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Arms are the only true badges of liberty.

— *Andrew Fletcher*

FUTURE OF FREEDOM



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Adhering to Principle to Achieve Liberty, Part 1

by Jacob G. Hornberger



I believe that when it comes to liberty, principles and ideals are everything. It has been principles and ideals that have given us such grand and glorious achievements as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, habeas corpus, due process of law, and trial by jury.

I also believe that adherence to principle is key to achieving a free society. Abandoning principle for the sake of popularity, acceptance, or credibility will doom any chance we have for achieving freedom in our lifetime.

Imagine that you live in Alabama in 1858. You learn of a slavery-reform group that calls for better conditions for slaves on the plantations. The group calls for

fewer lashings, shorter work hours, better food, and improved health-care. Even though the organization is being criticized by plantation owners, you decide to join and support it. You want to see the slavery system reformed in positive ways. You are doing your best to make life better for the slaves as they live and work on the plantations. No doubt the slaves will appreciate what you are doing for them.

There is one big problem, however: Slavery reform would not be freedom. Achieving freedom would require the end, not the reform, of slavery.

Now, bring yourself back to the 21st century. We Americans live what can be called a life of serfdom under a welfare-warfare state, a type of governmental system in which the state is sovereign and the citizens are subordinate.

Conservatives and liberals and even many libertarians have devoted their lives, resources, and energies to reforming and improving the welfare-warfare state system. Welfare reform. Regulatory reform. Criminal-justice reform. Income-tax reform. Drug-war reform. Monetary reform. Social Security reform. Medicare reform. Foreign-policy reform. Education reform. Reform of the Pentagon, the CIA, and the NSA.

Such reforms, of course, might well improve the lives of American serfs, just as slavery reforms in Alabama might have improved the lives of the slaves. But it is important to recognize that a reformed serfdom is not freedom. If all that we libertarians do is succeed in reforming the serfdom system under which we live, the most we will have achieved is an improved way of life as serfs. We will not have achieved our freedom, which is what libertarianism is really all about. Freedom necessarily consists of dismantling every infringement on freedom. It requires the repeal, abolition, or end of every single government program, law, regulation, department, and agency that forms a part of the welfare-warfare state.

Are Americans free?

There are two critically important questions that I believe should be discussed and debated all across America, particularly in the context of the 2020 political races: What does it mean to be free? And what is the legitimate role of government in a free society?

Why are these two questions so critically important?

First, in order to achieve a genuinely free society, it is necessary for Americans to come to the realiza-

tion that they are not genuinely free, no matter how much they might believe they are.

Second, once people realize that they aren't free, then they have to make the choice whether they want to be free.

Third, if they want to be free, an understanding of the legitimate role of government in a free society becomes imperative.

**Freedom necessarily
consists of dismantling every
infringement on freedom.**

The fact is that most Americans honestly believe that they are free. This is one of the major distinguishing characteristics between non-libertarians, including both conservatives and liberals (i.e., progressives), and libertarians. Non-libertarians are convinced that Americans are a free people and that they live in a free country. Libertarians know that that simply isn't true.

I myself grew up thinking that I was free. Like most other children in the 1950s and 1960s, I was sent into the state's public-schooling system. Most children who are sent into that system end up thinking the same thing that I did — that they live in a free country. That's because one of the main purposes of

the state's educational system is to indoctrinate children into believing that they are free. When I was a public-school student for 12 years, everyone in class would be required to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance, which stated in part that America was a country where there was "liberty and justice for all."

It wasn't until I discovered libertarianism that I realized the deep and insidious nature of the lie with which I had been indoctrinated. Libertarianism enabled me to "break through" the years of indoctrination and see the truth. The same applies to every other libertarian.

Non-libertarians have not yet achieved that breakthrough. At the risk of belaboring the obvious, if a person is convinced he's already free, he is not going to do anything to achieve a free society. The words of the 19th-century German thinker Johann von Goethe describe the plight of American non-libertarians: "None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free."

The mindset of modern-day Americans, including both conservatives and liberals, also explains their befuddlement over our libertarian goal of achieving a genuinely free society. As far as they are concerned, if one is already free, then

what's the point of striving to achieve a free society?

Let us examine particular aspects of America's governmental system in order to demonstrate this phenomenon more clearly.

Social Security and the welfare state

Contrary to popular opinion, especially among seniors, Social Security is not a retirement program. There is no retirement fund into which seniors have "contributed" their money over their lifetime. There are no individual lockboxes at Fort Knox with the name of each senior on them that contain each person's "contributions."

**If a person is convinced
he's already free, he is not going
to do anything to achieve
a free society.**

In fact, no one makes any contributions at all. People pay taxes, just as people throughout history have paid taxes. The government uses those tax revenues in certain ways, for example to pay the expenses of running the government. Taxes are not contributions. They are forced exactions imposed by the government. And the government normally spends its tax revenues as soon as it receives them.

The idea of taxing the young to give money to seniors originated among German socialists at the end of the 1800s. American Progressives embraced the idea and made it their goal to have it adopted here in the United States. Social Security was adopted in the United States the 1930s.

Social Security is based on the concept of mandatory “charity.” Under this system, the state forcibly collects taxes in order to give the money to seniors, after deducting the necessary amount to cover its expenses to perform that service. The system in which the state takes money from people to whom it belongs in order to give it to others has come to be known as the “welfare state.” Based on the Marxian principle “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need,” Social Security is a variation of the socialist paradigm.

Medicare and Medicaid are based on the same principle — taking money from one group of people and using it to provide health-care services to another group of people. The same applies to farm subsidies, education grants, foreign aid, and every other welfare-state program.

It’s worth noting that the American people lived without income taxation and Social Security, Medi-

care, Medicaid, and other welfare-state programs, departments, and agencies for more than a century. From the time the United States came into existence in the late 1700s until the welfare state was adopted in the 1930s, charity was voluntary. Our American ancestors believed that a system of voluntary charity was the only system that was compatible with the principles of a free society.

**The welfare state
constitutes a massive
infringement on freedom.**

There is no way that one can reconcile a system based on mandatory “charity” with the principles of individual freedom. A genuinely free society is one in which people are free to keep everything they earn and decide for themselves what to do with it.

Thus, with its principle of coerced charity, the welfare state constitutes a massive infringement on freedom. Therefore, a necessary prerequisite for achieving a free society is lifting that infringement. Leaving Social Security intact necessarily defers that freedom.

Conservatives and liberals, needless to say, are both committed to preserving Social Security, Medi-

care, Medicaid, and most other welfare-state programs. They believe that people cannot be trusted with freedom. They are convinced that most young people would turn their backs on their parents and grandparents in a time of emergency or need. They say that young people simply cannot be trusted with the freedom to make that decision on their own. They say that they need to be forced to care for their loved ones. If Social Security and Medicare and other welfare-state programs were abolished today, they claim, there would be people dying in the streets tomorrow. Conservatives and liberals have no faith in freedom or a free people. Their system of state-mandated “charity” is based on a lack of faith in freedom, in themselves, in others, and even in God, who vested man with the gift of free will.

