At the very least, this might give us all a chance to catch our breath while we roil in the eye of this perfect storm of an ugly, yelling, screaming Presidential election enveloped by a an economic and fiscal crisis teetering on a crisis of confidence. 

Last week, in one of many, a Rasmussen poll stated that 59% of Americans believe that 535 people, randomly selected from US telephone books, would do a better job than the 435 incumbent members of the House and 100 members of the Senate. This led me to think that any one of us ought to be able to come up with a plan to save the system that's at least as good as anything anyone's proffered so far. (I am writing this on October 10 at noon with the Dow at 8200. Who knows where it'll be by the time you read this).

So, here's an insane or, if you remove the 's', a potentially inane solution from the Canadian happily living in America. We learned long ago in the Great White North (in Canada that's about snow, not race) that you could be a hard-assed fiscal "conservative" and an almost bleeding-heart social 'liberal" at the same time. In the US, that could be considered bi-polar, but it's normal in my former native land.

This probable chemical or psychic imbalance would therefore suggest the following solution: Punish the heck out of the Wall Street perpetrators by making them work for a minimum of five years at a salary of $22,000 each, during which their job would be to operate a credit union (we'll call it "FedCorp") for the benefit of all the "small players" and individuals who were affected by their greed and mismanagement. So that you all know that I am trying to be both equanimitous and Solomonic in my approach, "their greed" means both the greed of the lenders and the greed of the borrowers, equally. See, this way the bailout or rescue is less distasteful since we can do the usual, comfortable thing and blame it on everyone else.

OK, back to the $22,000 a year functionaries of FedCorp: First, that's a nice, common sense change from the $300 million bonuses for Mr. Fuld, Jr at Lehman, or all those nice AIG folks who went to the spa for half-a-mil after we bailed 'em out. Second, their boss at FedCorp will be the Director of the US Penitentiary Service and, rather than termination for cause in their employment contracts, there is hard time for cause, if they mess up the credit union in any way.

We, the taxpayers, are the funders because the treasury is us and, we lend at 5%-6%; even lower if the Fed reduces the key rates again. Theoretically, as the owners of FedCorp, we can afford to offer these low rates because we now have these financial geniuses running our FedCorp for just $22,000 with no bonuses, forever, so our overhead is very low. Now, the regular folks can afford to pay down their credit cards and mortgages. Any FedCorp profits are returned to taxpayers over time as tax credits. House values rebound, boomers start moving here again; we get to go out to dinner without threatening our retirement accounts, the angels sing, the sun comes out and all the TV pundits are sent to the Gulag. Hey, works for me.

OK, my tongue is now extricated from my cheek and I ask each and every person taking the time to read this to answer a few questions:

Do you believe in the basic principles and values of the United States of America?

Do you believe its people are inherently good?

Do you comprehend the depth of importance of the fact that something akin to 70% of working Americans are employed by Small Business?

Do you believe that our country and its institutions will still be here tomorrow and next year and for generations to come?

And, do you recognize that we can't just believe in any of the above unless we each are willing to put ourselves on the line for it?

It's a question that needs to be posed and it hasn't really been since JFK's "ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" was uttered almost 50 years ago.

If you have that belief and faith and trust in this country, then you keep your money in its banks. You stop selling off and start buying up the stocks of companies whose ideas and products and futures have merit. You go out to dinner and breakfast once or twice and leave a decent tip. You go buy a shirt or a dress or a new tennis racket. You support the small businesses in our communities. You listen less and less to the lunacy on TV and more and more to the good sense that has guided this country, its generations and your own life.

In America, defining the relationship between individual liberty and the common good has been a challenge. Where does that liberty become selfishness? When is that common good not good for me? Philosophically, it's complex. Practically, in our world of today, it's a no brainer:

Use all the power, wisdom and resolve of your individual liberty to improve the common good of this nation.