



Stomach grumbling? It's time for a change, not a pill

By Jim Waters

Dissatisfaction serves as a necessary component of change. Most find change hard and dissatisfaction uncomfortable.

So procrastination usually trumps dissatisfaction. We often simply adapt to avoid the usually messy process of change.

Sometimes it's necessary to do so – at least temporarily. We have to know for sure that we simply cannot accept the status quo. We count the cost before we pay the price of change.

Before our founders went to war with King George III, Ben Franklin and others shuttled across the Atlantic to offer countless gestures of diplomacy – all to avoid the fallout from the change that would rudely attach itself to the British army's muskets, canons and bayonets.

The world's most renowned change agent advised such deliberation, once asking in the Gospel of St. Luke: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?"

Estimating the finished product's value helped determine whether his audience would submit to the often-deadly process of change. The apostles saw eternal life and suffered martyrdom.

Our founders saw this nation's destiny and pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honors.

When diplomacy failed, Virginia's Thomas Nelson Jr. used his personal credit to raise \$2 million to supply America's young revolutionary army. The government never paid him back. As a result, he lost almost everything he owned.

A big chunk of his estate – including his home – was destroyed during the battle of Yorktown. And it was Nelson who gave the command to his gunners to fire on – and destroy – his own home after it was seized by British General Charles Cornwallis. Some accounts claim Nelson himself fired the first shot. I wouldn't doubt it. This great patriot, who sacrificed much to help his young country's cause, died bankrupt and was buried in an unmarked grave.

Nelson and the other 55 signers of the Declaration of Independence possessed a far-reaching vision of freedom that could be achieved only by dumping a British king – who acted like too many local government agents today by increasing tax burdens and sticking cotton in his ears.

Most great ventures are birthed in dissatisfaction.

For decades, a small but righteous group nurtured the dissatisfaction about slavery and the movement to abolish it. They found they just couldn't "adapt" to the wrong of fellow men treated as property. The "small" became a chamber group, then a great chorus.

Thomas Edison got tired of lighting a candle or filling a lamp with oil just to write a letter. So he invented the light bulb. Now, we have laser-light technology.

We've come a long way, baby. But reform only comes a long-enough way when the crescendo of dissatisfaction rises to a high-enough level.

It happens.

In 2003, the Bowling Green City Commission and its Republican mayor raised the city's occupational tax. A chorus showed up the next year to vote out all of the incumbents, including Mayor Sandy Jones, who ran for re-election. The new commission couldn't ignore the voices of change, either. It lowered the tax.

It didn't require a government initiative to drive voters to pull the lever in favor of the challengers. Dissatisfaction drove them to do it.

In fact, government programs, regulations and frivolous taxes don't end poverty, improve education, end drug use or lower crime rates. Their cost isn't worth it. Still, we often pay it.

Commentator Linda Chavez pointed out in a recent New York Post editorial that the federal government has spent \$11 trillion in its 40-year "war on poverty." Yet poverty rates have remained virtually unchanged – from 10 percent of all families in 1968 to 9.9 percent in 2005.

The war on poverty and failure will not be won by government. Rather, the ingenuity, commitment – even dissatisfaction – of patriots like Thomas Nelson who count, and pay, the cost of freedom will produce miracles in our commonwealth far greater than anything that could be funded by Washington, Frankfort or City Hall.

Too many Kentuckians have become content with economic underachievement, educational mediocrity and entitlement.

But I think I hear – faint though it might be – the grumbling of dissatisfaction.

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