We libertarians believe otherwise. We believe that freedom necessarily entails the right to keep everything a person earns and decide for himself what to do with it — save, invest, donate, or spend. In a genuinely free society, no one is forced to share his money with anyone, including his parents, grandparents, the poor, or some foreign ruler. We also believe that people can be trusted with freedom and

that a free people will respond positively to honoring their mother and father and helping others in need, all on a voluntary basis.

Many conservatives and liberals know that Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other welfare-state programs contradict the principles of a free society. They don’t care. They are willing to relinquish freedom for the “security” that comes with the dole society. Having a government “safety net” is more important to them than a genuinely free society, one in which there is no safety net, one in which everyone is free to keep his own money and decide what to do with it.

Conservatives and liberals have no faith in freedom or a free people.

But there are still many non-libertarians who simply do not realize that the welfare state contradicts the principles of freedom. Remember: They are convinced that they are free even though they know that they live under a welfare-state system.

That’s why these two questions should be discussed and debated all across the country and are so critically important: What does it mean to be free, and what is the legitimate role of government in a free society? In order to want freedom, peo-

ple have to first discover what we libertarians have discovered — that we are not free and that one of the reasons we are not free is that we live in a system based on mandatory “charity.”

**One of the reasons we are not free
is that we live in a system based
on mandatory “charity.”**

Now, it is true that when non-libertarians discover that they are not free, they might well decide to join the ranks of conservatives and liberals and choose welfare-state security over freedom. But at least then they are making a conscious choice. And when people realize that they are faced with a choice, at least there exists the possibility that they will join up with us libertarians and choose freedom over security.

This is where methodology and principle come into play insofar as we libertarians are concerned.

Immediate repeal

When it comes to Social Security and Medicare, many libertarians have decided to settle for reform rather than stand firmly for repeal and abolition. Given that a free society necessarily entails lifting all infringements on liberty, libertarian reformers have effectively

surrendered any hope for a free society in the near term. They have resigned themselves to doing their best to improve the lot of the serfs on the plantation. They have given up on achieving freedom.

One popular libertarian reform plan, for example, calls for replacing the current Social Security system with one based on mandatory retirement accounts. Under this plan, the state would require everyone to contribute a certain amount of money into a government-approved and government-regulated retirement account. The plan would be like a mandatory IRA or 401k program.

Would that type of Social Security system be better than the one that we have now? Maybe, maybe not. But notice something important: There would still be governmental force involved. People would not be free to decide for themselves whether to save for their retirement or not. That freedom of choice would be denied them. Such a plan would fall under the rubric of “economic fascism,” a system in which private ownership of property is allowed but only under strict government control or regulation. It is not a coincidence that proponents of this particular Social Security reform plan use as their model the Social Security program of

Chilean Gen. Augusto Pinochet, a brutal and ruthless unelected military dictator.

Notice something else important: The adoption of a fascist Social Security program would necessarily mean that freedom would be deferred for a long time, at the very least for decades. That's because the reform plan would inevitably remain in existence at least for the life span of today's seniors.

There is something else to consider about such a plan: today's seniors. Even if a fascist retirement plan were adopted, that would cover only young people today. What about today's seniors? What would happen to them under such a plan? There is no way that libertarian proponents of a fascist retirement program would leave today's seniors hanging. They know that to get their fascist plan adopted, they would have to show how today's seniors would continue to be taken care of by the government.

Thus, a fascist Social Security plan would inevitably have to be a hybrid Social Security plan, one that maintains the old socialist system for today's seniors and simultaneously adopts the fascist system for younger people. Let's say that seniors live, on average, another 20 years. That necessarily means free-

dom is deferred for another two decades. And then what if 20 years from now, people who are 40 today claim that they have a "right" to get back what they "put in." Saying yes to them would mean another 20 years of freedom deferred. That means at least 40 more years before libertarians can achieve the free society. And then what if the second batch of 40-year-olds claims, "We put it in and so we have a right to get it back"? It means that freedom is deferred forever.

For those of us who want freedom now, neither a socialist nor fascist Social Security plan is satisfactory. The only thing that is consistent with freedom is the immediate repeal, not the reform, of Social Security as well as Medicare, Medicaid, education grants, farm subsidies, foreign aid, and every other welfare-state program.

Is such a goal attainable? If so, how do we achieve it?

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

NEXT MONTH:

"Adhering to Principle to Achieve Liberty, Part 2"
by Jacob G. Hornberger

America's Benevolent Bombing of Serbia

by James Bovard



Twenty years ago, President Bill Clinton commenced bombing Serbia in the name of human rights, justice, and ethnic tolerance. Approximately 1,500 Serb civilians were killed by NATO bombing in one of the biggest sham morality plays of the modern era. As British professor Philip Hammond recently noted, the 78-day bombing campaign “was not a purely military operation: NATO also destroyed what it called ‘dual-use’ targets, such as factories, city bridges, and even the main television building in downtown Belgrade, in an attempt to terrorise the country into surrender.”

Clinton’s unprovoked attack on Serbia, intended to help ethnic Albanians seize control of Kosovo, set a precedent for “humanitarian”

warring that was invoked by supporters of George W. Bush’s unprovoked attack on Iraq, Barack Obama’s bombing of Libya, and Donald Trump’s bombing of Syria.

Clinton remains a hero in Kosovo, and there is an 11-foot statue of him standing in the capitol, Pristina, on Bill Clinton Boulevard. A commentator in the United Kingdom’s *Guardian* newspaper noted that the statue showed Clinton “with a left hand raised, a typical gesture of a leader greeting the masses. In his right hand he is holding documents engraved with the date when NATO started the bombardment of Serbia, 24 March 1999.” It would have been a more accurate representation if Clinton was shown standing on the corpses of the women, children, and others killed in the U.S. bombing campaign.

Bombing Serbia was a family affair in the Clinton White House. Hillary Clinton revealed to an interviewer in the summer of 1999, “I urged him to bomb. You cannot let this go on at the end of a century that has seen the major holocaust of our time. What do we have NATO for if not to defend our way of life?” A biography of Hillary Clinton, written by Gail Sheehy and published in late 1999, stated that Mrs. Clinton had refused to talk to the

president for eight months after the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke. She resumed talking to her husband only when she phoned him and urged him in the strongest terms to begin bombing Serbia; the president began bombing within 24 hours. Alexander Cockburn observed in the *Los Angeles Times*,

It's scarcely surprising that Hillary would have urged President Clinton to drop cluster bombs on the Serbs to defend "our way of life." The first lady is a social engineer. She believes in therapeutic policing and the duty of the state to impose such policing. War is more social engineering, "fixitry" via high explosive, social therapy via cruise missile.... As a tough therapeutic cop, she does not shy away from the most abrupt expression of the therapy: the death penalty.

I followed the war closely from the start, but selling articles to editors bashing the bombing was as easy as pitching paeans to Scientology. Instead of breaking into newspaper, my venting occurred instead in my journal:

April 7, 1999: Much of the media and most of the American public are evaluating Clinton's Serbian policy based on the pictures of the bomb damage — rather than by asking whether there is any coherent purpose or justification for bombing. The ultimate triumph of photo opportunities.... What a travesty and national disgrace for this country.

April 17: My bottom line on the Kosovo conflict: I hate holy wars. And this is a holy war for American good deeds — or for America's saintly self-image? Sen. John McCain said the war is necessary to "uphold American values." Make me barf! Just another ... Hitler-of-the-month attack.

