

## AMERICA

*By Mike Harris*

The debate over the separation of government and religion was fought by such leaders as Washington, Franklin, Thomas Paine, Jefferson, Adams, and Hamilton, just to name a few. All the above were for separation of church and state. But as in all debates, those who had the most to lose never accepted whatever the outcome was if it decreased their power. After a long time, the original Pledge of Allegiance was finally changed to include the words "under God." Religious people feel very strongly and seek to save non-believers. They seek to save them from themselves. They never seem to learn "A man convinced against his will is unconvinced still."

This mindset carries forward when a conquering country tries to tell the conquered how to run their lives. It does not work! It did not work for Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Rome, Great Britain, and does not work for Uncle Sam. But to return to America, i.e. the United States of America.

Europe until 1700 was in chaos, unending wars bled the continent of its resources. The only countries that had a sustaining economy were the ones engaged in trade. Trade was mostly restricted to the Mediterranean Sea area. And here pirates took more than their share, which led adventurous ship owners to seek trade further afield. Spain had its explorer Desoto; England, Hawkins; Italy, Columbus; France, the Hudson Bay Company.

In time the resources of the land known as the United States of America became profitable articles of trade, the lumber for the masts of sailing ships was highly prized since most of the forests of western Europe were denuded, furs traded with the native peoples of this new land also were valuable trade goods, and so settlements, outposts of trade appeared. There was one more commodity that attracted Europeans, free fertile farm land! Europe was not agriculturally self-sustaining and the Middle East filled the deficit food wise.

Now a new people came to the land, and as the hunters and gatherers were displaced by farmers their food supply preserves became endangered. There was no stopping the hungry masses, the natives did not have a chance. As the word spread in Europe of the fertile soil in the Americas, the masses just kept coming. America the land of opportunity, the golden land. So the disenfranchised came with their iron plows, their muskets and armament and a more advanced civilization. As history has shown this land became settled and the natives have become almost extinct. But history is repetitive. Now we are the explorers seeking the new wealth. Oil and mineral wealth are replacing fertile farm lands, advancing technology and farming is still able to sustain and feed an exploding population.

On a tablet of base of the statue of liberty is the following:

"Give me your tired and poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to be free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,

Send these homeless tempest tossed to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

On the hand of the statue is the following inscription using roman numerals "July IV MDCCLXXVI (JULY 4 1776), the day the United States adopted the Declaration of Independence, encouraging the disenfranchised of the world to come to the land of hope and opportunity.

Now sadly our representatives are not following the precepts of the founding fathers. The basic Pledge of Allegiance that ends "with liberty and justice for all" is being compromised. We the people still may return this country to the people. Only time will tell, and hope springs eternal.