

## Et Tu, Barack?

by *Oliver\_North*

Julius Caesar was murdered by Brutus and his friends in the Roman legislature on the ides of March 44 B.C. Free enterprise died at the hands of Barack and his friends in the American legislature on the 30th of March 2009. The following day, those same ministers of American government completed the death warrant for civic duty in our republic. They called it the "Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act." The bill passed as did the killing of Caesar with overwhelming support from the legislature.

It was a remarkable performance, worthy of a Shakespearean tragedy. In the space of 48 hours, the president of the United States seized control of one of the world's largest manufacturing companies and fired its CEO. He followed up by congratulating our representatives for creating the 14th-largest paid entity on the planet a quarter-million government-paid "volunteers." And then he departed the capital to receive the cheers of adoring crowds in Europe. If Adolf Hitler or Josef Stalin had done any of this, Americans would have gone crazy. As it was, most of our countrymen apparently enjoyed the show.

Mr. Obama not only fired Rick Wagoner, the CEO of General Motors, but also vowed to remake the company's board of directors in his own image. He also forced Chrysler to merge its operations with Fiat a foreign auto manufacturer and dictated to the two firms what kinds of products they may and may not manufacture. Finally, he assured the American people and presumably those in other nations, as well that "O-Team Auto Repairs" will stand behind these companies' warranties. How this can be perceived to be fair to Ford Motor Co. the only American auto brand that has not taken a government "bailout" wasn't even mentioned.

While Mr. Obama was firing GM's CEO and dictating terms to Chrysler, Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner was threatening the same treatment to bank executives, and Rep. Barney Frank's Financial Services Committee was preparing to regulate the pay of ordinary Americans. On March 23, the committee adopted HR 1664, a bill that retroactively would impose government controls on the pay of all employees of any company that takes bailout funds and would prevent compensation for any employee that is "unreasonable or excessive." Those standards will be defined by the secretary of treasury and the chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, who will judge "the performance of the individual executive or employee to whom the payment relates."

These decisions that government, not the free market, shall dictate who runs a private corporation, what that corporation shall make or sell, and what it shall pay its employees are unprecedented in an America not fully mobilized for war. Apologists for the Obama administration and there are many note that previous administrations have done similar things in "difficult economic times." As examples, they cite Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Depression-era agricultural production limits to boost farm prices and Richard Nixon's "temporary" wage and price freeze to cut inflation.

What today's cheerleaders for Draconian interference in capitalism and our private lives fail to mention is that these measures were abandoned because they did not work. FDR's farm production limits produced a

thriving black market and eventually succumbed to the need to feed millions of our countrymen suddenly drafted to fight World War II. President Nixon's attempt to dampen inflation with wage and price controls was a monumental failure. When he started the program, the inflation rate was nearly 4 percent. By the time he left office, it was more than 13 percent and climbing. But those ugly precedents aren't going to stop the O-Team from trying again.

Short of war, the unintended consequences of government intervention are often far worse than the problem it was supposed to solve. As the U.S. Senate was voting to spend a billion dollars a year to put a quarter-million civilian "volunteers" on the government payroll, Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., rose to ask his colleagues a salient question that applies as much to the takeover of the auto industry as it does to destroying community volunteerism: "Do you see anything in our history as a federal government that shows that we have the ability to effectively manage something like that?"

He then observed: "Despite the good intentions of this bill, we are creating a huge new government entity that will be unmanageable and violates some of the core principles of our civil society. Every time the government steps in to solve a problem, it creates three new problems in its place."

Let's hope that last sentence will not become the epitaph for the United States of America we knew before Barack.

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