May 13: This damn Serbian war ... is a symbol of all that is wrong with the righteous approach to the world ... and to problems within this nation.

The KLA

The Kosovo Liberation Army's savage nature was well known before the Clinton administration formally christened them "freedom fighters" in 1999. The previous year, the State Department condemned

“terrorist action by the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army.” The KLA was heavily involved in drug trafficking and had close ties to Osama bin Laden. Arming the KLA helped Clinton portray himself as a crusader against injustice and shift public attention after his impeachment trial. Clinton was aided by many congressmen eager to portray U.S. bombing as an engine of righteousness. Sen. Joe Lieberman whooped that the United States and the KLA “stand for the same values and principles. Fighting for the KLA is fighting for human rights and American values.”

American and NATO forces stood by as the KLA resumed its ethnic cleansing, bombing Serbian churches, and oppressing any non-Muslims.

In early June 1999, the *Washington Post* reported that “some presidential aides and friends are describing [bombing] Kosovo in Churchillian tones, as Clinton’s ‘finest hour.’” Clinton administration officials justified killing civilians because, it alleged the Serbs were committing genocide in Kosovo. After the bombing ended, no evidence of genocide was found, but Clinton and Britain’s Tony Blair continued

boasting as if their war had stopped a new Hitler in his tracks.

In a speech to American troops in a Thanksgiving 1999 visit, Clinton declared that the Kosovar children “love the United States ... because we gave them their freedom back.” Perhaps Clinton saw freedom as nothing more than being tyrannized by people of the same ethnicity. As the Serbs were driven out of Kosovo, Kosovar Albanians became increasingly oppressed by the KLA, which ignored its commitment to disarm. The *Los Angeles Times* reported on November 20, 1999,

As a postwar power struggle heats up in Kosovo Albanian politics, extremists are trying to silence moderate leaders with a terror campaign of kidnappings, beatings, bombings, and at least one killing. The intensified attacks against members of the moderate Democratic League of Kosovo, or LDK, have raised concerns that radical ethnic Albanians are turning against their own out of fear of losing power in a democratic Kosovo.

American and NATO forces stood by as the KLA resumed its

ethnic cleansing, slaughtering Serbian civilians, bombing Serbian churches, and oppressing non-Muslims. Almost a quarter million Serbs, Gypsies, Jews, and other minorities fled Kosovo after Clinton promised to protect them. In March 2000 renewed fighting broke out when the KLA launched attacks into Serbia, trying to seize territory that it claimed historically belonged to ethnic Albanians. UN Human Rights Envoy Jiri Dienstbier reported that “the [NATO] bombing hasn’t solved any problems. It only multiplied the existing problems and created new ones. The Yugoslav economy was destroyed. Kosovo is destroyed. There are hundreds of thousands of people unemployed now.”

U.S. complicity in atrocities

Prior to the NATO bombing, American citizens had no responsibility for atrocities committed by either Serbs or ethnic Albanians. However, after American planes bombed much of Serbia into rubble to drive the Serbian military out of Kosovo, Clinton effectively made the United States responsible for the safety of the remaining Serbs in Kosovo. That was equivalent to forcibly disarming a group of people, and then standing by, whistling

and looking at the ground, while they are slaughtered. Since the United States promised to bring peace to Kosovo, Clinton bears some responsibility for every burnt church, every murdered Serbian grandmother, every new refugee column streaming north out of Kosovo. Despite those problems, Clinton bragged at a December 8, 1999, press conference that he was “very, very proud” of what the United States had done in Kosovo.

“The [NATO] bombing hasn’t solved any problems. It only multiplied the existing problems and created new ones.”

I had a chapter on the Serbian bombing campaign titled “Moralizing with Cluster Bombs” in *Feeling Your Pain: The Explosion and Abuse of Government Power in the Clinton-Gore Years* (St. Martin’s Press, 2000), which sufficed to spur at least one or two reviewers to attack the book. Norman Provizer, the director of the Golda Meir Center for Political Leadership, scoffed in the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, “Bovard chastises Clinton for an illegal, undeclared war in Kosovo without ever bothering to mention that, during the entire run of American history, there have been

but four official declarations of war by Congress.”

As the chaotic situation in post-war Kosovo became stark, it was easier to work in jibes against the debacle. In an October 2002 *USA Today* article (“Moral High Ground Not Won on Battlefield”) bashing the Bush administration’s push for war against Iraq, I pointed out, “A desire to spread freedom does not automatically confer a license to kill.... Operation Allied Force in 1999 bombed Belgrade, Yugoslavia, into submission purportedly to liberate Kosovo. Though Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic raised the white flag, ethnic cleansing continued — with the minority Serbs being slaughtered and their churches burned to the ground in the same way the Serbs previously oppressed the ethnic Albanians.”

**A desire to spread freedom
does not automatically confer a
license to kill.**

In a 2011 review for *The American Conservative*, I scoffed, “After NATO planes killed hundreds if not thousands of Serb and ethnic Albanian civilians, Bill Clinton could pirouette as a savior. Once the bombing ended, many of the Serbs remaining in Kosovo were slaugh-

tered and their churches burned to the ground. NATO’s ‘peace’ produced a quarter million Serbian, Jewish, and Gypsy refugees.”

In 2014, a European Union task force confirmed that the ruthless cabal that Clinton empowered by bombing Serbia committed atrocities that included murdering persons to extract and sell their kidneys, livers, and other body parts. Clint Williamson, the chief prosecutor of a special European Union task force, declared in 2014 that senior members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) had engaged in “unlawful killings, abductions, enforced disappearances, illegal detentions in camps in Kosovo and Albania, sexual violence, forced displacements of individuals from their homes and communities, and desecration and destruction of churches and other religious sites.”

The *New York Times* reported that the trials of Kosovo body snatchers may be stymied by cover-ups and stonewalling: “Past investigations of reports of organ trafficking in Kosovo have been undermined by witnesses’ fears of testifying in a small country where clan ties run deep and former members of the KLA are still feted as heroes. Former leaders of the KLA occupy high posts in the govern-

ment.” American politicians almost entirely ignored the scandal. Vice President Joe Biden hailed former KLA leader and Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci in 2010 as “the George Washington of Kosovo.” A few months later, a Council of Europe investigative report tagged Thaci as an accomplice to the body-trafficking operation.

Clinton’s war on Serbia opened a Pandora’s box from which the world still suffers. Because politicians and pundits portrayed that war as a moral triumph, it was easier for subsequent presidents to portray U.S. bombing as the self-evident triumph of good over evil. Honest assessments of wrongful

killings remain few and far between in media coverage.

James Bovard is a policy advisor to The Future of Freedom Foundation and is the author of a new ebook, Freedom Frauds: Hard Lessons in American Liberty, published by FFF, Public Policy Hooligan, Attention Deficit Democracy, and eight other books.

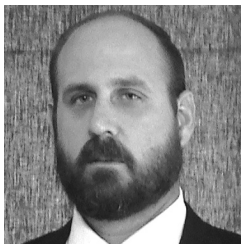
NEXT MONTH:
“2002 Landmarks on the Road to 1984”
by James Bovard

Economics is not about things and tangible material objects; it is about men, their meanings and actions.

