americans have failed to live up to their responsibilities under this alleged social contract. This includes most Democrats who, throughout these past five years, have done little more than opportunistically await the day that they might recover the White House in order to continue the same statist agenda under new management. You will not find the Democrats proposing repeal of the Patriot Act — or any of the other recently enacted additions to police-state powers — or the dismantling of the Homeland Security system. Neither will they do what any morally decent person would do in the conduct of a war against wholly innocent people: stop the killing. As Nancy Pelosi has expressed it, more money will be needed for the military, and the troops will be brought home but only after they have achieved victory, rhetoric that differs not one iota from that of George W. Bush.

It is counterproductive not only to look to the Democrats to bring about any fundamental change in governmental behavior, but to fantasize about bringing George Bush to justice. There is something cowardly about failing to confront a bully when he enjoys strength, but then joining with others to pounce on him when he has fallen into a weakened condition.

Furthermore, to demand retribution from members of this crowd is but to reinforce the process by which political systems energize themselves, namely, to project our self-directed fears and other shortcomings onto others. We shall never end our self-destructive subservience to power by indulging in the pretense that, by punishing such wrongdoers, we can not only absolve ourselves of the painful feelings of our moral cowardice, but sanitize the political system — to which we remain attached — from any future transgressions.

So, forget about impeaching George Bush and his moral reprobates. They — along with his predecessors — have breached whatever social contract Americans like to delude themselves into thinking they have with the state. It is most Americans who ought to be impeached. As the purported real parties in interest in this arrangement, their breach has been the most egregious. They have utterly failed, not only in their obligations to their

children and grandchildren to restrain state power but, what is worse, to give a whit that such a state of affairs has arisen in a country that was once looked upon by the rest of the world as a symbol for peace, liberty, and decency.

The Best of Butler Shaffer

