

Not Yours To Give

Author unknown

In the early 1800's Congress was considering a bill to appropriate tax dollars for the widow of a distinguished naval officer. Several beautiful speeches had been made in support of this bill. It seemed that everyone in the House favored it. The Speaker of the House was just about to put the question to a vote, when Davy Crockett, famous frontiersman and then Congressman from Tennessee, rose to his feet.

“Mr. Speaker, I have as much respect for the memory of the deceased and as much sympathy for the suffering of the living as any man in this House, but we must not permit our respect for the dead or our sympathy for a part of the living to lead us into an act of injustice to the balance of the living. I will not go into an argument to prove that Congress has no power to appropriate this money as an act of charity. Every member upon this floor knows it. We have the right, as individuals to give away as much of our own money as we please in charity, but as members of Congress we have no right to so appropriate a dollar of the public money. Some eloquent appeals have been made to us upon the ground that it is a debt due the deceased. Sir, this is no debt. We cannot without the grossest corruption, appropriate this money as the payment of a debt. We have not the semblance of the authority to appropriate it as charity. I cannot vote for this bill, but I will give one week's pay, and if every member of Congress will do the same, it will amount to more than the bill asks.”

There was silence on the floor of the House as Crockett took his seat. When the bill was put to a vote, instead of passing unanimously as had been expected, it received only a few votes.

The next day a friend approached Crockett and asked why he spoke against a bill for such a worthy cause. In reply, Crockett related the following story:

Just a few years before, he had voted to spend \$20,000.00 of public money to help the victims of a terrible fire in Georgetown. When the legislative session was over, Crockett made a trip back home to do some campaigning for re-election. In his travels he encountered one of his constituents, a man by the name of Horatio Bruce. Mr. Bruce bluntly informed Crockett, “I voted for you the last time. I shall not vote for you again.”

Crockett, feeling he had served his constituents well, was stunned. He inquired as to what he had done to so offend Mr. Bruce.

Bruce replied, “You gave a vote last winter which shows that either you have not the capacity to understand the Constitution, or that you are wanting in the honesty and firmness to be guided by it. The Constitution, to be worth anything, must be held sacred, and rigidly observed in all its provisions.”

“I take the papers from Washington and read very carefully all the proceedings of Congress. My papers say that last winter you voted for a bill to appropriate \$20,000.00 to some sufferers by a fire. Well, Colonel, where do you find in the Constitution any authority to give away public money in charity? No Colonel, Congress has no right to give charity. Individual members may give as much of their own money as they please, but they have no right to touch a dollar of the public money for that purpose.”

“The people have delegated to Congress, by the Constitution, the power to do certain things. To do these, it is authorized to collect and pay money, and for nothing else. Everything beyond this is usurpation, and a violation of the Constitution. You have violated the Constitution in what I consider to be a vital point. It is a precedent fraught with danger to the country, for when Congress once begins to stretch its power beyond the limits of the Constitution, there is no limit to it, and no security for the People.”

“I could not answer him,” said Crockett. “I was so fully convinced that he was right.” I said to him, “Well, my friend, you hit the nail upon the head when you said I had not sense enough to understand the Constitution. If you will forgive me and vote for me again, if I ever vote for another unconstitutional law, I wish I may be shot.”

After finishing the story, Crockett said, “Now sir, you know why I made that speech yesterday. There is one thing now to which I will call your attention. You remember that I proposed to give a week’s pay? There are in that House many very wealthy men, men who think nothing of spending a week’s pay, or a dozen of them, for a dinner or a wine party when they have something to accomplish by it. Some of these same men made beautiful speeches upon the debt of gratitude, which the country owed the deceased, yet not one of them responded to my proposition. Money with them is nothing but trash when it is to come out of the people. But it is the one great thing for which most of them are striving, and many of them sacrifice honor, integrity, and justice to obtain it.”

“Democracy is a form of government that cannot long survive, for as soon as the people learn that they have a voice in the fiscal policies of the government, they will move to vote for themselves all the money in the treasury, and bankrupt the nation.”

-- Karl Marx, Father of Communism, Author of the 'Communist Manifesto'

“Observance of the Constitution is essential to the survival of the Republic and the well being of Americans, their lives, liberties and property. Those in power must fear the consequences of ignoring, evading or violating it.”

Clarence Carson

“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support, obey and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of this Commonwealth and that I will discharge the duties of my office with fidelity.”

- Article VI, Section 3 – Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

We sincerely instruct those in government, at all levels, to read, study, and understand the original meaning and intent of the Constitution of Pennsylvania, the Constitution for the United States of America and many other founding documents. You are constitutionally required, by “oath of office”, to always strictly “support, obey and defend” these documents.

Public funds may only be lawfully used for constitutionally authorized purposes.