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*Power tends to corrupt and absolute power
corrupts absolutely.*

— *Lord Acton*

FUTURE OF FREEDOM

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Understanding the JFK Assassination, Part 6

by *Jacob G. Hornberger*



The group of deep-state people who planned and orchestrated the military's fraudulent autopsy on the body of President Kennedy would have been deeply concerned about the very real possibility that the autopsy could become an issue if Lyndon Johnson continued his run for reelection in the 1968 presidential race. That's because they had to know that despite the reports generated by the three meetings at the National Archives, the autopsy would be an Achilles heel for them. If people discovered the autopsy was fraudulent, it would inevitably lead to such questions as: Why would the military conduct a fraudulent autopsy? When did the plan come into existence? Who was in

on the plan? Who was the person in authority who ordered Colonel Finck not to dissect the neck wound at the autopsy? Was that person acting alone or as part of a deep-state team overseeing and running the autopsy? Who were the men in suits who secretly delivered the president's body to the Bethesda morgue at 6:35 p.m. in the cheap shipping casket? How did they get ahold of the body in the first place? Who directed their actions and movements?

At the beginning of this essay, I stated that understanding the autopsy would give the reader a better understanding of the assassination itself. Let's now put things into an overall context to see how that is true.

President Kennedy was shot in Dallas at approximately 12:30 p.m. He was immediately rushed to Parkland Hospital, where he died about thirty minutes later, at about 1 p.m. At the moment that Kennedy was declared dead, a team of Secret Service agents went into action, ordering an expensive, heavy, ornate casket from a local funeral home. The president's body was wrapped in sheets and placed into the casket.

At that point, the Secret Service team began forcing its way out of Parkland Hospital with the presi-

dent's body. They were confronted by Dr. Earl Rose, the Dallas County Medical Examiner, who told the Secret Service agents that they could not remove the body until he had performed an autopsy on the body, as required by state law. The Secret Service team began screaming, yelling, and shouting profanities, making it very clear that they were not going to permit Rose to conduct an autopsy. When Rose stood his ground, the Secret Service team pulled back their coats to reveal their guns, making it clear that they were prepared to shoot and kill Rose and any other Parkland physician, nurse, or employee who got in their way. One witness stated that the medical personnel at Parkland were terrified.

One witness stated that the medical personnel at Parkland were terrified.

The Secret Service team also declared they were following orders. They didn't disclose who gave them those orders but it had to be Lyndon Johnson, either directly or indirectly. We know that at the same time that Kennedy was declared dead, Johnson headed directly to the airport, where he had aides begin removing seats from the back of

Air Force One to make room for Kennedy's casket. The fact that Johnson knew that the casket was coming constitutes extremely persuasive circumstantial evidence that he was the one who issued the order to the Secret Service team that forced its way out of Parkland Hospital with the president's body.

Thus, when we examine the entire fraudulent autopsy scheme in its totality, we see that the first step in that scheme occurred at 1 p.m. on November 22, when the Secret Service team, operating under orders presumably issued by Johnson, went into action to prevent Rose from conducting an autopsy, with the aim of getting the body to Johnson, who in turn would transport it to Maryland to put it into the hands of the military, which would then conduct the fraudulent autopsy.

The plan

Let's now examine when the overall plan for the fraudulent autopsy came into existence. There are two possibilities: One, during the 30-minute time period between the time Kennedy was shot and declared dead or, two, prior to the assassination. Logically, there are no other possibilities.

Let's examine the first possibility. It would necessarily mean that as

soon as Kennedy was shot and taken to the hospital, Johnson began thinking to himself, “If Kennedy dies, I think I’ll have the military conduct a fraudulent autopsy on his body. I’ll order a team of Secret Service agents to take control over his body as soon as he is declared dead and have them forcibly prevent the Dallas County Medical Examiner from conducting an autopsy as required by Texas law. I will then transport the body to Maryland and deliver it into the hands of the military, which will then conduct a fraudulent autopsy.”

Johnson clearly had another role to play: to raise the possibility of a nuclear war.

Obviously, that is a ludicrous scenario. Why would the thought of a fraudulent autopsy even enter Johnson’s mind in that 30-minute period of time? Obviously, there would be lots of other things that would be going through his mind. The thought of a fraudulent autopsy would not ordinarily be among them. After all, why would he even want a fraudulent autopsy? Moreover, during that short period, how could he be sure that the military would go along with the plan? For one thing, he would have had to

telephone someone in the military and see if they would be willing to go along with the plan. Wouldn’t that person ask him what the purpose of the plan was?

That means that the more reasonable possibility is that the fraudulent autopsy was conceived, planned, and orchestrated before Kennedy was shot. And that necessarily leads to one conclusion: that the fraudulent autopsy was a key part of the plan to cover up the national-security establishment’s assassination of John F. Kennedy. There really is no conceivable innocent explanation for the fraudulent autopsy that the military conducted on the body of President Kennedy. A fraudulent autopsy strongly suggests a cover-up in the assassination itself.

The circumstantial evidence therefore suggests that Lyndon Johnson had two roles in this operation. The first role was to get Kennedy’s body out of Parkland Hospital at all costs, without permitting an autopsy to be conducted by Dallas officials, and then to deliver it into the hands of the military, whose job was then to conduct a fraudulent autopsy.

But Johnson clearly had another role to play: to raise the possibility of a nuclear war, which was the

scariest scenario for the American people, especially given how close the United States and the Soviet Union had come to nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis the year before. Keep that role in mind because, as we will see later, it played a critically important role in the cover-up of the assassination.

Johnson brought up the possibility that the Kennedy shooting was a first strike in a surprise nuclear attack three separate times: at Parkland Hospital while he was waiting to see what was going to happen to Kennedy, in his car as he was being driven to Love Field after Kennedy was declared dead, and just before Air Force One took off.

Yet, as we previously noted, Johnson's actions belied his supposed concern. If he truly was concerned about the possibility that the shooting signaled a nuclear attack, he should have gone directly to Love Field to get into the air and direct America's defenses to the nuclear attack.

That's not what he did. Instead, he lollygagged, especially after he arrived at Dallas Love Field. First of all, he took the time to switch planes, even though Air Force Two was an exact copy of Air Force One. Second, he ordered the luggage on Air Force Two to be switched to Air

Force One, even though both planes were going to the same destination. And third, even though U.S. Attorney General Bobby Kennedy had told him that he didn't need to be sworn in, he had people searching for a federal judge and then waited patiently for her to arrive and swear him in.

Johnson took the time to switch planes, even though Air Force Two was an exact copy of Air Force One.

Those are not the actions of a person who is even remotely concerned about the possibility that the shooting of Kennedy was the first step in a Soviet nuclear attack. Those are the actions of a person who is absolutely certain that it wasn't. If there was even one iota of doubt, Johnson would have gotten into the air immediately. There is only one reasonable way to explain his lack of doubt about the Soviets despite his obvious role-playing in which he falsely expressed his concern of a Soviet nuclear attack: Johnson knew that it wasn't the Soviets who had shot Kennedy because he knew that it was the U.S. national-security establishment that had shot Kennedy. And the reason he was lollygagging at

the airport was to fulfill his assigned role in the operation by taking possession of Kennedy's body and delivering it into the hands of the military.

The autopsy: a review

Let's review the autopsy to see what was occurring there. The circumstantial evidence establishes that the purpose of the fraudulent autopsy was to hide the fact that shots were fired at Kennedy from the front. The fraudulent autopsy was designed to show that all the shots fired at Kennedy came from the rear, specifically from the Texas School Book Depository, where accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald was situated.