— Ludwig von Mises

Americans Didn't Need the Original New Deal

by Laurence M. Vance



We have heard much this year about how much the country needs a Green New Deal to reverse the negative effects of climate change, ensure economic security, revamp the nation's transportation system, restore damaged ecosystems, secure a sustainable environment, and achieve justice and equality. Overlooked in all of the analyses of the Green New Deal is that Americans didn't need the original New Deal.

The Green New Deal

On February 7, newly elected Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) introduced in the U.S. House a resolution (H.Res.109) "recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal."

On the same day, the veteran Sen. Edward Markey (D-Mass.) introduced a companion resolution (S.Res.59) in the U.S. Senate. According to the U.S. Senate, "A simple resolution addresses matters entirely within the prerogative of one house," is "also used to express the sentiments of a single house," or may simply give "advice." Simple resolutions require neither the approval of the other House of Congress nor the signature of the president, as they do not have the force of law.

Prior to the introduction of her Green New Deal resolution, Representative Ocasio-Cortez issued a "Green New Deal FAQ." A similar FAQ sheet was sent to the media on the day the resolution was introduced. The Green New Deal "is a 10-year plan to create a greenhouse gas neutral society that creates unprecedented levels of prosperity and wealth for all while ensuring economic and environmental justice and security." The Green New Deal achieves this "through a World War 2 scale mobilization that focuses the robust and creative economic engine of the United States on reversing climate change by fully rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure, restoring our natural ecosystems, dramatically expanding renewable power generation,

overhauling our entire transportation system, upgrading all our buildings, jumpstarting US clean manufacturing, transforming US agriculture, and putting our nation's people to work doing what they do best: making the impossible possible." The Green New Deal also "calls for an upgrade to the basic economic securities enjoyed by all people in the US to ensure everybody benefits from the newly created wealth." This "upgrade" builds on "FDR's second bill of rights" by guaranteeing to every American:

- A job with family-sustaining wages, family and medical leave, vacations, and retirement security
- High-quality education, including higher education and trade schools
- High-quality health care
- Clean air and water and access to nature
- Healthy food
- Safe, affordable, adequate housing
- An economic environment free of monopolies
- Economic security to all who are unable or unwilling to work

And that is just the beginning: "The economic securities and programs for justice and equity laid out in this Green New Deal resolution are a bare minimum of what we need to do to successfully execute the Green New Deal."

It's not just the Democratic Party that is pushing the Green New Deal.

And how will the Green New Deal be paid for? It will be paid for "the same way we paid for the original New Deal, World War II, the bank bailouts, tax cuts for the rich, and decades of war — with public money appropriated by Congress." But also, "the Federal Reserve can extend credit to power these projects and investments," "new public banks can be created to extend credit," and the government can "take an equity stake in Green New Deal projects so the public gets a return on its investment." In the end, the Green New Deal is not an expenditure; it is "an investment in our economy that should grow our wealth as a nation."

It's not just the Democratic Party that is pushing the Green New Deal. Not at all surprising, the Green Party also supports a Green New Deal. Although the center-

piece of the Green New Deal “is a transition to 100% clean energy by 2030,” it also “includes an Economic Bill of Rights, which ensures all citizens the right to employment through a Full-Employment Program that will create 20 million jobs by implementing a nationally funded, but locally controlled direct-employment initiative.” Unemployment offices will be replaced “with local employment offices offering public sector jobs that are ‘stored’ in job banks in order to take up any slack in private sector employment.” The Green New Deal “will provide assistance to workers and local communities that now have workers employed in the fossil fuel industry and to the developing world as it responds to climate-change damage caused by the industrial world.” It will “end unemployment in America once and for all by guaranteeing a job at a living wage for every American willing and able to work.” Once implemented, the Green New Deal “will revive the economy, turn the tide on climate change and make wars for oil obsolete.”

And how will the Green Party’s Green New Deal be paid for? “We will need revenues between \$700 billion to \$1 trillion annually for the Green New Deal,” says the Green

Party. Cutting the military budget by 50 percent and subsequently saving “several hundred billion dollars per year would go a very long way toward creating green jobs at home.” The revenue from a carbon tax “will provide funding for the Green New Deal as well as safety nets for low-income households vulnerable to higher prices on certain items due to rising carbon taxes.” A tax “on the assets of oil and gas companies” will “help deal with the effects of climate change and smooth the transition to a low-carbon economy.” Wealthy Americans “should pay increased taxes to help with the cost of transitioning to a green economy.” The top income tax rate and the estate tax should both be raised. And on top of all that, “the Green New Deal largely pays for itself in healthcare savings from the prevention of fossil fuel-related diseases, including asthma, heart attacks, strokes and cancer.”

The Green Party’s Green New Deal invokes Roosevelt’s New Deal several times.

The Green Party’s Green New Deal invokes Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal several times: “building on the concept of FDR’s New Deal,” “establish a Renewable Energy Ad-

ministration on the scale of FDR's hugely successful Rural Electrification Administration," "this would include a WPA-style public jobs program." "So it's like the New Deal that got us out of the Great Depression, but it's a Green New Deal so it also solves the crisis of the climate," says Jill Stein, Green Party presidential candidate in 2012 and 2016.

The cost of the Green New Deal has been conservatively estimated in the tens of trillions of dollars — and that is the case even if only the costs of guaranteed jobs, universal health care, affordable housing, and food security are considered. Indeed, according to Robert Murphy, senior economist with the Institute for Energy Research (IER), "The Green New Deal is simply a wish list of standard progressive social goals, rather than an actual blueprint for fighting the technical problem of (alleged) human-caused harmful climate change." The underlying philosophy of the Green New Deal is that government intervention in the economy and society is absolutely essential to effect the change that is needed to right every wrong and fix every problem.

The original New Deal

Much as conservative politicians invoke the name of Ronald

Reagan when they want to hoodwink grassroots conservatives into believing how "conservative" they are, so liberal and progressive supporters of the Green New Deal invoke the original New Deal. Just as the unregulated free market and unbridled capitalism caused the Great Depression and Roosevelt's New Deal cured the Great Depression, so only the "massive investment" of government akin to the original New Deal can save the planet and eliminate economic injustice and inequality. The New Deal is viewed as the model for what government should do for the poor, needy, and vulnerable members of society in times of economic instability, crisis, and uncertainty.

"The Green New Deal is simply a wish list of standard progressive social goals."

As explained by journalist and New Deal historian Michael Hiltzik, "The New Deal instilled in Americans an unshakable faith that their government stands ready to succor them in times of need. Put another way, the New Deal established the concept of economic security as a collective responsibility." The only reason the radical goals of the Green New Deal can even get a

hearing is that most Americans — of any political persuasion — look favorably on the original New Deal. After all, not only did it (eventually) end the Great Depression, it gave us Social Security — the most popular government program in history, and which is defended by conservative Republicans to this day. Yet it was government intervention by Presidents Herbert Hoover and Roosevelt that exacerbated and prolonged the Depression. The New Deal made the Depression the Great Depression.

