

THE REAL STORY OF THANKSGIVING

Excerpt from Chapter 6, "Dead White Guys Or What Your History Books Never Told You," *See, I Told You So*, by Rush H. Limbaugh, III

Today, public schools are simply not teaching how important the religious dimension was in shaping our history and our nation's character. Whether teachers are just uncomfortable with this material, or whether there has been a concerted effort to cover up the truth, the result is the same. Kids are no longer learning enough to understand and appreciate how and why America was created.

The story of the Pilgrims begins in the early part of the seventeenth century (that's the 1600s for those of you in Rio Linda, California). The Church of England under King James I was persecuting anyone and everyone who did not recognize its absolute civil and spiritual authority. Those who challenged ecclesiastical authority and those who believed strongly in freedom of worship were hunted down, imprisoned, and sometimes executed for their beliefs.

A group of separatists first fled to Holland and established a community. After eleven years, about forty of them agreed to make a perilous trip to the New World, where they would certainly face hardships, but could live and worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences.

On August 1, 1620, the *Mayflower* set sail. It carried a total of 102 passengers, including forty Pilgrims led by William Bradford. On the journey, Bradford set up an agreement, a contract, that established just and equal laws for all members of their new community, irrespective of their religious beliefs. Where did the revolutionary ideas expressed in the Mayflower Compact come from? From the Bible. The Pilgrims were a people completely steeped in the lessons of the Old and New Testaments. They looked to the ancient Israelites for their example. And, because of the biblical precedents set forth in Scripture, they never doubted that their experiment would work.

But this was no pleasure cruise, friends. The journey to the New World was a long and arduous one. And when the Pilgrims landed in New England in November, they found, according to Bradford's detailed journal, a cold, barren, desolate wilderness. They were no friends to greet them, he wrote. There were no houses to shelter them. There were no inns where they could refresh themselves.

And the sacrifice they had made for freedom was just beginning. During the first winter, half the Pilgrims - including Bradford's wife — died of either starvation, sickness, or exposure. When spring finally came, Indians taught the settlers how to plant corn, fish for cod, and skin beavers for coats. Life improved for the Pilgrims, but they did not yet prosper! This is important to understand because this is where modern American history lessons often end. Thanksgiving is actually explained in some textbooks as a holiday for which the Pilgrims gave thanks to the Indians for saving their lives, rather than as a devout expression of gratitude grounded in the tradition of both the Old and New Testaments.

Here is the part that has been omitted. The original contract the Pilgrims had entered into with their merchant-sponsors in London called for everything they produced to go into a common store, and each member of the community was entitled to one common share. All of the land they cleared and the houses they built belonged to the community as well.

Bradford, who had become the new governor of the colony, recognized that this form of collectivism was as costly and destructive to the Pilgrims as that first harsh winter, which had taken so many lives. He decided to take bold action. Bradford assigned a plot of land to each family to work and manage, thus turning loose the power of the marketplace.

That's right, long before Karl Marx was even born, the Pilgrims had discovered and experimented with what could only be described as socialism. And what happened? It didn't work! Surprise, surprise, huh? What Bradford and his community found was that the most creative and industrious people had no incentive to work any harder than anyone else, unless they could utilize the power of personal motivation!

But while most of the rest of the world has been experimenting with socialism for well over a hundred years — trying to refine it, perfect it, and re-invent it — the Pilgrims decided early on to scrap it permanently. What Bradford wrote about this social experiment should be in every schoolchild's history lesson. If it were, we might prevent much needless suffering in the future.

"The experience that was had in this common course and condition, tried sundry years . . . that by taking away property, and bringing community into a common wealth, would make them happy and flourishing - as if they were wiser than God," Bradford wrote. "For this community [so far as it was] was found to breed much confusion and discontent, and retard much employment that would have been to their benefit and comfort. For young men that were most able and fit for labor and service did repine that they should spend their time and strength to work for other men's wives and children without any recompense... that was thought unjustice."

Do you hear what he was saying, ladies and gentlemen? The Pilgrims found that people could not be expected to do their best work without incentive. So what did Bradford's community try next? They unharnessed the power of good old free enterprise by invoking the undergirding capitalistic principle of private property. Every family was assigned its own plot of land to work and permitted to market its own crops and products. And what was the result?

"This had very good success," wrote Bradford, "for it made all hands industrious, so as much more corn was planted than otherwise would have been." Bradford doesn't sound like much of a Clintonite, does he? Is it possible that supply-side economics could have existed before the 1980s? Yes. Read the story of Joseph and Pharaoh in Genesis 41. Following Joseph's suggestion (Gen. 41:34), Pharaoh reduced the tax on Egyptians to 20 percent during the "seven years of plenty" and the "Earth brought forth in heaps." (Gen. 41:47)

In no time, the Pilgrims found they had more food than they could eat themselves. So they set up trading posts and exchanged goods with the Indians. The profits allowed them to pay off their debts to the merchants in London. And the success and prosperity of the Plymouth settlement attracted more Europeans and began what came to be known as the "Great Puritan Migration."

Now, let me ask you: Have you read this history before? Is this lesson being taught to your children today? If not, why not? Can you think of a more important lesson one could derive from the Pilgrim experience? If Bill Clinton had been exposed to these lessons of history as a schoolboy in Hope, Arkansas, maybe we would all be a lot better off today.