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The Road Waiting to Be Taken **by Christine Smith**

Disobedience is the true foundation of liberty. The obedient must be slaves.

— *Henry David Thoreau*

Reading Friedrich A. Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*, one is amazed that a book published 64 years ago could paint such an accurate picture of where the United States is headed today. Hayek's warning of the dangers of centralized planning and his cautioning that well-intentioned planning can degrade into tyranny describes the road the United States embarked upon several decades ago and has traveled ever since. We now live in a nation where many people give only lip service to the free market and its fruits of economic and personal freedom. As long as they can get a fast-food meal down the street, watch a movie, and shop at the department store, many Americans feel they have all they need. They call that "liberty."

It is they, the perfectly submissive and obedient, "patriotic" citizens, who wonder why we libertarians waste time and cause ourselves the stress of fighting the welfare/warfare state. Never mind the compulsory financing of government programs and military operations. Never mind that the poor are exploited by the government. Never mind that you don't really own your property. Never mind compulsory school attendance, mandatory jury duty, or even the real risk of military conscription. Never mind the unjustified killing of tens of thousands of people by the U.S. government.

What can those things possibly have to do with our daily lives of relative comfort? I've met those whose only problem with taxation is making sure it is "fairly" forced upon all. In other words as long as the government imposes the burden upon all equitably, there's no reason to object. Likewise, I've met those who simply choose not to empathize with families in other parts of the world who suffer at the hands of this government. In their silent complicity, they look the other way, to their life of creature comforts in America, the home of the "free." A place where

they have the “freedom” to get a soda and hamburger any time they want. What more could they ask for?

The words of contented slaves: “Don’t you know you’re living in the best country in the world?” they ask, suspecting one’s loyalty for even questioning the “way it’s always been.” “Why question the way it is, when we’ve got everything needed for a comfortable life?”

My answer: Without liberty, life is a dreary existence. A caged animal, no matter how many creature comforts it is given, is not experiencing all that it can be. Unless you have the power to direct your life and property, there is no liberty.

The character of the American people has changed. There are those seeking bailouts for huge corporations and others seeking subsidies for suffering industries. There are families wanting a house to call their own and people who need medical care. They are all willing to serve their government master in the hope of getting a handout to fix their problems. But those and other problems cannot be solved using force from the government, because all become victimized by the tyranny of economic and social planning. To allow the state to coercively control your life, and never challenge it, is enslavement. Whether the state is a malevolent master or a benevolent one, the fact is, the slave has no self-determination over the matters which make life worth living. For millions, slavery is no longer abhorrent.

But for libertarians, slavery remains repugnant. To be born into a form of slavery, as American youth are now, presents a unique situation for libertarians — awakening the spirit of freedom within others. Although it may be difficult to discern, it is inside every person like a glowing coal awaiting but a small piece of kindling to ignite it into bright, abundant flames.

To build a better world, we must have the courage to make a new start.

— Friedrich A. Hayek, ***The Road to Serfdom***

To my surprise, I’ve heard libertarians ask, “The problems are so great, what can I possibly do?” Simply begin by learning all you can, working for what you believe, and helping others grow in their understanding. You don’t need anything beyond what you have right now: yourself.

Think about it. Every affront to men, whether political tyranny or even a natural disaster, has always been ultimately overcome by the human spirit. Who was responsible for the Renaissance? Women’s suffrage? The American Revolution? Was it politicians? No. It was people who used their talents to disseminate ideas, sometimes through disobedience — people who raised their voices through what they wrote, spoke, and created — people whose high level of consciousness and deep sense of conscience contributed to a better way of life for the individual.

Every advancement in the world and every revolution sprang from an idea. Mindless actions, without a basis in a clearly delineated idea, cause but temporary chaos and are soon

irrelevant. Ideas on liberty, however, are magnetic. They attract support and grow in strength. Transformative and inspiring, they result in wise and liberating actions.

Igniting those flames, those demands for liberty, and thereby restoring the American Republic is a task requiring the work of every liberty-loving American. Choose the activities you are happy doing and at which you excel. Let nothing but right versus wrong be your guide. Choose your battles carefully, letting the issues that fill you with the greatest righteous indignation be the ones you educate yourself about. Government infringement of liberty is pervasive. Do not shy away from those big areas of oppression that the majority of Americans have already accepted, but instead boldly choose such tough issues to address, for they get to the core of the problems, causing people to listen when they might otherwise tune out.

To achieve liberty requires having one's internal power, the love of freedom, awakened. There are tasks that only you can do to reach people only you can reach by expressing the ideas and living the principles you hold. Every libertarian has a unique voice and talent that must be used in this awakening.

Are we ready to courageously take the road not previously taken? The road to freedom? Let us not be concerned with aligning ourselves with ideological labels. We are committed to liberty alone. We know silence is consent to slavery, and we will not be slaves. That is why we must never give up.

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