**It was government intervention
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After heading the federal Food Administration during World War I, Hoover concluded, in the words of Jim Powell, author of *FDR's Folly: How Roosevelt and His New Deal Prolonged the Great Depression*, “that the vast power of the U.S. government could do wonders during an emergency.” He thought that government could spend its way out of a depression. Hoover supported dramatically increased subsidies to business and agriculture and massive public-works projects. To pay for this spending, he backed

both higher tariffs and higher taxes. In 1930, he signed into law the Smoot-Hawley tariff — the most protectionist legislation in U.S. history — that crippled international trade. In 1932, he signed into law the Revenue Act — the largest peacetime tax increase in history — which revived wartime excise taxes, imposed new taxes, restored eliminated taxes, reduced exemptions and credits, raised the corporate income tax, and doubled the estate tax and personal income tax.

The 1932 Democratic Party platform, as summarized by Laurence Reed, president of the Foundation for Economic Education, in *Great Myths of the Great Depression* “called for a 25 percent reduction in federal spending, a balanced federal budget, a sound gold currency, the removal of government from areas that belonged more appropriately to private enterprise and an end to the extravagance of Hoover’s farm programs.” Throughout the 1932 election campaign, “Roosevelt blasted Hoover for spending and taxing too much, boosting the national debt, choking off trade, and putting millions on the dole.” He accused Hoover of “reckless and extravagant” spending, of thinking “that we ought to center control of everything in Washington as rapid-

ly as possible,” and of presiding over “the greatest spending administration in peacetime in all of history.” Roosevelt’s running mate charged that Hoover was “leading the country down the path of socialism.”

During a speech on July 2 from the floor of the 1932 Democratic Convention in Chicago, Roosevelt said, “I pledge to myself a new deal for the American people.” The phrase was not original to Roosevelt, but he made it his own. Once elected, he did everything he accused Hoover of and more. His remedies, which were inspired by European socialist or fascist models, were, in the words of Rexford Tugwell, one of the architects of the New Deal, “extrapolated from programs that Hoover started.”

Once elected, Roosevelt did everything he accused Hoover of and more.

The New Deal greatly increased the power of the presidency. In his first inaugural address, Roosevelt asked for “broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.” He got it. He issued 3,728 executive orders, including one that ordered Ameri-

cans to surrender their gold to the government or face a fine of \$10,000 and ten years in prison. The New Deal’s National Recovery Administration (NRA) forced most manufacturing industries into cartels with codes that regulated prices. The New Deal’s Agriculture Adjustment Act (AAA) paid farmers to destroy crops and livestock. The New Deal’s National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) empowered labor unions to organize strikes, seize plants, and commit violence with impunity. The New Deal’s Works Progress Administration (WPA) gave rise to the term “government boondoggle.” No one who valued any degree of individual liberty, private property, free markets, and limited government would ever invoke the New Deal to give credence to any social or economic proposal.

Laissez faire

The alternative to a socialist or fascist economy — elements of which can still be found in our interventionist economy in the twenty-first century — is a laissez-faire economy; that is, an economy where exchange, commerce, business, and trade between individuals, groups, companies, and corporations are free from government intervention, whether such intervention takes the

form of regulation, mandates, oversight, management, control, licensing, certification, privilege, tariffs, or subsidies. I want to explore three key issues in the context of a laissez-faire economy.

Trade. In a laissez-faire economy, trade is absolutely free. It is neither managed by the government nor distorted by protectionism. There are no government trade agreements or trade treaties with other countries. There are no government memberships in trade organizations or associations. There is no 3,700-page Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States. There is no government trade representative or Export-Import Bank. The government doesn't calculate a meaningless trade deficit and, even worse, seek to remedy it by intervening in the economy. Managed trade is not free trade. It is a misnomer to call thousand-page trade agreements "free-trade agreements." The World Trade Organization (WTO) is a globalist bureaucracy.

It is not the proper role of government to protect domestic industry from foreign competition. Protectionism is not just tariffs; it can also take the form of quotas, barriers, sanctions, or dumping rules. Calls for protectionism are actually calls for Soviet-style central plan-

ning. All forms and levels of protectionism require central planning. Government economists and bureaucrats must determine which industries to protect, against which countries to impose protectionist measures, which items should be subject to tariffs, how much the tariffs should be, and what the duration of the tariffs should be. Trade is fair when it is not subject to government interference, regulations, or restrictions.

**Trade is fair when it is not
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restrictions.**

Free trade is fair trade. Trade cannot be made more fair by making it less free. Protective tariffs and retaliatory tariffs are counterproductive. Raising tariffs will not make the country great again. Trade is not a zero-sum game in which one party gains at the expense of the other. Trade does not result in winners and losers. In every exchange, both parties give up something they value less for something they value more. Each party to a transaction anticipates a gain from the exchange or it wouldn't engage in commerce with the other party. Tariffs are no different from taxes.

Any way you look at it, a tariff is a tax. American importers suffer when they have to pay a tariff to the U.S. government, just as American exporters suffer when they have to pay a tariff to a foreign government.

Commerce. In a laissez-faire economy, commerce is unrestricted and free enterprise and the free market are truly free. There is no National Economic Council or Council of Economic Advisers. There is no Small Business Administration, Securities and Exchange Commission, Federal Communications Commission, Federal Trade Commission, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, or Commerce Department. All businesses handle their own security. Private industry delivers the mail, provides utilities, and collects garbage. No place of business is forced to provide handicapped parking spaces or is prohibited from selling alcohol after a certain time of day or on Sunday. No industry is singled out for special protection or provision by the government.

The banking, education, housing, transportation, and health-care sectors of the economy provide services just like any other business. There are no government grants, subsidies, vouchers, loans, or loan guarantees to any individual, group,

organization, profession, occupation, business, or industry. There is no Federal Reserve to manipulate interest rates and distort the money supply.

There is no AMTRAK or public transit, no government deposit insurance, no rent-control laws, and no government accreditation of educational institutions. There are no departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Transportation, Education, or Housing and Urban Development.

**In a laissez-faire economy,
commerce is unrestricted, and
free enterprise and the free
market are truly free.**

The free market allows buyers (who want to acquire goods at the lowest price possible) and sellers (who want to sell their goods at the highest price possible) to come together in harmony. Market forces of supply and demand allocate goods and resources and determine prices. Unhampered competition keeps prices in check. There are no government regulations to stifle businesses or anti-trust laws to “protect” consumers. Government intervention is not necessary to ensure competition or prevent monopolies. There are no price-

control, price-gouging, predatory-pricing, price-discrimination, or usury laws. The just price is the market price.

Not only is it not the business of government to regulate how people engage in commerce, attempts to regulate markets by governments always have unintended consequences that are often worse than the problems that regulations were meant to cure. Government interference in the market cannot make the market fairer or more competitive; it can only distort or disrupt the market.

Employment. In a laissez-faire economy, employment is strictly a contract between employer and employee. The government doesn't interfere in the employer/employee relationship in any way. There is no Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, National Labor Relations Board, Americans with Disabilities Act, Family and Medical Leave Act, or Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

**The government doesn't interfere
in the employer/employee
relationship in any way.**

There are no government job-training programs. There is no government unemployment-compen-

sation program. Unemployment insurance is private, voluntary, and purchased on the free market just like any other form of insurance. There are no government occupational-licensing or certification requirements to prevent people from working. There are no minimum-wage or overtime-pay laws. Regular wages and overtime pay are set entirely by agreement between employers and employees, as are employee fringe benefits, since there are no other government-mandated employee benefits. Employers can hire anyone regardless of his citizenship or immigration status. Affirmative Action policies are not only voluntary, they can be based on anything, not just race. Union membership and participation in collective bargaining is voluntary, and employers are free to mandate or disallow either. Subject to any restrictions in an employment contract, striking workers can be summarily fired and replaced for the simple reason that any employee can be fired and replaced at any time and for any reason.

