

The perversion of the U.S. Constitution

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"Stroke of the pen. Law of the land. Kinda cool."
--Clinton presidential aide Paul Begala, July 1998

"All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives."
--Article 1, U.S. Constitution, 1789

The greatest fear of the Founding Fathers was the establishment of a strong central government and an ambitious, power-hungry political leader at the center of that government. They had had their fill of kings and dictators. They believed the best assurance against centralized authority was a loose association of sovereign states, which maintained most governmental power at the local level.

President Clinton's glib announcement that he will issue a barrage of executive orders to further his legislative agenda while bypassing Congress is the ultimate fulfillment of those fears. More chilling yet is the timing of the ominous announcement. It comes less than two months after Clinton issued, while on foreign soil, Executive Order 13083, which annihilates the principles of federalism that have guided the nation for the last 200 years.

The 10th Amendment states: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people." Under EO 13083, Clinton has effectively tacked on to that clear, forthright, inspired, unambiguous statement a list of exceptions. He has done it single-handedly, with the stroke of a pen. And, no Mr. Begala, there is nothing cool about totalitarianism.

Say what you will about him, Bill Clinton is a bright and educated man. His actions and his words are carefully considered. He knows what he is doing. That's what makes this trend so frightening. Where does he want to take the nation? How far from its founding principles are we to stray? Is America about to transform itself from a nation governed by laws to a nation ruled by men?

How far we've come from the days of statesmen like James Madison, who believed "That all power is originally vested in, and consequently derived from, the people. That government is instituted and ought to be exercised for the benefit of the people; which consists in the enjoyment of life and liberty and the right of acquiring property, and generally of pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety. That the people have an indubitable, unalienable, and indefeasible right to reform or change their government whenever it be found adverse or inadequate to the purpose of its institution."

Note that Madison said "the people" -- not the government -- have a right to change their government. Bill Clinton has taken on this mission as his own God-given responsibility. He is acting like a strongman, an ayatollah, a czar, a potentate, a Fuhrer.

Even before Clinton abused his office so egregiously, the United States was in grave danger of concentrating too much power in Washington and too much power in the Oval Office. Clinton, ever the opportunist, has taken full advantage of Americans' ignorance of their constitutional heritage and usurped much of the remaining congressional legislative authority.

Potentially, the worst abuse of all is the executive order. For 30 years, Americans have lived under the shadow of executive orders that could -- as Mr. Begala inelegantly stated it -- with "the stroke of a pen," turn America into just another fascist dictatorship. Fortunately, America has been blessed with leaders -- some good, some bad -- who have restrained themselves from signing away our freedoms.

Without congressional approval, the president has the power to relocate whole populations of Americans, the power to shut down the free press, to force a national registration of all people. There doesn't need to be a war to justify such an action -- just a crisis, be it domestic or foreign, violent or merely economic.

I count at least a dozen executive orders, today standing as the law of the land, which would suspend the Constitution and the Bill of Rights in their entirety with such a stroke of the pen. Such power should not be in the hands of any one man -- particularly one as ambitious, driven and morally contemptible as Bill Clinton.

Oh, what a delicate thread from which our liberty is suspended.