The fraudulent autopsy hid the fact that shots were fired at Kennedy from the front.

We know that this was the aim of the fraudulent autopsy because of the overwhelming amount of circumstantial evidence establishing that there was a large exit-sized wound in the lower back of President Kennedy's head while, on the other hand, the official autopsy photographs show the back of Kennedy's head to be intact. It cannot be both. If there was a large exit-

sized wound in the lower back of President Kennedy's head, that necessarily means that the official autopsy photographs are fake, fraudulent, and bogus.

We have already examined the circumstantial evidence establishing the existence of the back-of-the-head wounds, but it's worthwhile to recall it at this point: U.S. Navy Petty Officer Sandra Spencer, whose competence and integrity were beyond reproach, told the ARRB that the autopsy photographs she developed on the weekend of the assassination showed the massive exit-sized wound in the back of Kennedy's head. The bystanders who were situated behind the presidential limousine stated they were splattered with exit debris. A medical student found a bone fragment in the area in which the assassination took place that Dallas pathologists determined was occipital bone, which means it had to have come from the lower back of the president's head. Two nurses at Parkland stated that they saw or felt the large exit-sized wound. Two FBI agents said that they saw the large wound, and one of them even stated that the official autopsy photographs appeared "doctored." Many of the Bethesda autopsy personnel stated that they had seen the large

wound. And the Dallas treating physicians themselves stated that they had seen the large wound, which prevented them from saving the president's life. In fact, when one of them pointed out the wound to the others, he said, "Stop resuscitation. This [wound] is inconsistent with life."

Let's now turn our attention to the neck wound, the one that Colonel Finck was ordered during the autopsy not to touch.

In the press conference that was held about an hour after the president was declared dead, two of the treating physicians stated that there was a bullet entry wound in Kennedy's throat. That would imply, once again, a shot's having been fired from the front.

No one has ever been able to reproduce what is supposed to have happened in the Kennedy shooting.

The Warren Commission, however, concluded that that throat wound was actually an exit wound, not an entrance wound. The official conclusion was that a bullet had entered Kennedy's back of the neck; exited his throat; entered Gov. John Connally's back, where it broke some ribs; exited the front through

Connally's chest; entered Connally's wrist, where it shattered more bone; exited the wrist; and then lodged in Connally's left thigh.

The bullet that supposedly did all that damage has gone down in history as the "magic bullet." One reason it earned the moniker is that it came out looking virtually new, notwithstanding the fact that it did so much damage, especially to bone. In experiments involving gun shots to goat carcasses and human carcasses, no one has ever been able to reproduce what is supposed to have happened in the Kennedy shooting. The bullet always ends up being mangled, which is what one would expect when a bullet hits bone. In the Kennedy case, the magic bullet was virtually pristine, which is why it has also come to be known as the "pristine bullet."

There is another oddity to consider. There is a diagram of a man's body in the official autopsy report. It depicts the location of a bullet wound on the president's back. The wound is clearly located with a mark in the right-side shoulder of the president, not the back of his neck. Moreover, Adm. Arleigh Burkley, who was President Kennedy's personal physician and who was at both Parkland Hospital and the Bethesda morgue, stated that

the president had suffered a back wound “at about the level of the third thoracic vertebra,” which placed the wound in the president’s back, not his neck.

Thus, the three military pathologists concluded that the bullet had entered the president’s back and exited through his throat and then proceeded on to cause Connally’s wounds. The problem with that theory was the bullet’s trajectory. If the bullet had actually come from high above the president’s back, it would naturally head downward, not upward toward the president’s throat, which is another reason the bullet has been called the “magic bullet.” Warren Commissioner Gerald Ford simply moved the entry point of the bullet from the right shoulder to the

back of the neck to make the magic-bullet theory more palatable.

A question naturally arises: Why would the national-security establishment want to hide the fact that shots had been fired from the president’s front? As we will see, that was the best way to ensure that no one would trace the assassination to the national-security establishment itself.

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

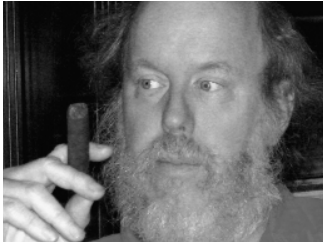
NEXT MONTH:
“Understanding the JFK
Assassination, Part 7”
by Jacob G. Hornberger

Anyone who has passed through the regular gradations of a classical education, and is not made a fool by it, may consider himself as having had a very narrow escape.

— William Hazlitt

George H.W. Bush's Forgotten Debacles and Demagoguery

by James Bovard



After former President George H.W. Bush died late last year, he was widely hailed as a great leader and patriot. At the National Cathedral funeral service, biographer Jon Meachan declared that Bush was a “twentieth-century Founding Father.” The minister of Bush’s church in Houston compared him to Jesus. Bush’s gentlemanly manners were lauded by many people outraged by President Trump’s behavior. But there was far more Trump-like demagoguery and conniving during Bush’s presidency than most Americans remember.

Bush was the most protectionist president since Herbert Hoover. Like Trump, he spoke of the need for “level playing fields” and “fair

trade.” But Bush-style fairness gave federal bureaucrats practically endless vetoes over Americans’ freedom to choose foreign goods. Bush’s Commerce Department ravaged importers with one bureaucratic scam after another, using the anti-dumping law to convict 97 percent of imports investigated, claiming that their prices were unfairly low to American producers (not consumers). Japanese auto makers were convicted after Commerce bureaucrats compared the price of used cars sold in Japan with the price of new cars sold by the Japanese companies in America. Used cars were cheaper, so the Japanese were guilty of dumping. The Commerce Department compared the price of small kiwis from New Zealand sold abroad with the price of imported large kiwis sold here. The smaller kiwis were cheaper and that proved the foreigners were dastards, with no thought for American consumers.

Bush also ordered the U.S. International Trade Commission to investigate after ice cream imports threatened to exceed 1 percent of the U.S. market. (American companies realize that foreign names have more cachet, which is why New Jersey-based Häagen-Dazs did not name its product after Newark.)

Bush also perpetuated import quotas on steel and machine tools, undermining the competitiveness of American manufacturers who needed access to the best building materials in the world.

While Bush declared that trade was the key to spreading prosperity to poorer nations, he slapped new textile import quotas on Nigeria, Indonesia, Egypt, the Philippines, Burma, Costa Rica, Panama, Pakistan, and many other nations. Mexico was allowed to sell Americans only 35,292 bras in 1989 — part of a byzantine regime that also restricted imports of tampons, typing ribbons, tarps, twine, table linen, tapestries, ties, and thousands of other products. A 1989 White House report concluded that the trade restrictions added 50 percent to the price of imported clothing.

Though Bush called for a “kind-er, gentler” nation while campaigning for the presidency in 1988, he turned federal drug policy into a holy war, demonizing drug users while hailing DEA agents as America’s “greatest freedom fighters.” Thanks in part to Bush’s tub-thumping, drug arrests surged by 200,000 in the first year of his presidency. His choice for drug czar, Bill Bennett, had no problem with beheading drug dealers, while his ad-

ministration began deluging law enforcement with surplus military equipment that would lead to no-knock-raid and wrongful-killing disasters around the nation in the following decades.

Drug arrests surged by 200,000 in the first year of his presidency.

