

Sailing Lessons for Landlubbers

Written by Alex Baer

Wednesday, 06 June 2012 19:34 - Last Updated Wednesday, 06 June 2012 19:36

Brace for impact, sound the collision klaxon -- prepare to be rammed by unwieldy metaphors and unpleasant facts. The frothing pundit class will be holding forth and spouting -- *thar they blow!* --

issuing more sailing lessons for landlubbers, providing more tactless tutoring in tacking, more analysis for our continued paralysis.

(As warning labels go, this is the maximum alliteration and safe warning that can be provided at this time, without handing out helmets, and installing handrails, safety straps, and emergency oxygen masks.)

The punditry will be piloting us around and through many oily inlets and mined harbors of thought today, only to emerge with a sparkling-clean and unblasted hull, nearly collapsing on itself in congratulatory or cursing fits of verbal desk-pounding, shoe-chewing, and bent-knee wailing, following the dizzy outcome in Wisconsin yesterday.

There were many winners yesterday in the Land of Prosser, where, you may remember, a passel of votes was suddenly discovered, just enough to help that candidate over the top. *No more vote-counting funny business is possible there, right?*

Yes, of course: The totals in yesterday's recall election make one chew one's tongue and cheek while doing the math, comparing yesterday's vote totals to the numbers of earnest signatures on recall petitions, and to the numbers of dedicated, long-suffering protesters, marchers, and volunteers. *Hmmm.*

Yes, of course: It's another clear victory for the U.S. Supreme Court, and for the Citizens United decision -- for people (the entity formerly known as corporations), and for free speech (the entity formerly known as money).

It's another clear victory for the ability of an insane amount of externally-churned up funds to enter into any political contest of any size anywhere in the country, and suddenly stomp the opposition, bar none, without so much as even one exception.

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And, yes, of course: It's another clear and mammoth victory for all the spin doctors, propagandists, advertising agencies, media owners and dwellers, and assorted message handlers, who benefitted from the avalanche of messaging cash cascading and crashing into all corners and all quarters.

All this is a given, along with expectations that Op-Ed pieces will take wing and be airborne in sky-darkening squadrons before first light, flight plans filed, bombs loaded, hair-triggers tested. *(We'll get right back to the nautical lingo shortly -- perhaps an aircraft carrier -- after a moment suspended in mid-air, mimicking how we all have been hung on tenterhooks and left dangling on and in Wisconsin for so long.)*

Pundits will today provide heated and handy opinions, some fully baked, some only half-way at best; they may even shed some light and wit, based on any facts they might stumble across, updating and regaling us with reports from the front, from that intrepid Wisconsin skirmish.

All of that is important and needs to be said, heard, and digested. All of it also misses the point, and by many aircraft carrier lengths.

The effort expended in noting another symptom of Democracy's utter meltdown, however horrific, is effective only for the sake of detailing history, and in the same way military colleges take apart doomed or victorious plans of attack -- all of it done after the fact, poking about long after the smoke and dust and debris and the dead have been cleared, hoping to learn the dos and don'ts of that kind of skirmish or battle.

In noting the details of one more point of fracture, stress, and collision, a singular, over-arching concept gets lost -- of the war itself already having been lost, no matter the outcome of any one battle.

Here, you are likely ahead of me. The news of the end of democratic, representative government -- the one most of us first learned about in grade school -- long ago came to pass, on December 12, 2000, at the hands of yet another SCOTUS ruling demanding a halt to a counting of votes, instead anointing, appointing, and installing a president of its own choosing.

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You might remember the lack of thunderous protest at that time. The silence was taken as a sign of complete capitulation and Constitutional surrender. Nothing yet contradicts that initial and ominous sign.

We shrugged, they pounced -- story over.

So, yes, of course: Wisconsin marks a new chapter in how money can be spent in any election, and demonstrates clearly how endless tsunamis of cash can crash in from unnamed places, swamping smaller craft, drowning all legitimate hopes.

Let us take these new sailing lessons with a clear mind, and not fool ourselves that these actions represent new or meaningful twists or the turning of any tide in any tactical battle.

That undeclared war was already lost, a dozen years ago.

We are simply left chewing on our hands, absent-mindedly knotting our handkerchiefs, waving farewell to a fading image, to a fleeting persistence of vision, to a ghost ship that long ago sailed and was sunk.