



11350 Random Hills Road, Suite 800, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone (703) 934-6101 Fax (703) 352-3678

fff@fff.org www.fff.org

Ron Paul, Fox News, and the Conservative Life of the Lie

by Jacob G. Hornberger

Last week television commentators Greta van Susteran and Shepard Smith, treading cautiously and with a bit of trepidation, wondered aloud why their employer, Fox News, was banning Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul from its New Hampshire presidential debate.

Permit me to explain the likely reason: the life of the lie, the life that conservatives have been living for decades.

Conservatives love to portray themselves as advocates of libertarian principles. For example, go to the websites of two classic conservative foundations — the [Heritage Foundation](#) and the [Claremont Institute](#). You will find standard mantras that conservatives have employed since as far back as Ronald Reagan’s talks for General Electric in the 1950s: free enterprise, private property, limited government, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, our founding principles, and fundamental rights.

There is just one big problem, however: Conservatives do not practice what they preach. They instead live the life of the lie. Long ago, they threw in the towel in the fight for libertarian principles by embracing the big-government programs of both the welfare state and the warfare state.

It wasn’t always that way. Conservatives once genuinely believed in a society based on economic liberty and a constitutionally limited republic. For that matter, so did liberals, which is why Grover Cleveland, a Democrat, vetoed a \$10,000 farm bill to aid struggling Texas farmers, with [the admonition](#), “Though the people support the Government, the Government should not support the people.”

Thus, Americans in, say, 1889 lived without such socialist and interventionist programs as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, public (i.e., government) schooling, drug laws, economic regulations, immigration controls, welfare, subsidies, income taxation, a Federal Reserve System, and fiat money. Equally important, they also avoided a standing army, conscription, foreign aid, nation-building, and involvement in foreign wars.

That is what it once meant to be an American. That is what it once meant to free. That is the freedom that Americans once celebrated on the Fourth of July.

Not anymore. Today, freedom is defined by the grip that both the welfare state and warfare state have on the lives and fortunes of the American people. Both conservatives and liberals look to the federal government to be their daddy or, even worse, their god. They have assigned their federal daddy-god the task of taking care of their retirement, healthcare, education, employment, and business as well as protecting them from the terrorists, drug dealers, immigrants, communists, and other scary people.

In the process, they have brought a federal monstrosity into existence, one whose programs and powers violate the free-enterprise, limited-government mantras that conservatives continue to maintain on their websites and on their stationery.

While it's true that liberals are as devoted to the welfare state as conservatives are, there is one big difference: liberals don't make any pretense of being advocates of economic liberty and limited government. They are direct and straightforward defenders of the big-government welfare state.

Conservatives, on other hand, continue to portray themselves as advocates of libertarian principles. That's what makes them people of the lie — people of hypocrisy — people who preach one thing and practice another.

Another popular conservative mantra involves the importance of taking “personal responsibility” for one's actions. Unfortunately, it is a slogan that conservatives, in their life of lie, apply only to others, never themselves. After all, have you heard even one conservative taking personal responsibility for the 50 percent decline in the value of the dollar over the past 5 years? Of course not. Oh, they'll stand foursquare in favor of “fiscal responsibility” and a “sound dollar” during those presidential debate forums but, at the same time, endorse every program, project, department, and agency that produces the out-of-control federal spending that has brought about the plunge in the dollar.

Compounding the conservative problem is another lie: that the big-government welfare state reflects “compassionate conservatism.”

Oh? You mean like the compassion shown for the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who are now dead or maimed at the hands of the U.S. war machine, deaths that conservatives cavalierly claim are worth the U.S. “success” in Iraq? Sure, we often hear laments for American soldiers who have lost their lives or limbs in Iraq, but not one conservative peep for the countless Iraqis who have lost their lives or limbs at the hands of the U.S. war machine.

And yet, the discomfiting fact remains: Not a single one of those dead and maimed (and tortured) Iraqis ever attacked the United States.

In fact, Iraq might well be the ultimate manifestation of the conservative life of the lie. When it became evident that the fake and false WMD rationale could not be relied upon to justify

an invasion of a country that had never attacked the United States, conservatives didn't skip a beat, quickly shifting to their secondary "We did it for democracy" rationale for the invasion.

Never mind that at the same time they were funneling millions of dollars of U.S. taxpayer money into the coffers of Pakistani military strongman Pervez Musharraf, one of the world's most brutal unelected dictators. In fact, never mind that conservatives had once partnered with Saddam Hussein himself — and, for that matter, with the Shah of Iran and countless other dictators around the world. Those are things that the conservative mind of the lie would rather not confront.

Thus, why would it surprise anyone that Fox News conservatives deeply resent libertarians and wish that we would simply go away? By maintaining our allegiance to free enterprise, private property, limited government, and the Constitution, we libertarians remind conservatives of what they have become — people of the lie, people whose lives now entail preaching the old libertarian mantras while embracing the principles of the big-government, welfare-warfare state.

But conservatives not only resent libertarians, they also fear us — or, more accurately, they fear our ideas. They know that ideas on liberty have consequences. They have the power to move people, especially people who are seeking the truth about freedom and our country's heritage of freedom. As the Ron Paul campaign has demonstrated, ideas on liberty can ignite the hearts and minds of men and women one by one, young and old, both conservative and liberal, bringing us closer to the restoration of genuine freedom to our land.

Under the principles of free enterprise and private property, Fox News certainly had the right to ban libertarian Republican Ron Paul from its presidential debate. But what better evidence of the conservative life of the lie than Fox News' continual use of its well-worn mantra, "fair and balanced"?

Jacob Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation.

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