

Answering Question #8

8. What form of government did the founders say was unstable and incompatible with personal security or the rights of property?
- a. Democracy
 - b. Monarchy
 - c. Republic
 - d. Communism

People commonly refer to America as a democracy, and often act like it. Yet, virtually all the founders believed pure democracy to be a very bad form of government. They saw it as “*the tyranny of the mob.*” James Madison said:

“Democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have, in general, been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths.”¹⁴

Madison was certainly not alone in his distaste for democracy as seen in the following quotes:

“A simple democracy... is one of the greatest of evils.”¹⁵

— Dr. Benjamin Rush, Signer of the Declaration

“Pure democracy cannot subsist long nor be carried far into the departments of state, it is very subject to caprice and the madness of popular rage.”¹⁶

— John Witherspoon, Pastor and signer of the Declaration

“The experience of all former ages had shown that of all human governments, democracy was the most unstable, fluctuating and short-lived.”¹⁷

— John Quincy Adams, 6th President of the United States

This view of democracy was not based on theory but upon a careful study of governments through history. Scottish historian Alexander Tytler, Professor of Universal History, and Greek and Roman Antiquities in the University of Edinburgh, was a contemporary of the founders and shared a similar view of democracies. Below is a quote that is often attributed to him, though there is no clear source to connect it to him. However, reading Tytler’s views reveal that he said things similar and leaves little doubt that he would agree with it.

“A democracy is always temporary in nature; it simply cannot exist as a permanent form of government. A democracy will continue to exist up until the time that voters discover that they can vote themselves generous gifts from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates who promise the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result

that every democracy will finally collapse due to loose fiscal policy, which is always followed by a dictatorship.”¹⁸

It is unnerving how much the description above resembles the condition of the United States today. In 2011, the Census Bureau reported that 49.2% of Americans received benefits from one or more government programs. Once becoming accustomed to receiving free goods, it is unlikely people will vote for it to cease, unless of course, they realize the destructive long term results.

Once again, we should remember that knowledge is the power to make intelligent choices – the choices that can get our nation off the road of socialism which leads to tyranny, and on the road to prosperity and freedom.