



JIM C'S QUIZ OF THE WEEK

MONDAY - 04/21/08

← Charles de Secondat, Baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu (1689-1755) – ideological co-founder of the American Constitution

Separation of powers is a fundamental principle undergirding the design of American government.

HOW DID “SEPARATION OF POWERS” ORIGINATE?

Definition: The parceling out of the various federal government powers and functions into separate, relatively independent entities. The normal division is into executive, legislative, and judicial.

Goal: To prevent government from being controlled at the same time by any potentially tyrannical political faction.

Origin: The principle of separation of powers traces its origins at least as far back as the ancient Greek city-states, but it first came into widespread use by the Roman Republic.

In the late 18th century Americans were reflecting on new political arrangements, and no political authority was invoked more often than the French Enlightenment thinker Baron de Montesquieu. The term “*Separation of Powers*” (aka *Trias Politica*) was coined by Montesquieu as a model for the governance of democratic states.

Conventional Wisdom: Separation of Power = Checks & Balances

Moment of Zen: With more places to try to influence, politically active interest groups truly found a home in Washington DC.