

The Word's Eye View

The Word's Eye View is a newspaper column written by
Dr. James Modlish

Transparency... or Not! (Article 67)

President Obama campaigned vigorously upon the pledge of a transparent administration. He promised that not only would the White House be a dwelling of genuine clarity, but Congress would also represent the American public with a similar translucent attitude. We were told there would be no more deeds of the dark but only labors of light. This was part of the hope and change slogan into which the majority put their faith. It appears that the windows on Pennsylvania Avenue have quickly become opaque. White House chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, has been dispatched to put the hammer on some senators behind closed doors in an effort to produce a health care bill that meets the approval of the president. A Democratic Congress has steadfastly refused to post any eventual bill on the internet for a 72 hour period prior to a vote in direct contradiction to what Mr. Obama pledged. The work of the administration accompanied with a good number of Congressional accomplices continue to recede into the dark recesses of Chicago alleys while at the same time demanding that the work of the CIA (a spy agency) be put under the microscope of daylight. Is it just me or does this all seem a little upside down? What is good for the goose should be good for the gander. Perhaps that old saying has no relevant application in this day of chickens. Sorry, KFC...no insult intended.

The first king of Israel, a man named Saul, was embraced by the populous with great enthusiasm. He demonstrated a tremendous amount of potential, enjoying some early victories which temporarily increased his popularity. He was probably awarded the Heisman trophy for watching a football game. Unfortunately, Saul's ego grew in direct proportion to his idolization which led him to believe his previous commitments to God and the citizenry were of no consequence. All of this resulted in the king making a variety of executive orders in the dim light of his own counsel. He refused to listen to anyone except those who shared his Machiavellian thoughts. An evolution of darkness was set into motion that ultimately found Saul receiving his guidance from a witch of the underworld. The prophet Samuel, commissioned by God, had a profound message for the king---"When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?" (I Samuel 15:17) Saul had made an effort to disallow wizards, witches and those who had familiar spirits in the beginning of his administration (I Samuel 28:3), but in the end he violated every guideline that he had put into place. His vows were of no value!

Every dictatorial regime in history has operated under the cover of night either assuming that the residents are too ignorant to comprehend regulation or desiring to keep people in naivete'. A popular sticker seen on the back of many vehicles says "No Fear." If the government is about to produce legislation that will genuinely benefit all Americans, why should it be kept in the shadows--what is there to fear? Shouldn't the public have time to evaluate the bill and then respond to their representatives? To deny this opportunity is to suggest that there are venomous snakes in the wood pile of 1100 pages.

The twin brother of transparency is accountability, another word the president used incessantly while on the campaign trail. The tone of that rhetoric rang well with the American people since most have long ago come to the conclusion that the greater part of Congress feel far more accountable to special

interest groups than they do to the average taxpayer. The bulk of voters believe that the present health care system needs some overhaul, but every poll taken reveals that the majority are earnestly opposed to the present direction Washington is dictating. By all appearances our leadership has turned a deaf ear to the voice of the nation. The system was established in order for the government to be “of the people, by the people, for the people.” In the framework of that concept, Congressional representatives are the employees of the people whose very voices are being ignored. If they are not accountable to the voters, then pray tell, who are they responsible to? Perhaps the appointment of 40 czars, who have no real oversight from anyone, has emboldened our elected officials to simulate an attitude of arrogance which suggests that we peasants couldn’t possibly know what it best for us. “We the people” would simply appreciate an answer from our delegates. To respond is to answer. Correspondingly, to be responsible is to be answerable, to be accountable. Irresponsible behavior is immature behavior.

James Madison delimited the parameters of responsibility with characteristic clarity in Federalist No. 63. “Responsibility, in order to be reasonable, must be limited to objects within the power of the responsible party, and in order to be effectual, must relate to operations of that power. Persons who have not reached maturity have not yet come into full ownership of their powers.” Madison was beyond most of us in intellectual prowess, but if the reader reviews his statement long enough, it may sink in.

At the very least, the words ‘responsibility’ or ‘accountability’ would imply that everyone who votes for a final health bill at least has the moral fiber and maturity to read it—all of it. Failure to do this should result in a Scripture verse being posted on their doors---oh yes, here is an appropriate one: “For now we see through a glass darkly.”