The Bush administration turbo-charged asset forfeiture, spurring seizures of private property on the slightest pretexts from individuals who were never convicted of crimes. Federal seizures of private property rose 300 percent during the Bush presidency. Abuses became so widespread that a September 1992 Justice Department internal newsletter lamented, “Like children in a candy shop, the law enforcement community chose all manner and method of seizing and forfeiting property, gorging ourselves in an effort which soon came to resemble one designed to raise revenues.” Despite media exposés of gross injustices, the forfeiture juggernaut continues ravaging the rights of innocent Americans decades later and spurring delusions of absolute power in law enforcement. At a recent Supreme Court hearing, Indiana Solicitor General Thomas Fisher even asserted that forfeiture

laws entitle police to confiscate any car going more than five miles over the speed limit.

Being “inclusive”

Bush was posthumously praised for his “inclusive rhetoric” but his drug war converted low-income Americans into third-class citizens. In a Supreme Court case, Bush’s Solicitor General Ken Starr effectively championed police sweeps and warrantless searches of interstate bus passengers for illicit drugs. Police would order a bus driver to lock down a bus and then go down the aisle demanding that passengers open their bags for inspection. The Florida Supreme Court had compared such sweeps to Nazi and Soviet abuses but the Bush administration swayed the Supreme Court to define down the freedom of Americans who could afford nothing better than a Trailways ticket.

Bush pushed into law one of the most intrusive and self-defeating paternalist laws of modern times. Bush said the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 “calls upon the best in the American people.” The badly written ADA — also known as Attorneys’ Dreams Answered — proved a disaster at helping the disabled find work. It converted disabilities into legal assets, thus

spurring the proliferation of disability claims on college campuses by students seeking special treatments or waivers (25 percent of students at some schools now claim some type of disability) and the profusion of therapy animals on airplanes and elsewhere. Many ADA edicts defy common sense, such as the ban on a Los Angeles strip joint from having a shower stall on its stage. Because the stall was not wheelchair-accessible, the business supposedly discriminated against disabled women — even though no wheelchair-bound strippers applied for work.

The JTPA was such a boondoggle that it actually decreased the earnings of male trainees.

Bush promised “kinder, gentler” policies but his administration chose bragging over benevolence. The Job Training Partnership Act (co-authored in 1982 by Sen. Dan Quayle) was a favorite applause line for administration officials, supposedly proving their concern for youth, low-income households, and minorities. But the Labor Department covered up the law’s dismal failure, long delaying release of a report revealing that the JTPA was such a boondoggle that it actually

decreased the earnings of male trainees. But the program was a windfall for businesses that received lavish subsidies to train employees they would have trained regardless, so corporate America continued cheering.

Bush's contempt for property rights spawned legal brawls that continue to our time. In 1988, presidential candidate Bush declared that "all existing wetlands, no matter how small, should be preserved" and promised "no net loss" of wetlands if elected president. After he took office, federal bureaucrats unveiled a new definition of wetlands that swept nearly 100 million acres of additional private land under federal control. Bad faith permeated enforcement: bureaucrats relied on "the glancing geese" standard — if migrating birds glanced down and considered stopping at a water hole, then that land became involved in interstate commerce and thus fell under federal jurisdiction. Since many landowners could not afford to fight the world's largest law firm — the U.S. Justice Department — that type of bunkum sufficed to make people submit. The Justice Department and private landowners are still squabbling almost 30 years later, thanks in part to Bush's grandstanding on the issue.

After he died, Bush was portrayed as a responsible, judicious ruler. But that hagiography ignores his de facto demolition of the work of Special Counsel Lawrence Walsh. On Christmas Eve 1992, Bush pardoned six Reagan administration officials for their roles in the Iran-Contra Affair, the illegal arms-for-hostage deal that blighted the final years of the Reagan presidency. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger was scheduled to go on trial two weeks later on charges of lying to Congress.

Bush pardoned six Reagan administration officials for their roles in Iran-Contra.

Walsh denounced the pardons as part of a "cover-up" and said that they undermined his investigation of possible criminal conduct by Bush himself. Walsh also reported that Bush's pardons prevented Bush from having to testify in court and face "searching questions" on his own conduct. Bush's pardons greatly reduced the likelihood that his co-conspirators would ever turn state's evidence against him. If Walsh's investigation had led to Bush's conviction, the Bush brand name might have been sufficiently damaged that his son would not have captured the presidency in 2000.

The war

Probably Bush's biggest folly was the Gulf War against Iraq. Bush said that that America had to restore Kuwait's "rightful leaders to their place." Why should Americans care which Arab dictators control which patches of sand? The United States had previously been arming and bankrolling Saddam Hussein — so he was probably surprised when the United States flipped on him. The Bush administration pushed bushels of falsehoods to spur public support for the war.

At Bush's funeral, eulogists heaped praise on his supposedly lofty character. But nobody mentioned how he betrayed the Kurds in 1991, encouraging them to revolt and then abandoning them to Saddam's brutal crackdown. *New York Times* columnist William Safire scoffed, "When our troops come home to a ticker-tape parade, perhaps room can be found for a small float carrying maimed Kurdish refugees."

After the Gulf War ended, Bush decided that the U.S. government and its allies had the right to permanently blockade Iraq — putting a stranglehold on their imports of food, medicine, and other items. Since the Iraqi people failed to overthrow Saddam, they did not deserve to eat, right? Vast numbers

of Iraqis died as a result — but none of their survivors attended or spoke at Bush's funeral service.

Bush's postwar dictates on Iraq helped sow perpetual conflict and paved the way to his son's 2003 invasion of Iraq. That part of the world has been an even bigger mess since then. Plenty of Washington whiz kids are now claiming the United States must intervene to take down Iran. But Iraq was containing Iran just fine before the U.S. government pulverized that nation.

Bush's postwar dictates on Iraq helped sow perpetual conflict and paved the way to his son's 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Given this disastrous record, why was the older Bush idolized after his death? One clue came from the funeral tribute from the former senator Alan Simpson. Simpson portrayed Bush as a hero for betraying his most important campaign pledge in the 1988 presidential race — his "read my lips — no new taxes" promise. The Washington establishment loved that riff — since that tax hike helped shore up Leviathan and signaled the end of Reagan-era anti-government rhetoric.

Bush's son George, the 43rd president, also spoke at the funeral

service and declared that his father was “no cynic.” But George Herbert Walker Bush’s betrayals on his tax pledge and his debacles at home and abroad turned millions of other Americans into cynics. Perhaps that is the most positive legacy of his one-term presidency.

Democracy cannot afford to deify deceased presidents whose precedents pose continuing perils.

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NEXT MONTH:
**“Obama’s Forgotten
Frauds and Debacles”**
by James Bovard

Only one thing can conquer war — that liberal attitude of mind which can see nothing in war but destruction and annihilation, and which can never wish to bring about a war, because it regards war as injurious even to the victors.

— Ludwig von Mises

Blasphemy Laws and Other Victimless Crimes

by *Laurence M. Vance*



Pakistan is a Muslim country with harsh blasphemy laws. In 1986, during the military rule of Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, it became a capital offence for anyone to insult the prophet Mohammed. Government officials who opposed the nation's blasphemy laws have been assassinated. Late last year, a Christian woman in Pakistan, Aasiya Noreen, who had been convicted of blasphemy by a Pakistani court in 2010, was acquitted on the basis of insufficient evidence, although she was not allowed to leave the country. She had been arrested and imprisoned in 2009, and sentenced to death by hanging in 2010 after being imprisoned for more than a year without being charged. Her death sentence provoked interna-

tional outrage from governments and human-rights groups around the world, and generated extensive media coverage. Her acquittal was marked by protests and acts of violence in the major cities of Pakistan. The three Pakistani Supreme Court justices who acquitted Noreen, as well as her lawyer, received death threats.