Discrimination in hiring, pay, or promotions on any basis and for any reason is perfectly lawful. No one deserves to have a particular job, even if he is fully qualified for it. No one has the right to a "living

wage” or a particular rate of pay. No employee is entitled to pay equal to that of any other employee. Workplace dress codes, hairstyles, headwear, appearance, and religious accommodations related to these things are solely the prerogative of employers.

Americans don't need a Green New Deal any more than they needed the original New Deal. Each of them is a grab bag of progressive social and economic goodies with horrific consequences for liberty and property. Americans need *laissez faire*. They need it now, just as they needed it in the 1930s.

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NEXT MONTH:
**“Why Republicans Are
Powerless against Socialism”**
by Laurence M. Vance

Under a controlled economy, it is persons — not things — who are told by government — what they must or must not do. This coercion of individual citizens is the vital issue.

— Dean Russell

Learning Liberty and the Power of Principles

by Richard M. Ebeling



In *The Constitution of Liberty*, free-market economist and social philosopher F.A. Hayek, quotes in a footnote the famous nineteenth-century scientist Louis Pasteur: “In research, chance only helps those whose minds are well prepared for it.” What Pasteur was, no doubt, getting at is that unless the researcher already has been trained in the principles and methods of his own scientific field, and unless he is fairly knowledgeable about previous experiments and their outcomes in his area of study, he will not be able to see possibilities or opportunities for discovery that come his way that otherwise would just pass by the untrained mind.

I want to argue that the same applies in taking advantage of op-

portunities to advance liberty. Unless an individual is willing to take the time to make himself fairly well informed about the principles, applications, and some of the history of liberty, chances for advancing the cause of freedom may pass him by; opportunities that might have made a difference can be missed.

I should confess that my guide for emphasizing that are ideas developed by Leonard E. Read (1898–1983), the founder and first president (1946–1983) of the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). In June 1974, I attended a weeklong FEE seminar at the Foundation’s original headquarters in a grand old mansion located in Irvington-on-Hudson, about 20 miles north of New York City. There were many excellent lectures during that week. Some of them were by FEE staff members, including Ed Opitz (FEE’s resident classical-liberal theologian), Paul Poirot (editor of FEE’s monthly magazine, *The Freeman*), and Bettina Bien Greaves (publications editor and expert on all things relating to Ludwig von Mises).

There were also a number of outstanding talks by outside speakers, including Hans Sennholz (the head of the economics department at Grove City College in Pennsylvania) and Henry Hazlitt (the interna-

tionally renowned free-market journalist, and the author of *Economics in One Lesson*). Sennholz was a real showman, using his native German accent to great effect to make his points in defense of economic freedom and highlighting the contradictions and errors in all forms of socialism. Henry Hazlitt was clear, calm, and compelling in his emphasis on always looking beyond “what is seen” in government policies so as not to miss the secondary or “unseen” effects of government interventions that usually lead to disastrous consequences.

A light of liberty through self-improvement

But I must admit, reflecting back on that week now 45 years ago, that I can picture in my mind and remember most of the content of only one lecture. It was a talk delivered by Leonard Read. The presentations were given in a lecture hall off the great library room of the mansion. At one point in his talk, Leonard Read asked that the lights be turned off. He held a small electric candle in his hand, and slightly turning its dimmer dial, there emerged a small flicker of light.

“Notice,” Read said, “that though the candle gives off only a

wee bit of light, how all of our eyes are drawn to it in the dark.” He slowly turned the dimmer dial again, and remarked, “Now notice how as I add just a little more to the candle’s illumination, we can now see more of me and some of those sitting in the front of the room.” He continued to turn the dial until the candle was at its maximum. As he was doing so, Leonard Read pointed out how much more of the room was becoming visible to our eyes, until finally the darkness had been pushed back into the small corners of the room.

He said, “That is what is each of us can be — lights of liberty. The more we are informed, knowledgeable, and articulate about the ideas of freedom the more intellectual light we give off in exchanges with others, and the more we may attract some of those others to also become illuminations of liberty. Finally, there will be enough of us that the ideas of collectivism and statism will have been pushed back to a few small, dark corners of society.”

Changing the world begins with you.

Read noted that many of us would like to change society for the better. But the question is, where and how to start? He asked us, out of all the people in the world, over

whom do you have, personally, the most influence? The answer is, yourself! Making over the world, therefore, should and must start with improving your own understanding of freedom and dedication to it. In this case, it means being willing to take the time, attention, and courage to learn the meaning of liberty and improving your ability to share what you know with others.

**Leonard Read reminded us to
always treat others with
courtesy and respect.**

Leonard Read did not say that each of us has to dedicate himself to learning and sharing what he called the “freedom philosophy” all day, every day. We all have different circumstances, obligations, and willingness to do things. Some may have only the time and ability to become generally familiar with the ideas of liberty and just try to live by them to the best that we can while doing all the other things of life.

Others might have the chance to read and think more about what freedom means, and the arguments for and against. If moved to do so, these people will have the knowledge and interest to more actively participate in conversations and other forums to advance the cause

of freedom. And still others may have the interest and desire to become spokesmen and developers of arguments for freedom and the free society.

However bright we try to make ourselves as such lights of liberty, we have to accept the fact that change always comes one person at a time, one mind at a time. If freedom seems to be something important to you and for the world in which you live, then a little bit of the burden of learning about it and passing it on to others falls upon you, in your own way and personal circumstances.

The other important point that Leonard Read made is that you cannot force the ideas of freedom on anyone, nor do people like to be “talked down to” in arrogant and know-it-all ways. Whether in comments during a conversation over a meal, or answers you may give when someone asks your opinion on some political or economic issue, Leonard Read reminded us to always treat others with courtesy and respect, and never with hubris or anger.

**You never know whom you have
touched about freedom.**

Another takeaway from Leonard Read is never to allow disap-

pointment to get the better of you. You never know how what you have said may end up rolling around inside some person's head long after your exchange of views with him, or in others who may have said nothing themselves but overheard the conversation.

Many years ago, I found this out when I was first teaching while still in graduate school. One day I was waiting in line at the checkout counter in a small grocery store in New York City. The woman behind me in the line had been staring at me and said, "Aren't you Richard Ebeling? Don't you teach an evening course at Rutgers University?" Hesitatingly, I said, "Yes." The woman looked right at me and said, "You have ruined my marriage!" Everyone around just looked at me. "You've ruined my marriage," she repeated. "My husband took your economics class, and now all he does is come home from work, watch the evening news, and complain about government all night. You have ruined my marriage."

I had no idea who her husband was, or where he sat in the classroom, or whether he had ever asked questions or simply sat back and listened. But, clearly, some of the things I discussed and explained in that introductory economics class

had clicked inside of him, and made a difference about how he thought about freedom, markets, and the role of government in society. None of us knows how or when something we say or do will affect or influence another, in one way or another, for good or ill.

