

*astrological-cultural-spiritual-political  
views & commentary...*

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# THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



Thoughts, dates, & reminders about our lives as members of the craziest species on this lovely planet. Like a message in a bottle washing up on the sandy shores of consciousness...

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Dear friends,

This month's commentary is a follow-up to the July essay, because politics is still on the front burner and very much on my mind. (If you haven't seen that issue, #43, it's available to be read online at my website.)

Next month's newsletter will concern astrological information with specific dates that I think you'll find relevant and immediately useful.

--Bill

## Parents and Children

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Limitations are an essential part of growing up. Parents know this; children do not.

We are coming to the end of another recurring period in American history where, collectively, we've acted like children. As a society, we pretended that we could have it all, indeed, that we *should* have it all—whatever we want, whenever we want it, with none of those silly rules that parents impose—no cleaning up our rooms, no consideration for others, no washing behind the ears, etc. Nothing to detract from the headlong pursuit of our own very self-centered desires. And we told ourselves collectively that there would be no consequences. After all, we were privileged. Who would stop us?

America typically leans in this direction. From our founding principles of freedom from constraint, through the immigrant's vision of "streets paved with gold," to modern corporate slogans of "unlimited possibilities," our mythology tends to embrace the infinite over the finite and personal self-interest over the common welfare. We are a culture that prefers adolescent dreams to adult realities. From time to time, however, the balance tilts so far that we lose our heads, and with them our common sense. Not content to merely reject limits as if they didn't exist, we scorn them as well.

The free-market ideology that came into favor with Reagan has enshrined in our government the dogma of infinite economic growth and endless wealth creation in what is in truth a very

finite world of extremely limited and fragile resources. This is a bad idea, friends, for it means blindly maintaining our ultimately tragic self-denial about the fact that America is wreaking havoc at home and around the globe simply to feather our own nest.

As only one example among many, we—and by *we*, I mean *those in power*—actually seem to believe that every natural habitat is fair game to be ravaged by toxic pollution and the increasingly destructive search for fossil fuels, as if the ecological balance were of no concern and pristine environments magically went on forever. Well, they don't. In the past century, the industrial juggernaut of human society and population growth has caused the mass extinctions of one-third of the flora and fauna on this planet. Those plant and animal species are gone forever, and another third will soon follow.

The case can be made that our leaders are not solely to blame, that the common people bear much responsibility for our tragic childishness. After all, we put those leaders in power, or, at least, allowed them to take control. This argument suggests that, while politicians and corporate executives are certainly culpable—their actions have not been those of responsible, wise parents—they are no less fallible than the rest of us who went along for the ride, hoping that the trickle-down would make us wealthy too. Judging solely from the proliferation of upscale suburbs that have sprung up like poisonous mushrooms, one could easily get the impression that everyone in America owns a MacMansion and drives an SUV.

That argument has critical flaws, however. 40 million Americans have no health care insurance. The middle class has shrunk, and the ranks of the impoverished underclass have swollen as our national wealth was increasingly concentrated into fewer and fewer hands. The top 1% of the American population is now obscenely wealthy, while the minimum wage is a cruel joke at the expense of the bottom 20%, who barely scrape by.

Despite the lies and deceptions revealed in recent corporate scandals, most of the migration of wealth and power over the past 30 years—what amounts to the kidnapping of our country—occurred legally. Yes, many of the deals took place behind closed doors or in the shadows, but they were shepherded by lawyers, enacted by legislators, and approved by judges. The courts have failed us, and the voice of the people has been effectively stilled.

The overwhelming majority of Americans favor increased efforts toward environmental conservation, yet the EPA has been gutted, government lands are routinely opened to corporate scavenging, and alternative energy development continues to languish.

The overwhelming majority of Americans do not want war, but the American military continues to bomb Afghanistan, the drums of war beat incessantly in the corporate-controlled media, and Congress rubber-stamps Bush's plan to invade Iraq.

Our days as children are numbered. I fervently hope we choose to become mature, responsible parents—for ourselves, our nation, our earthly home, and all of humanity—but time is running out.

One way or another, we have to grow up.



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