Blasphemy laws

Pakistan is not alone. According to the 2017 report "Respecting Rights? Measuring the World's Blasphemy Laws," compiled by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), "71 of the world's 195 countries have blasphemy laws" with penalties for violating these laws ranging "from fines to imprisonment and death."

The USCIRF is "an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission created by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) that monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad." The USCIRF "uses international standards to monitor violations of religious freedom or belief abroad and makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress." The commission's report "examines and compares the content of laws

prohibiting blasphemy (‘blasphemy laws’) worldwide through the lens of international and human rights law principles.” The laws examined “prohibit or criminalize the expression of opinions deemed ‘blasphemous,’ or counter to majority views or religious belief systems, and many impose serious, often criminal, penalties.”

According to the report’s introduction,

- Blasphemy laws are astonishingly widespread.
- Every one of the blasphemy statutes deviates from at least one internationally recognized human-rights principle.
- All five nations with blasphemy laws that deviate the most from international human-rights principles maintain an official state religion.
- Most blasphemy laws studied were vaguely worded, as many failed to specify intent as part of the violation.
- Most blasphemy laws were embedded in the criminal codes and 86 percent of states with blasphemy laws prescribed imprisonment for convicted offenders.

The list of countries with blasphemy laws is shocking. Not only

does it include Muslim countries like Pakistan that one would expect — Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Indonesia, and Kuwait — but also countries that one would never expect — Germany, Greece, Israel, Finland, Switzerland, and Canada. The ten countries whose prohibitions on blasphemy run most counter to international-law principles are Iran, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Qatar, Egypt, Italy, Algeria, Comoros, and Malta. The ten countries whose prohibitions on blasphemy are most adherent to international-law principles are Ireland, Spain, the Philippines, Guyana, St. Lucia, Grenada, Vanuatu, Brazil, Canada, and Tunisia. But, of course, that these countries have blasphemy laws of some sort is a bad thing.

The list of countries with blasphemy laws is shocking.

In November of last year, a new Android app was launched in Indonesia that allows users, including government officials, to report “deviant” religious ideas. Although Indonesia officially recognizes six religions — Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism — it still has a blasphemy law that makes it illegal to promote any other religion, in-

cluding atheism. The punishment for violating the law can be as many as five years in prison. According to Human Rights Watch, “125 people were convicted of blasphemy in Indonesia between 2004 and 2014 and 23 additional people have been convicted since 2014.”

Some countries also have religious-conversion and apostasy laws.

In addition to blasphemy laws, some countries also have religious-conversion and apostasy laws. Those laws penalize changing one’s religion or seeking to persuade someone else to change and renounce his religion. According to a recent US-CIRF “Fact Sheet” on conversion laws, “Many laws related to conversion contain harsh penalties, including death sentences. In some states, there are significant civil implications for changing religions, resulting in legal consequences related to marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance.”

Colonial America

That a fourth of the world’s countries in the twenty-first century still have blasphemy laws seems incredible to Americans. That is because if there is one thing America

is universally known for, it is its heritage of religious liberty and freedom of conscience. The only explicit reference to religion in the original seven articles of the Constitution is found in Article VI, paragraph 3:

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

And then there is the most well-known part of the Constitution, the First Amendment:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Every individual in every country should have both the freedom to believe the tenets of and practice his religion as he sees fit and the freedom to blaspheme any religion or deity or all of them — as long as he doesn't violate the personal or property rights of others while doing so.

Such was not always the case in the United States. Colonial America had its share of blasphemy laws. In the “Massachusetts Body of Liberties” (1641), there are several capital offenses listed, including blasphemy:

If any man after legall conviction shall have or worship any other god, but the lord god, he shall be put to death.

If any man or woeman be a witch (that is, hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit,) They shall be put to death.

If any person shall Blaspheme the name of god, the father, Son, or Holie ghost, with direct, expresse, presumptuous, or high handed blasphemie, or shall curse god in the like manner, he shall be put to death.

And then there is the colony of Maryland. According to the “Maryland Toleration Act” (1649),

... that whatsoever Person or Persons within this Province and the Islands thereto Belonging shall from henceforth Blaspheme God that is Curse him or deny our Saviour Jesus Christ to be the Son of God or shall deny the holy Trinity the Father Son and Holy Ghost or the Godhead of any of the said three Persons of the Trinity or the unity of the Godhead or shall use or utter any reproachful speeches, words or Language Concerning the said holy Trinity or any of the said three Persons thereof shall be punished with death & Confiscation or Forfeiture of all his or her lands and Goods to the Lord Proprietary and his heirs....

Blasphemy laws in Colonial America were not just religious in nature. The Sedition Act of 1798 — passed just a few years after the adoption of the Constitution — made it illegal to

write, print, utter, or publish, or shall cause or procure to be

written, printed, uttered, or published, or shall knowingly and willingly assist or aid in writing, printing, uttering or publishing any false, scandalous and malicious writing or writings against the government of the United States, or either house of the Congress of the United States, or the President of the United States, with intent to defame the said government, or either house of the said Congress, or the said President, or to bring them, or either of them, into contempt or disrepute....

Violators could be punished “by a fine not exceeding two thousand dollars, and by imprisonment not exceeding two years.”

Blasphemy laws are still on the books in some states, although they are not enforced.

Victimless crimes

According to a recent USCIRF “Fact Sheet” on blasphemy laws,

- Blasphemy laws violate freedom of religion or belief.
- Blasphemy laws violate freedom of expression.
- Blasphemy laws promote intolerance and discrimination against

minorities.

- Blasphemy laws are often misused.
- Blasphemy laws are frequently vague and overbroad.

Those are good points, and the USCIRF goes on to explain them well. But there is one major problem with blasphemy laws that the USCIRF never mentions in its fact sheets, on its website, in its op-eds, in its press releases, or in its report on the world’s blasphemy laws: Blasphemy laws are laws that punish the commission of a victimless crime.

Blasphemy laws are laws that punish the commission of a victimless crime.

Every crime needs a real victim — not a potential victim or a possible victim, but rather a tangible and identifiable victim who has suffered measurable harm to his person or measurable damages to his property. There should be, as far as the law is concerned, no such things as nebulous crimes against religion, nature, society, humanity, civilization, the greater good, the public interest, or the state. Having bad habits, exercising poor judgment, engaging in risky behavior, participating in dangerous activities, holding erroneous

opinions, performing immoral actions, and committing vices are not, in and of themselves, crimes. It is on this latter point that the 19th-century classical-liberal political philosopher Lysander Spooner so eloquently explained,

Vices are those acts by which a man harms himself or his property. Crimes are those acts by which one man harms the person or property of another. Vices are simply the errors which a man makes in his search after his own happiness. Unlike crimes, they imply no malice toward others, and no interference with their persons or property.

Unless this clear distinction between vices and crimes be made and recognized by the laws, there can be on earth no such thing as individual right, liberty, or property — no such things as the right of one man to the control of his own person and property, and the corresponding and co-equal rights of another man to the control of his own person and property.