**You never know how what
you have said may end up rolling
around inside some
person's head.**

The lesson that I learned from that experience was that whether students in any class of mine seemed wide awake or half asleep, fully taking everything in I was saying or showing body language indicating that they wished they could be someplace else, I am always, to the best of my teaching ability, partly talking and explaining to that unknown one that may be there, like the unknown student in that Rutgers class of mine very long ago.

**Ideas influence events: the free-trade
movement**

Two of the momentous victories for liberty in the 19th century were the end to British trade protectionism and the abolition of slavery in the United States. Both advances for human freedom occurred dur-

ing times of economic or political crisis. The British Corn Laws imposed high tariff barriers against the importation of foreign agricultural goods into the British Isles, especially, though not exclusively, on wheat, as a means of securing higher prices for the landed aristocracy. In the autumn and winter of 1845/1846 some of the worst rains in living memory destroyed much of the wheat and related crops throughout Great Britain. High bread and other food prices caused many to face starvation, particularly among the lower classes. Social unrest threatened the country.

The issue of protectionism versus freedom of trade in food had been hotly debated for a long time in the British Parliament. But finally, in June 1846, both Houses of Parliament passed legislation repealing the Corn Laws, allowing unilateral free trade in virtually all food items. Cheap food from abroad could enter the land and feed the desperately hungry. But this “radical” answer of unilateral free trade, did not appear out of nowhere.

For decades the friends of freedom in Great Britain, a generation of thinkers influenced by the ideas of Adam Smith and others, had been arguing for freedom of enter-

prise and trade, at home and abroad. Persons such as Richard Cobden and John Bright in the Anti-Corn Law League led them. They talked, they lectured, they published books, monographs, and pamphlets, and they elected free-trade advocates to Parliament.

**This “radical” answer of
unilateral free trade, did not
appear out of nowhere.**

A historical accident, a season of terrible weather, became the catalyst for the economic reform of ending government interference with international trade in Great Britain, but only because before that moment of crisis there had been more and more people who had come to see economic freedom as the answer to poverty and starvation. The idea of free trade had become so much a part of the climate of opinion by the middle of the 1840s, that children in poor parts of London would write graffiti on the walls of buildings with slogans such as, “I be protected, and I be starved.”

Large segments of the British population among the poor and the “ruling classes” had been won over, one mind at a time, over a good number of years, in spite of many policy frustrations and disappoint-

ments along the way; until, finally, an economic crisis of failed food crops could open the door to the chance of changing the course of economic events in a dramatic way. But it would not have been possible if people who had come to see the importance of liberty had not been willing to learn, champion, and speak out for free trade as a matter of moral as well as practical principle. Ideas, it was demonstrated, do have consequences.

Slavery and the American South

Another instance is the end to slavery in the United States. Slavery was formally ended in all the Northern states of the United States by 1802. However, the institution of black slavery was embedded into the very fabric of the Southern states. There were 31.2 million people in the United States in 1860, out of whom almost 4 million were slaves, or about 13 percent of the country's total population. The overall population of the slave states before the Civil War was less than 9.5 million, so 42 percent of the South's population was made up of black slaves. Indeed, the 1860 census showed that the slave populations were in the majority in some of the Southern states (53 percent in Mississippi and 57 percent in

South Carolina). Those 4 million slaves were held as human property by a total of 294,000 Southern slave owners, or by only 7 percent of the South's population.

Ideas, it was demonstrated, do have consequences.

Nonetheless, the vast majority of slave owners and non-slave owners in those Southern states considered this “peculiar institution” essential to the livelihood and culture of the South. It was said that white labor could not work in the southern climate; only blacks, originally made for the heat of Africa, were biologically fit to pick cotton, harvest tobacco, and wade into the rice fields in that part of the country. Besides, if slavery was ended not only would slave owners lose the market value of their investment, it would be impossible to get “free labor” to work for wages that would still make their crops profitable, so the Southern economy would be destroyed without low-cost slave labor. Finally, Africans, it was said, were inherently inferior to whites, and they needed masters to take care of them in beneficial ways that they could never do for themselves if they were free. Slavery, in other words, was a benevolent socialism,

and so said some of the slavery proselytizers publicly arguing in behalf of the institution.

Northern bigotry and the Abolitionist movement

In the Northern states, slavery may have been ended, but the free blacks in those parts of the country were shunned, discriminated against, sometimes violently attacked, and generally considered an undesirable element in American society. Slavery may be wrong in the eyes of God and man, but most whites in the North did not want blacks living next door, marrying their daughters, or competing for their jobs. It was for that reason that the eloquent runaway slave Frederick Douglass delivered his Fifth of July address in 1852 on why the Declaration of Independence was a mockery with its talk of unalienable rights that belonged to all men, while millions languished in chains and slave labor south of the Mason-Dixon Line, and too many white Northerners considered Africans to be less than fully and equal human beings.

But like the enemies of slavery before them in Great Britain, where that institution was ended throughout the British Empire in 1834, the American Abolitionist leaders, such

as William Lloyd Garrison, spoke out against slavery as a matter of moral principle. Most were motivated by their deeply held Christian belief that human slavery was an abomination in the eyes of God. They insisted that we are all equally God's children, regardless of where we were born and how we looked.

American Abolitionist movement spoke out against slavery as a matter of moral principle.

The cruelty of the slave traders and the harshness of the slave masters in the South called for one and only one answer: the end to slavery now and completely. And our African brethren in the United States, the Abolitionists said, should be considered Americans with all the same rights and protections as all other citizens. Abolitionists were often scorned, physically attacked, sometimes murdered by racists and slavery sympathizers in the North. They were considered unreasonable and dangerous radicals threatening the unity of the country and the tranquility of society.

Lincoln, slavery, and the Civil War

But the Abolitionists persisted, and their numbers slowly but surely grew. And then a national crisis

emerged with the election of Abraham Lincoln as president in 1860. Lincoln was against the extension of slavery to any of the Western territories that would, over time, have populations large enough to apply for statehood within the Union. He was emphatic, however, that he did not intend and did not consider that he had the authority as president to abolish slavery in the Southern states where it already existed.

However, for the Southern states, attempts to stop the spread of slavery to any future new states in the Union threatened to bring the death knell to their peculiar institution. New states meant more senators and additional congressmen increasingly outnumbering the congressional representatives from the slave states. The free states, at some point, would try to overthrow their slave system.

(As an aside, it is true that there were disputes over protectionist tariffs and use of federal tax revenues for “internal improvements” — canals, railways, and roads — more for the benefit of the Northern and Western states than those of the South. But any reading of the declarations of secession issued by the Southern states following Lincoln’s election makes it very clear that the only issue that mattered

enough to explicitly refer to and defend in their secession justifications was slavery.)

Lincoln needed the support of the Abolitionists in Congress to vote his way.

For the first two years, the Civil War went badly for Lincoln and the Union side. Southern resistance had been stronger than expected, the Confederate Armies had routed Union forces an embarrassing number of times, and the war was getting to be costly in terms of money and lives. Draft riots ensued in New York City following Lincoln’s imposing military conscription. Members of his own Republican Party were hesitant to vote sufficient funds to continue prosecuting the war.

