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Memoirs of a Longtime Libertarian **by Ross K. Anderson**

Who is he? What makes him tick? Why should anyone else care?

I'm the one who cares and this is why I'm what I am. I am an individual and there is no one like me.

Some individuals question some of the thoughts I have so I'll give some of my background and why I choose to involve myself with such "radical" views. Radical by whose standards?

It's my nature to be inquisitive and somewhat of a skeptic. I have always been intrigued with people, their motivation, desires, diversity, and actions. I completed my formal schooling with an attempt at college. I had aspirations of becoming a veterinarian. I was a good student at the top of my class through high school but my attempt at college was very short. I did a hitch in the Navy and then worked in manufacturing plants in Wichita, Kansas, in different capacities but most often moved up to supervisor. I worked at Love Box and worked in the Bob Love organization. In January of 1959, I was transferred to a facility owned by the Loves in Lewisburg, Ohio, and I was product manager. I received information on a seminar in Indianapolis by [The Foundation of Economic Education](#) (FEE). This was the early 60's. I met [George Roche](#), [Leonard Read](#), and [Ben Rogge](#).

In 1964, I had the good fortune to attend the Freedom School in Larkspur, Colorado. [Robert LeFevre](#) was the instructor, and the opportunity to be a student and study with Bob was the most significant in my development and integration leading to my present views. It has been said that we stand on the shoulders of our mentors and teachers. I believe this to be true. And although my ideas are my responsibility alone, LeFevre provided me with a very broad and sound base. As a result of his teaching and reading books since, I have formed views which I have today.

Many people think that economics is a matter of opinions. Economics is not a study of opinions. Economics is a science, and as a science it deals with eternal laws — laws that men are not able to change — laws that remain constant. "Laissez-faire."

Economics is about human action and all life is human action. To live implies action, action implies choosing, that is, selection and rejection. Economics is striving for efficiency in the

use of means to attain selected ends and is essentially the theory of free enterprise. Economics is not a dry subject. It is not a dismal subject. It is not about statistics. It is about human life. It is about the ideas that motivate human beings. It is about how we act from birth to death. It is about the most important and interesting drama of all — human action.

While each of us is a unique human being with his or her own characteristic values, goals, desires, and so on, there are qualities which we have in common — just because we are human beings. One of those qualities seems to be the common view that we want to live in a rich society which is relatively peaceful and allows maximum opportunities for every person to satisfy his own unique desires and goals.

At the risk of oversimplifying a problem of enormous complexity, I will say that this question — how to accommodate the common or social environment to individual human wants and goals — has been so profoundly confusing that it is the root of virtually all social discontent.

Let me state at this point that I'm not suggesting that my thoughts and ideas hold the answer. If anything, it may raise still more questions in recognizing that for several thousand years, human beings have failed to achieve a way to live alongside each other without a basic view that they will rely ultimately on some means of violence to settle disagreements.

In technological fields, the mind of man has made fantastic accomplishments, and the future is bright and glowing with anticipation of still greater scientific progress. But in the area of human interaction — social interchange — we are still employing the ideas that were in vogue when “society” consisted of roving bands of savages. Yes, technologically we are brilliant and have broken into the twenty-first century in a noble and proud manner, but psychologically and sociologically we have yet to emerge from pre-biblical times. Could it be that one of the key factors in this disparity is attitude? I think so. The scientist has the attitude that everything is open to question and challenge. He builds upon prior knowledge, but is always ready to consider evidence that previously established “truth” may be in error. This is the cornerstone of promise and progress; to be willing to examine, to consider when necessary, to correct.

Often I'm questioned about my own political affiliation or identity. My activities have been called “conservative conspiracies” by liberals and “liberal conspiracies” by conservatives. I have been labeled as everything on the political spectrum at one time or another, from pacifist to anarchist to communist to plain old maverick.

Actually, I'm apolitical. I have no personal interest or desire to participate in politics for reasons which I hope will become evident as you read and educate yourself. The question which next arises, then, is why I even mention politics. That deserves an answer.

All of us have personal lives and social lives. In our personal lives we can be highly selective and effect a higher degree of integrity between our values and how we express them. Our social lives are subject to greater influence of others, by necessity.

I recognize that present society will continue to rely on political methods. If I can exert some influence on the use of these methods and thereby cause some decrease in the adverse effects on my life and the lives of my friends and neighbors, it is consistent with my personal views to make that effort. But for myself, I must make that effort from outside the political arena, because if I became active politically I would then become part of the problem. From a tactical viewpoint, it's my belief that significant political changes take place as a result of activity outside of politics rather than inside. So, ethically, I will not participate — and pragmatically, I believe it is more effective to remain an outsider.

There are many of course, who will disagree with my reasoning — but that's not the point. I have simply tried to explain why I do what I do. I'm not saying anyone else should do the same, but I would add that I am what I am because of my search for truth.

To return to importance of attitude: Things change when we are not satisfied with present conditions and when we acknowledge the existence of methods for improving them. To be unhappy with how things are and yet believe that nothing can be done to change them leads to frustration and disaster.

I believe that many people today have advanced psychologically and emotionally to the point where they want to exercise more control over their own lives. Conversely, there are many people who want power and control over the lives of others. For the latter group, there are six thousand years of history involving all kinds of dictators and rulers.

If all the energies now being expended on political action by freedom advocates around the world were focused instead on finding individual solutions, on allowing the “invisible hand” free reign, we would marvel at the ideas and mechanisms that would be bound to evolve.

We learn to support ourselves, pay our own bills, and champion the cause of liberty by consistent advocacy. As others glimpse the merit, they, one by one, join the effort. They don't have to join each other or have a leader. They enlist in the concept. I know of no other practical method for moving from where we are to where at least some of us hope to see the light.

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