Vices may be immoral, they may be addictive, they may be ruin-

ous, they may be foolish, and they may be sinful, but crimes they are not. Only actions that cause harm to others or their property without their consent should be crimes. What is unjust, immoral, and unethical should not necessarily be criminal.

Only actions that cause harm to others or their property without their consent should be crimes.

Prosecuting Americans for committing victimless crimes not only turns vices into crimes, it unnecessarily makes criminals out of otherwise law-abiding Americans; is an illegitimate function of government; criminalizes voluntary, consensual, peaceful activity; costs far more than any of its supposed benefits; does violence to individual liberty and private property; and is incompatible with a free society.

That does not mean that certain victimless crimes are not immoral, sinful, unethical, or dangerous. It does not mean that any or all victimless crimes are wholesome, good, healthy, or noble. It does not mean that some victimless crimes don't have any negative consequences. Adultery is generally viewed as immoral, but few want it to be against the law to commit

adultery. Smoking cigarettes leads to all kinds of health issues, but few want it to be against the law to smoke a cigarette in the privacy of one's home. Divorce has negative consequences for children, but few want it to be against the law to get a divorce. So why do so many people want to criminalize victimless crimes such as drug use, prostitution, and price gouging?

Committing victimless crimes may be addictive, unhealthy, unwise, risky, irresponsible, injurious, dangerous, immoral, ruinous, sinful, or just plain stupid, but it is not for the government to decide what risks people should be permitted to take and what kinds of behaviors they should be allowed to engage in — as long as their actions are peaceful, private, voluntary, and consensual; and as long as those who freely and willingly participate in such acts are not harming or violating the personal or property rights of nonparticipants.

Examples

Victimless crimes take many forms. Here are twelve real-world examples.

Possessing illegal drugs is a victimless crime. If one owns his own body, then he has the right to put any substance he wants into his

body, from marijuana to fentanyl and anything between. It is not the proper role of government to prohibit, regulate, restrict, or otherwise control what a man desires to eat, drink, smoke, inject, absorb, snort, sniff, inhale, swallow, or otherwise ingest into his mouth, nose, veins, or lungs.

It is not for the government to decide what risks people should be permitted to take.

Working without a license is a victimless crime. Why is it that some Americans must get permission from the government to open a business, engage in commerce, work in certain occupations, have a particular vocation, or provide a service to willing customers? Since when is it the business of government to forbid or permit people to exercise what should be their natural right to make a living? Since when is it the business of government to forbid or permit people to freely contract with other people to provide them services?

Prostitution is a victimless crime. People who support laws against prostitution do not generally support laws against fornication and adultery. But why does the introduction of money suddenly turn

fornication and adultery into criminal offenses? If it is legal for a woman to provide free sexual services as often as she wants and to as many people as she wants, then how can it be illegal for her to charge for her services? How can something that is legal to give away be illegal if one charges for it?

Price gouging is simply charging market prices for goods that are in high demand and short supply.

Selling a kidney is a victimless crime. If an individual owns his own body, then he likewise owns all of the organs in his body. If you can't do what you wish with your own body without the government's permission, then you don't own your own body; the government does. Overseeing the procurement of bodily organs is an unconstitutional and illegitimate function of government that could be handled entirely and more efficiently by the private sector on the free market.

Gambling is a victimless crime. It may be addictive, foolish, wasteful, and financially ruinous, but what someone does with his own money is his own business, not the government's business. Everyone should have the freedom to do what

he wishes with his own money, including waste it, burn it, give it away, hide it under a mattress, squander it, or gamble it away.

Ticket scalping is a victimless crime. Ticket scalpers are middlemen and entrepreneurs who perform a valuable service. What could possibly be wrong with an exchange of tickets for cash between a willing buyer and a willing seller, as long as their activity does not violate the property rights of the owner of the ground where they make their exchange?

Price gouging is a victimless crime. Price-gouging laws are predicated on the fallacy that there is a just price for every good and service, and even more so during bad weather or some government-declared state of emergency. But price gouging is simply charging market prices for goods that are in high demand and short supply. Natural disasters don't negate economic laws. Price-gouging laws also grossly violate property rights.

Discrimination in hiring, selling, membership, or renting is a victimless crime. Discrimination is not aggression, force, violence, or threat. No one has the right to any particular job, hotel room, club membership, house, or apartment. Anti-discrimination and public ac-

commodations laws are an illegitimate function of government and an unconstitutional expansion of federal power that infringes upon property rights, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, free enterprise, and freedom of contract. To outlaw discrimination is to outlaw freedom of thought.

Usury is a victimless crime. It is the borrower who should be deciding what rate of interest is too high, not the government. But there is no right to borrow money at a particular rate of interest. If the borrower doesn't like the rate of interest offered to him by the lender, then he can choose not to borrow any money from that lender and go somewhere else. But how can a willing lender and a willing borrower freely agreeing on an interest rate possibly be committing a crime?

Drinking alcohol as a legal adult who has not reached the age of 21 is a victimless crime. Any American who has reached the age of 18 can get married, enter into contracts, vote in elections, and join the military. He is also legally responsible for all of his actions. It makes no sense at all that he cannot purchase and drink alcoholic beverages.

Doing business on Sunday is a victimless crime. In many states, cities, and counties, it is illegal to

sell automobiles or alcohol on Sunday. But if a business owns or controls its own property, then the business alone should determine what days of the week it will be open for business.

To outlaw discrimination is to outlaw freedom of thought.

None of that is to say that these illegal actions are equal in nature, but they do all have one thing in common: they are crimes in search of victims.

Murder, manslaughter, negligent homicide, lynching, torture, rape, robbery, burglary, theft, larceny, shoplifting, embezzlement, assault, battery, child abuse, looting, rioting, kidnapping, false imprisonment, and arson are real crimes that merit various degrees of punishment or imprisonment. But only persons who initiate violence or aggression against someone else should ever be incarcerated, and no one should ever be arrested or fined for committing a victimless crime. And certainly not for blasphemy. As Thomas Jefferson wrote in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, "The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there

are twenty gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my legs.”

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NEXT MONTH:
“Time to End the
Postal Monopoly”
by *Laurence M. Vance*

Experience should teach us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the government’s purposes are beneficent. Men born to freedom are naturally alert to repel invasion of their liberty by evil-minded rulers. The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious entrenchment by men of zeal, well-meaning, but without understanding.

— *Louis D. Brandeis*

The Fallacy of a Government Shutdown, the Reality of Freedom Lost

by *Richard M. Ebeling*



Another partial federal government “shutdown” began on December 22, 2018. The impression from the media and other commentaries easily suggested that the political and economic sky was about to fall. Various government departments were closed and some government services were reduced. And the fear was fostered that soon masses of people would be dying in the streets or driven from their homes owing to the lack of government spending.

The Democrats and Republicans, of course, all played the blame game by pointing the finger of responsibility to the other side for government’s not being able to fully do its presumed numerous neces-

sary duties. Donald Trump insisted that it was all because the Democrats would not appropriate the \$5.7 billion to build his wall along the southwestern border.

The Democrats insisted they were ready to fund every government department through the end of the fiscal year in September 2019, except for the Department of Homeland Security, which has responsibility for border security; they were ready to pass a continuing resolution to fund Homeland Security into February of this year, and then talk about border barriers.

The president responded that he was willing to keep the government partly closed for months, even years, to ensure proper funding for “the wall.” The Democrats replied that he was holding the nation and its government hostage to his half-baked promises to his political base and looking to the 2020 presidential election. The White House rebutted with the accusation that the new Democratic majority in the House of Representatives was withholding funds just to make the president look bad for their own political purposes.

