

Every now and then, you read something that grabs your attention and will not let it go. Something that continues to provoke thought long after the words have been removed from your sight. This happened to me recently, when I read this quote from Alexander Tyler:

"A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves money from the public treasure. From that moment on the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most money from the public treasury, with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy followed by a dictatorship. The average age of the world's great civilizations has been two hundred years. These nations have progressed through the following sequence: from bondage to spiritual faith, from spiritual faith to great courage, from courage to liberty, from liberty to abundance, from abundance to selfishness, from selfishness to complacency from complacency to apathy, from apathy to dependency, from dependency back to bondage."

While the quote is well over one hundred years old and is referring to the fall of the Athenian Republic, one could easily assume that Mr. Tyler was speaking about the United States. Ask yourself, "What stage of the sequence are we in?" Obviously, our country is just over two hundred years old, so you'd believe we are in one of the later stages based strictly on time. But when you look at our current political and economic environment, it becomes clear that our society is indeed in the later stages. As we rely on government bailout money to help private industry and may soon see the government providing our healthcare, I think it's safe to say we are heading for a date with dependency. Scary.

I've been wondering if my generation, Generation X, the 13th generation of the United States, is to blame. How could the grandchildren of the Greatest Generation allow this to happen? Did our parents, the Baby Boomers, make things too easy for us? Did we revel too much in the abundance and selfishness of the 80s and 90s? The truth is, it doesn't matter who the blame falls on. We've all become a little too complacent and apathetic; otherwise we wouldn't find ourselves in this situation.

As not to come off as the doom and gloom type in my first editorial for Michael, you should know that I don't think the sequence Tyler describes is inevitable. I believe we'll overcome apathy and complacency to take hold of our country before we become completely dependent on our government, or anyone else, to provide for us. Some times, we just need a wake up call and it seems we're finally getting one.

So the pressing question is not who is to blame. The pressing question, to quote Sean Connery in the *The Untouchables* (one of my favorite movies, by the way) is, "...what are you prepared to do?"