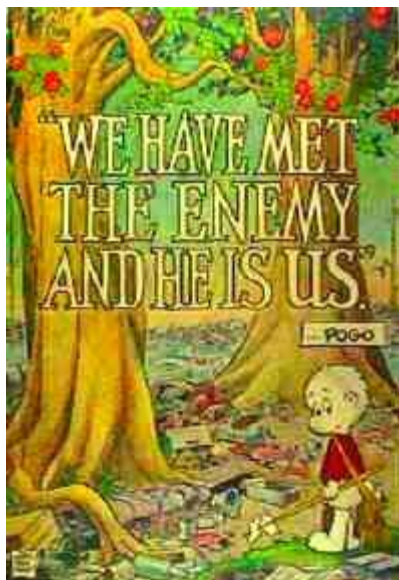


## Offshore Asset Protection BLOG - Bob Bauman

That's The Way It Looks From Here

June 03, 2009

### The Enemy Is Us



The late cartoonist Walt Kelley created Pogo, a sensible, sensitive possum who was the leading character of his long running (1948-75) daily comic strip bearing the same name. Syndicated in hundreds of U.S. newspapers, the strip was set in the Georgia part of the Okefenokee Swamp, and it often engaged in social and political satire through the adventures of its animal characters.

Indeed, Pogo gained such a cult following that in 1956, a boomlet developed when the possum mused about whether to run for president. (I still have my "I Go Pogo" button that bears his furry likeness).

Perhaps the most quoted line ever to originate in a comic strip came from Pogo when the disgusted possum surveyed an environmental mess made in his absence by his fellow swamp denizens. He intoned: "We have met the enemy and he is us."

Blame Yourselves

That pithy saying gained such currency in so many situations that Kelley was asked to explain what he meant in greater detail. He said he had tried "to explain each individual is wholly involved in the democratic process, work at it or no. The results of the process fall on the head of the public and he who is recalcitrant or procrastinates in raising his voice can blame no one but himself."



Kelley was correct. Even if we don't participate in voting, we get the government the majority of those who care enough to register and vote impose on all of us. Will Rogers put it another way: "We're lucky we don't get all the government we do pay for".

In 2004, 60.6% of those eligible voted in the presidential election, casting 122.3 million votes. Despite widespread predictions of a record turnout in the 2008 presidential election, about the same portion of eligible voters cast ballots as in 2004.

### 80 Million Drop Outs

But how many American even care enough to register and vote?

In 2008 the eligible voting age population was 212,720,027. But there were 131,256,905 valid ballots counted, so only 61.7% of eligible voters did vote. That means that 81.4 million Americans who could have voted, either didn't register or if they did, didn't cast their ballot.



The popular vote was split 69,498,215 for Obama (52.9%) to 59,948,240 for McCain (45.7%). Those statistics tell us that Obama was put into office by a minority of eligible voters -- but we all suffer the consequences.

It brings to mind a line from a song entitled "The Bum Won" from the Broadway musical "Fiorello" -- "People can do what they wanna, but I got a feeling it ain't democratic."

## Figures Don't Lie

"Why all these numbers?" you ask.



Because, as often happens, I was inspired by the Cato Institute, after reading an [article](#) by Gene Healy, a Cato vice president. The intriguing title: "Voters Are the Cause of America's Fiscal Mess".

Healy writes: "There's plenty of blame to go around for the fiscal mess we're in. By ramming through a prescription drug benefit to Medicare, President George W. Bush launched the biggest expansion of entitlements in four decades. President Obama has added insult to injury by pushing through a \$789 billion 'stimulus' package...with a budget that envisions a public sector more like France's or Sweden's. The result is that...we're facing a 2009 deficit of nearly \$1.8 trillion -- larger than the entire federal budget in 2000."

## We Get What We Deserve

If you can believe polls, based on data showing positions embraced by American voters, Healy says "...we're getting the government we deserve."



Sixty percent of Americans say the federal government has too much power and takes too much money, according to a May 2009 Rasmussen poll. OK, but what are Americans willing to do about it?

In 2007, the Harris Poll found the answer to that question was "not much." Very few are willing to support the spending cuts necessary to get our fiscal house in order. Harris reported that "hardly anyone would cut Medicaid (4%)... Social Security (2%) or Medicare (1%)" -- among the biggest chunks of the federal budget.

## Cut His, Not Mine

As did California voters recently, the overwhelming majority of respondents to the Harris poll rejected higher taxes to handle the deficit; the only increases they'd support are in "sin" taxes on alcohol and tobacco.

Add up defense, health care, and Social Security, and the public has declared more than two-thirds of the federal budget off limits. Non-defense discretionary spending -- the portion on which most budget fights take place -- now is only a measly 17%. Economist Bruce Bartlett reports that "federal taxes would have to rise by roughly 81% to pay all the benefits promised by these programs under current law."

## Look in the Mirror



But there is one flicker of what may be seen as rudimentary mass logic. The Pew survey reports that "the public is increasingly suspicious of itself," with fewer Americans than ever expressing confidence in "the wisdom of the American people when it comes to making political decisions."

My fellow Marylander, H.L. Mencken, (above) once described democracy as "the theory that the common people know what they want and deserve to get it good and hard." As Healy says, we're going to get it "good and hard" and it won't be pleasant.

Look in the mirror. Pogo was right. We have met the enemy -- and he is us.

**\*\*** The Sovereign Society is a recognized voice in the complex offshore world. [Join the Sovereign Society](#) and keep informed.

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