Media frenzy over shutdown fears

The news outlets were all full of stories about government employees who were laid off or required as

“essential personnel” to keep working, but without pay. Empathy and indignation dominated the accounts of the financial sufferings soon to be faced by the heroic performers of government good works if their paychecks were not to get processed and mailed because the shutdown was going on and on.

The press especially picked up on the partial closing of national parks and monuments.

Because of the easy visual images, the press especially picked up on the partial closing of national parks and monuments around the country. Frustrated adults and saddened children were shown standing at closed gates and entrances, forced to turn away from a day of enjoyment and homage to the country’s national and natural heritage because of the antics of a tweet-addicted president or the obstructionism of congressional Democrats (depending on the news outlet’s political biases).

Other proud Americans were seen entering federal parks and nature areas, but without the reassuring guidance of gentle and informed park rangers; and with public toilets locked and garbage cans overflowing. Oh, the cruelty of it all! How could ____ (fill in the blank accord-

ing to which side you opposed in the shutdown struggle in Washington, D.C.) do this to our country? Why, it’s, well — the word almost comes to the lips if it is still politically correct — unAmerican.

Political clowns in the government center ring

Of course, it’s all a circus, with the politicians performing their acts in the center ring. We, the citizen audience, have been trained to laugh, cheer, jeer, or boo at what they are doing in front of us, and practically on cue, depending on the name on the ticket we’ve used to enter the big tent of everyday politics — Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative. “Peanuts; popcorn; get your program to find out what the next act is, and whether you are expected to laugh and cheer, or boo and hiss, at the political clowns entering the center ring.”

Everyone knows that the shutdown will end. Everyone knows that all those poor federal employees furloughed or expected to work for the duration without pay will get it all back in the first paychecks issued once the “crisis” has passed. True, the federal subcontractors not on Uncle Sam’s permanent payroll are out of luck, but, really, how many voters are they? And, besides,

when it's all over the media can run more stories on how they are the uncompensated injured because of Trump's meanness or Nancy Pelosi's and Chuck Schumer's power plays for 2020.

Federal employees and the illusion of a shutdown

The federal government in 2018 employed more than 2 million civilian workers, nationwide. It is no surprise that large numbers work in Virginia (145,000) and Maryland (121,000), but the largest number of federal workers is in California (155,000), with Texas not too far behind (133,000). If you want to be surrounded by the fewest number of federal employees, then Wyoming is the place for you (5,000), followed by North Dakota (5,500), South Dakota (7,500), Idaho (7,700), and Montana (8,600). In Florida there are about 90,000 federal employees, in Georgia there are 72,000, in Pennsylvania there are 62,000, in New York there are 61,000, in Ohio about 50,000, and in Illinois there are almost 45,000. The rest are spread around the rest of country in various numbers.

Only 25 percent of the government was actually affected by this partial shutdown. Most of the government's departments, bureaus,

and agencies were fully funded by congressional legislation for the current 2019 fiscal year that began on October 1, 2018. The parts of the federal government most affected by the December 22, 2018 shutdown were the departments of Commerce, Education, Energy, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, and Homeland Security; the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); the Food and Drug Administration (FDA); the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); the Internal Revenue Service (IRS); and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Only 25 percent of the government was actually affected by this partial shutdown.

But have no fear, gentle citizen, the IRS expected everyone to keep paying what the government says you owe out of your salary paychecks and business revenues, even if almost 90 percent of the agency's work force were initially furloughed. And more of them were called back to work (temporarily at no pay if necessary) because the White House decided that refunds must be sent to eligible tax-filers once the filing season begins in earnest in late January and early Feb-

ruary 2019, even if the shutdown were to go on for that long.

After all, politics may be bread and circuses, but if taxpayers don't get the refunds their tax returns say they are supposed to receive, well, then you could really find out what an unruly and angry electorate looks like; they might even negatively remember a politician's name, come voting time in November 2020.

Of those 2 million federal employees, about 800,000 were affected by the shutdown, but only 380,000 were actually sent home on furlough. The remaining 420,000 remained at work technically without pay until the shutdown ends. So, really, fewer than 20 percent of the federal work force were sent home on free, delayed-pay vacation. In fact, therefore, four out of every five federal employees were still on the job, most of them devoting their time to regulating, controlling, prohibiting, commanding, snooping, and surveilling you in various ways having nothing to do with the duties and responsibilities originally assigned to the federal government in the Constitution as imagined by the Founding Fathers.

The welfare state was not sent home.

For instance, the Social Security Administration and Medicare re-

mained fully manned, operating, and redistributing. In fiscal year 2018, which ended on September 30, 2018, Social Security paid out almost \$980 billion, while Medicare and Medicaid, combined, paid out an additional \$974 billion, or a total for these core entitlement programs of more than \$1.95 trillion. Both before and after the start of the shutdown, these major engines of income redistribution kept taking money in and shelling it out.

Four out of every five federal employees were still on the job.

In 2018, a total of nearly 68 million people received transfers of one type or another from the Social Security Administration. Also, in 2018, around 60 million people obtained Medicare benefits, while more than 66 million people were on the Medicaid rolls, with an additional 6.5 million receiving money from the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

No doubt there was overlap between people who were both Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid transfer beneficiaries; but suppose we just use, say, 80 million as a working number of total net recipients of core-entitlement redistribution programs; that would come to

one out of every four people in the United States.

Food stamps and farm subsidies

The media drew attention to the fact that the Department of Agriculture was one of the branches of the federal government not fully funded for the current fiscal year before the beginning of the December partial shutdown. More than 40 million Americans who were eligible and receiving support under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) were at risk of not receiving nearly \$5 billion in food stamps just in the second half of January and in February, 2019. That means that almost one of every nine people in the United State receives subsidized groceries from the American taxpayer under the food stamp program.

Also because the Department of Agriculture was not being fully funded before the shutdown, large segments of the American farm community were facing a turning off of the federal spending spigot until a budget deal was worked out. Hundreds of farmers faced not getting some share of \$12 billion approved by Congress and signed by the president to subsidize estimated monetary losses due to lost business with China caused by Presi-

dent Trump's tariff war with Beijing. A first segment of this sum, some \$7.5 billion, was paid out in September 2018, but affected farmers in the soybean, corn, wheat, and dairy sectors had to sign up for a second round of payments under the program before mid January to get more money; but the Agricultural Department's doors were shuttered.

The farm budget for 2019 allows for a total of \$140 billion to be spent.

Other farmers were unsure about receiving their more-traditional farm-transfer payments from price-support programs, taxpayer money for not growing crops, and government mortgage guarantees for families wanting to buy farms with no money down and wobbly credit histories. The farm budget for 2019 allows for a total of \$140 billion to be spent, including around \$60 billion for SNAP (or food stamp) outlays to those 40 million recipients.

Military spending and congressional perks

Also untouched by the shutdown was the Department of Defense budget, which came to more than \$600 billion in fiscal year 2018,

and is budgeted to be \$716 billion in fiscal year 2019. There are 1.35 million people actively serving in the branches of the U.S. armed forces, with an additional 800,000 in the reserves, for a total of more than 2.15 million men and women in the U.S. military. Of this total, 165,000 U.S. military personnel are stationed in 150 different countries around the world, of which more than 80,000 are in East Asia and nearly 65,000 are in bases in Europe.

Members of Congress saw to it that the “let’s shut the government down” game did not affect them.

By the way, members of Congress saw to it that the “let’s shut the government down” game did not affect them. Not only did congressmen not go home on furlough, but they didn’t even have their salaries and office budgets temporarily put on hold. No, “the servants of the people” made sure that they would not feel any discomfort during the drama. In fact, even the congressional gym in the Capitol building remained open so that senators and congressmen could relax and exercise at their leisure as they reflected on and debated the fate of the government. Unfortunately, the gym for

the congressional staffs was closed. Well, someone had to feel the pain, right?

If only they really went home

With those facts in mind, it is easy to understand why all the hoopla and hysterics about a government shutdown, and the hue and cry about an America at risk because federal employees were not on the job to keep the country running, were absolute nonsense. Indeed, the classical liberal and libertarian can only wish that there had been an actual government shutdown, with the vast majority of those employed by Uncle Sam having been sent home with nothing to do.

Indeed, some of us even might be willing to pay many of those people their tax-extorted salaries, if only they would stay home and mind more of their own personal business, rather than the affairs of others while being armed with the coercive powers of the state. The analogy is the small private enterpriser who may find it expedient to pay the neighborhood protection racketeers to leave him alone, instead of their breaking up his place of business and even threatening his life.

The political combatants in Washington, D.C., and the vast ma-

jority of those in the mainstream media have harped on the severity and magnitude of the real or potential damage from a government shutdown, even of the very limited size recently experienced. However, the friend of freedom draws other conclusions when the news reminds us of all that government does in our world today.

Life goes on in the private sector.

One of those conclusions is how little the American people really need the government. In spite of the warnings and worries, as the partial shutdown continued day after day, everyday life for most of us went on just as before. Businesses went about producing and selling desired goods and services. Income earners and consumers went about buying and using the things that provide the necessities, conveniences, and luxuries of personal and family life. The vast majority of people did not change their habits of acting in honest and law-abiding ways in their dealings with others. Americans continued to follow sports, go out for dinner, do some weekend shopping, go online to take advantage of sales and free deliveries, and enjoy free time with family and friends.

The only frustrations and inconveniences were in those areas of

life where government interferes with or preempts private enterprise. For instance, IPO offerings by some businesses planning to go public were made more difficult, but only because of the regulatory rules and restrictions imposed by the SEC, which could not be followed because SEC offices were not open for bureaucratic business.

The only frustrations and inconveniences were in those areas of life where government interferes with or preempts private enterprise.

Going to federally owned and managed national parks and monuments was made more difficult, but only because they are owned and overseen by Uncle Sam. If, as classical liberals and libertarians often argue, they were transferred to the hands of private enterprises or non-profit charities, they would not have been closed or made less than safe and unsanitary to use. In fact, in some areas of the country, the media reported, local businesses and community efforts took over the job of taking care of federal parks that remained opened, keeping them clean, safe, and orderly, given that the usual park personnel were on furlough.

Learning how little we should want from government

The lesson that should be and could be learned, but which neither the Republicans and Democrats nor the mainstream media had any incentive or intelligence to draw from this latest shutdown episode, is precisely how unnecessary and how hindering the federal government is in so much of our personal, social, and marketplace lives.

Large portions of the population are dependent on tax-based transfers of income and wealth.

That is, how much better off we would all be, if only all these federal departments, bureaus, and agencies were closed down and their buildings and physical assets simply auctioned off to competitive bidders in the private sector! To the extent that these properties could be converted to market-oriented uses and those formerly employed in them had found alternative work in private businesses, they would be employed in ways that help to improve the human condition rather than hinder and hamstring it. Another lesson to be learned is just how disturbing and frightening it should be considered that such large portions of the American population are depen-

dent on and recipients of tax-based transfers of income and wealth through the redistributing hand of the government. Tens upon tens of millions of people live off the largess of government's ability to coercively take from Peter to give to Paul.

In 2018, total federal government expenditures came to \$4.1 trillion, with taxes of \$3.33 trillion, and a budget deficit of \$780 billion, along with a civilian work force of more than two million and a military force (active service and reserves) of more than another two million. But in focusing on that, it should not be forgotten how very large other levels of government are as well. State and local governments, combined, spent an additional \$3.25 trillion in 2018. The total number of those working for state and local governments came to 19 million people.

That means that all levels of government in 2018 spent \$7.35 trillion out of an entire U.S. Gross Domestic Product of approximately \$21 trillion, or one-third of all that private enterprise succeeded in producing last year. In addition, all levels of governments absorbed nearly 15 percent of those employed in the American civilian labor force in 2018.

Even while admitting that under a more classical-liberal political re-

gime some people in society would have to be employed by federal, state, and local governments, and while accepting the fact that some of the private wealth produced in society would still have to be used even by a government limited to those smaller though essential responsibilities of properly protecting life, liberty, and honestly acquired property, the size and scope of government today is far beyond all such freedom-friendly bounds.

The “freedom dividend” from smaller government

In 1913, all levels of government, combined, absorbed only 8 percent of national income. If government could be reduced tomorrow just to that pre-World War I level of involvement in society, it would mean that, together, federal, state, and local governments would siphon off only \$1.7 trillion of 2018’s \$21 trillion GDP.

Expressed another way, \$5.65 trillion more of produced output would be retained by the private individuals and enterprises that produced it. Per capita, that would represent a gain of more than \$17,000 for each of the 330 million people living in the United States. One might even call it the “freedom dividend” that

could be gained by ending the current size and scope of the interventionist-welfare state and reducing government to a dimension at least significantly closer to the classical liberal ideal of the free society.

That is what should be focused on and emphasized. Not the smoke and mirrors of political power-lusters and ideological demagogues using the fiction that government shutdowns cause societal chaos. That only distracts people from the reality of freedom lost and the possibilities of reestablishing more of a land of liberty.

Richard M. Ebeling is the BB&T Distinguished Professor of Ethics and Free Enterprise Leadership at The Citadel. He was professor of Economics at Northwood University and at Hillsdale College and president of The Foundation for Economic Education, and served as vice president of academic affairs for The Future of Freedom Foundation.

NEXT MONTH:
“The America That Was — The Good and the Bad”
by Richard M. Ebeling

Resolved, That the General Assembly of Virginia, doth unequivocally express a firm resolution to maintain and defend the Constitution of the United States, and the Constitution of this State, against every aggression either foreign or domestic.... That this Assembly doth explicitly and peremptorily declare, that it views the powers of the federal government, as resulting from the compact, to which the states are parties; as limited by the plain sense and intention of the instrument constituting the compact; as no further valid than they are authorized by the grants enumerated in that compact; and that in case of deliberate, palpable, and dangerous exercise of other powers, not granted by the said compact, the states who are parties thereto, have the right, and are in duty bound, to interpose for arresting the progress of the evil, and for maintaining within their respective limits, the authorities, rights and liberties appertaining to them.

— James Madison

The Ongoing Destruction of the Minds of Children

by Gary Barnett



There can be no greater stretch of arbitrary power than to seize children from their parents, teach them whatever the authorities decree they shall be taught, and expropriate from the parents the funds to pay for the procedure.

— Isabel Paterson

Compulsory schooling is a travesty. To call it education is absurd. Real education is lifelong learning as an individual, while compulsory public schooling is the indoctrination of children as a collective exercise to bring all down to the lowest level. Prisons called schools are simply the forced means to stifle individual brilliance while promoting sameness and monotony. The result of this brainwashing is meant to

teach children to obey orders, and to be satisfied spending their lives in a virtual cage of ignorance, to never become entrepreneurs and dissenters.

With the recent death of the great John Taylor Gatto, the loss of a giant is evident. He was not only a pioneer in real education, but he discovered the true nature and genius that exists in so many children. The controllers who use the government school system as a way to dumb down the masses fully understand this potential genius. They are very fearful of it. So fearful in fact, that more than 100 years ago, they designed a mandatory school system as a way to control the common people. By training them to be good citizens and members of a collective society instead of individuals, the few could continue to control the many.

The experiment called compulsory schooling, now referred to as “public education,” began in Massachusetts in 1852, and became widespread just after the turn of the twentieth century. By 1910 the majority of children were in public schools. Since that time “education” as administered by the state has been a horrible failure, if learning was the desired end. But learning and knowledge were never the

goals of forced schooling; training the young to honor authority, discipline, and nationalism were the true goals sought. In that regard, public schooling has been completely successful. These institutions became the vehicle used to teach children to be managed instead of managing themselves. They have produced a soft society consumed by doubt and incompetence, and one that can function only as a mass.

In order to change this dynamic, a real education is necessary, but so long as parents continue to shirk their responsibility by allowing unknown state employees to raise and train their children, things can only get worse.

John Gatto knew that teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic could be accomplished in as few as 100 hours. The improvement of those skills would be self-taught at the appropriate time and place, as self-taught persons are far more advanced than those subject to and dependent on mass schooling. Any real study of most kids educated at home will expose this truth.

As I see it, it is up to parents to save their own children. That will not be an easy task, as most parents are products of the same state-schooling system that exists today,

and were taught long ago not to rock the boat or question authority. Everything should be questioned, and everything should be scrutinized. Questioning authority is the bane of the state apparatus, which is the reason compulsory schooling was implemented in the first place. It continues unabated as the dominant training discipline of this country's young.

**Learning and knowledge
were never the goals of forced
schooling.**

Take a look around and you may be shocked. How many have lost their imagination? How many seek counseling? How many feel inadequate and consider suicide? How many do you know who manage their lives by taking prescription drugs? How many are bored, emotionally wrecked, and afraid? Most of those people, a very large portion of the population, can no longer function as individuals. Such behavior should be expected, as the product turned out by the mandatory government school system has little ability to think and act without guidance. That is a direct result of being a prisoner of state-sponsored indoctrination centers from infancy to adulthood. That is why public

schooling is anathema to free-thinking, self-reliant, and responsible individuals.

Mass schooling guarantees a weak and compliant population, one that has lost the ability to think critically. It is an all-consuming addiction to mediocrity, and an escape from excellence. No society can continue to be free and prosper under such conditions. Why, as John Gatto asked, are we turning our kids over to total strangers who

can mold their minds with state propaganda for twelve years? It is time for parents to take back their children, and rescue them from a life of dependency.

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But it would be a simpler and less dangerous remedy to grant no privilege to any, giving to all equal cultivation and equal independence, and leaving every one to determine his own position. Natural inequality will soon make way for itself, and wealth will spontaneously pass into the hands of the most capable.

— Alexis de Tocqueville

Pull That Veil Away!

by Leonard E. Read



Combatting statism is not, as many assume, a project in propaganda; it is, instead, a probing operation. The problem is not one of merely getting others to grasp the little we already know; it is far more a matter of discovering that which we ourselves do not yet understand.

A major area of exploration, of course, is to find new and better ways to explain and dramatize the miracles of productivity and progress which attend free-market, private-property, limited-government practices; most of us are but dimly aware of the potentialities of freedom. But while we are probing into the positive, we must also explore and understand the negative: *why so many persons find socialism attractive*. Why? Let's explore this one.

Why do people endorse the welfare state? Certainly, it will not do to

ascribe bad motives to all of them — such as malevolence, greed, and a thirst for power. These unwholesome drives doubtless do account for many turn-man-over-to-government positions but they utterly fail to explain why countless clergymen, educators, business leaders, and others of good intent — even big taxpayers — have joined the state-welfarist landslide. Please examine the following as a possible answer.

Based on some thirty years of personal probing, I am now convinced that most advocates of state welfarism are motivated by a kindly sentiment. These advocates observe or read or hear about people living in conditions that are below par; slums, poor diet, inadequate medical and hospital opportunities, too high prices for their power and light and other things they buy, too low prices for their labor, and so on and on. These sensitive people see instances of misery and misfortune; their heart goes out to the lame, the halt, the blind, the afflicted. No question about it, their desire to remedy the ills of mankind is motivated by kindness. Admirable, up to this point!

Now, what do most of these kindly people advocate as a means to satisfy their compassionate ends?

They advocate government aid. Such kindness is myopic or shortsighted, for these folk see no more than meets the eye; that is, they have no awareness beyond the benefits they would bestow upon certain individuals or groups. What they fail to see is the burden their government aid inflicts on millions of individuals outside their perspective. They are conscious only of trying to help those they have in view; they are blind to — unconscious of — the anonymous millions their system plunders, destroys. Their remedy consists of a presumed kindness which gratifies them and a major injustice of which they are unaware. Moral, social, political myopia, nothing less!

How circumspect is the individual in his own little orbit! Within his circle of acquaintance and personal experience he behaves like a human being. Unless demented, he would no more think of pilfering from these few than he would stand by and watch one of them starve to death. Indeed, not!

But, if he be shortsighted, observe his behavior toward those outside his orbit, these being well over 99 percent of the population. To him these millions are only a mass blur, a mere something he lumps off as “the people.” With re-

spect to this human lump he becomes inhuman. To “it” he accords no attributes of individuality; “it” he considers fit for exploitation: send the police force into “it” and obtain funds for not growing crops or to finance the local urban renewal or to subsidize a thousand and one little objects of his own peculiar “kindness.” Motivated by kindness and in the name of kindness, these victims of myopia commit an enormous unkindness!

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What the victim of myopic kindness overlooks is that most of the millions outside his orbit — those in the great mass blur — have little orbits of their own, each suffering the same myopia, each having him relegated to an “it” to be exploited. Does this not explain how a kindly sentiment, when coupled with shortsightedness, produces so much of man’s inhumanity to man?

Those, on the other hand, who are blessed with a modicum of vision or far-sightedness are not confronted with any mass blur. They clearly see that every individual

outside their own orbit has the same right to and yearning for life as they themselves do. They know that any real kindness to one cannot have its origin in an unkindness to another; that any practice which contradicts universal principles must, perforce, be unprincipled.

Why such an ado about myopic kindness? Simply because this shortsightedness, when associated with kindly sentiments, partially explains why good people are lending themselves to a worldwide devolution; and, also, because this shortsightedness can, in many instances, be easily overcome. All of us suffer myopia in varying degrees. All of us have experienced staring at a thing and seeing nothing or reading a line and perceiving nothing. Then someone has pointed out

the beauty or the truth and, behold, we see or perceive! Truth and beauty are all about us and, for those who seek, little more is required than to have someone — a teacher — pull the veil away.

This, we believe, is the spirit of freedom, the spirit in which free men are bound to proceed. We further believe that the more who acquire this spirit of everlasting inquiry, the more quickly will freedom prevail among men.

Leonard E. Read (1898–1983) was the founder and president of The Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). Reprinted from Essays on Liberty, Volume XI, published in 1964 by The Foundation for Economic Education.

Let us labor to think clearly. This is the source of moral conduct.

— Blaise Pascal

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