He needed the support of the Abolitionists in Congress to vote his way. But they would not, if ending slavery was not made central to the Union cause. Finally, to win that support, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, ending slavery in those parts of the South still in a state of rebellion against the U.S. government. It was an important, if only partial, victory for those who demanded the complete end to this immoral institution. Following

the end to the Civil War, the stage was set for the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution to be passed and ratified by the end of 1865 for the formal end to slavery and any other form of involuntary servitude throughout the United States.

If the Abolitionists had not been hard at work for decades earlier in the United States; if they had not made the moral argument for a complete end to slavery as an abomination in the eyes of God and man; and if they had not grown in influence and support enough to sway votes in Congress, there is no certainty that either the Emancipation Proclamation or the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution would have been issued and passed when and how they were.

Here was another accident of the circumstances of history, with its outcome partly dependent on people's believing in and arguing for liberty, even in a political setting in which all the cultural and social attitudes and forces seemed to suggest an unwinnable battle during all the years before the actual victory.

The only chance is to fight for liberty.

It is never possible to know beforehand or with full certainty whether right ideas will win out in a

particular place and at any particular time. But what is far more certain is that if those ideas are not known, believed in, and argued and fought for, they have no chance of ever prevailing.

**If those ideas are not known,
believed in, and argued and
fought for, they have no chance of
ever prevailing.**

That is why it is so important to make the principled and uncompromising case for individual rights and economic liberty, however daunting the task seems, no matter how unwinnable the triumph of those ideas appear. It is why each of us must, to the best of his ability and to the extent his time and circumstances permit, become one of Leonard Read's lights of liberty; intellectual candles of illumination offering the vision and vista of a free society.

In 1949, when the possibility of the triumph of Soviet-style socialism seemed likely around the world, Austrian economist, F.A. Hayek, penned an article entitled "The Intellectuals and Socialism." The heart of his argument is that socialism seemed to be winning because it had captured the imagination of far too many intellectuals as a vision of

a new, good, and more just society; and through them, a growing number of people in society in general were believing the same, owing to the persuasiveness of their writings.

But, Hayek insisted, it did not have to end with a collectivist future for mankind. Friends of freedom had to restate and remake the case for human liberty in a way that aroused the excitement and moral attractiveness of a truly free society. He said,

Unless we can make the philosophic foundations of a free society once more a living intellectual issue, and its implementation a task which challenges the ingenuity and imagination of our liveliest minds, the prospects of freedom are indeed dark. But if we can regain that belief in the power of ideas which was the hallmark of [classical] liberal-

ism at its best, the battle is not lost.

That is our task, our duty; and if we but try, all of us combined as individual lights of liberty can and will brighten up the world for freedom and free enterprise.

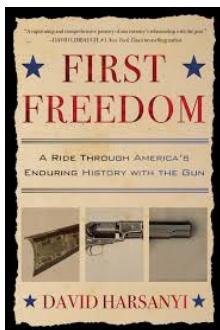
Richard M. Ebeling is the BB&T Distinguished Professor of Ethics and Free Enterprise Leadership at The Citadel. He was professor of Economics at Northwood University and at Hillsdale College and president of The Foundation for Economic Education, and served as vice president of academic affairs for FFE.

NEXT MONTH:
“Ludwig von Mises’s *Human Action*: Marking 70 Years of Continuing Relevance”
by Richard M. Ebeling

Gun Ownership: An Individual Right

by Matthew Harwood

First Freedom: A Ride Through America's Enduring History with the Gun by David Harsanyi (Threshold Editions, 2018); 321 pages.



In David Harsanyi's *First Freedom*, an entertaining jaunt through the gun's important place in American history, the nationally syndicated columnist notes that the first real attempt to institute gun control was New York's Sullivan Act. The impetus for the 1911 law, which required licenses for people who wanted to carry a concealed firearm, came from a man who worked in New York City's coroner's office. In January 1911, George Petit le Brun performed autopsies on Fitzhugh Coyle Goldsborough and David Graham Phil-

lips. Goldsborough, an unstable Harvard graduate, murdered Graham, a novelist, for slandering his sister and then turned the gun upon himself on East 21st Street in Manhattan.

In his 1960 autobiography, le Brun said the murder-suicide moved him to action. "I reasoned that the time had come to have legislation passed that would prevent the sale of pistols to irresponsible persons," he wrote. "In the vernacular of the day, 'There oughta be a law.'" The result was the Sullivan Act — named after its sponsor, the corrupt Tammany Hall boss and state senator Timothy "Big Tim" Sullivan — which made it a felony to carry an unlicensed concealed firearm. The law, which the *New York Times* in 2011 described as "a model for gun-control legislation enacted throughout the country," is still on the books and is routinely criticized for allowing only certain people — ex-police officers and the city's wealthy and connected elite — the privilege of receiving concealed-carry licenses doled out by the New York Police Department.

By the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, the feds were getting in on the gun-control act too. In response to the organized crime unleashed by government prohibition of the sale of alcohol and the

violence it spawned, Congress passed the National Firearms Acts of 1934 and 1938. Combined, the two laws taxed the manufacture and sale of machine guns and sawed-off shotguns, required gun manufacturers and dealers to be licensed, and prohibited gun dealers from selling guns to people under indictment or convicted of violent crimes.

In England, the gun was already an unquestioned feature of everyday life in the Old World.

Though the public argument for these laws was to fight back against gangsters such as Al Capone, Attorney General Homer Cummings told it like it was. The regulations were aimed not at criminals but law-abiding citizens. “We certainly don’t expect gangsters to come forward to register their weapons and be fingerprinted, and a \$200 tax is frankly prohibitive to private citizens,” he said. (If only today’s gun prohibitionists were as forthright.)

In 1939, the Supreme Court issued its first gun-rights ruling in *United States v. Miller*, which concluded that the National Firearms Act of 1934 was constitutional. But until the Court’s *Heller* decision in 2008, gun-control advocates misused *Miller* to argue that the found-

ing generation believed that the Second Amendment established a collective theory of gun rights connected to militia service rather than an individual right to keep and bear arms. Harsanyi’s book should disabuse anyone of that erroneous notion and exposes the intellectual ignorance or dishonesty of anyone who traffics in it.

Freedom’s guarantee

It is no surprise that Harsanyi’s book opens on European, particularly English, colonization of the territory that would become the United States, because of the new arrivals’ relationship with the gun. For Christian nonconformists, such as the Pilgrims, fleeing religious persecution in England, the gun was already an unquestioned feature of everyday life in the Old World. “In early fifteenth-century England, most male citizens were already trained to serve in a military reserve and knew how to use a musket,” writes Harsanyi. “From the ages of sixteen to sixty, reservists gathered in town squares across England four or five times each year and local military leaders inspected their weaponry and equipment — which they most often personally owned. The Pilgrims reproduced this tradition in their own towns.”

Civil defense took on such importance in the New World that some colonial municipalities fined men for not owning and carrying firearms. “By the end of the seventeenth century,” Harsanyi notes, “nearly every colonial town featured some kind of requirement impelling white inhabitants to bear arms (slaves, free slaves, indentured servants, and Catholics were typically prohibited from owning them) to protect their communities from external threats — and, on occasion, from internal perils.” Aside from defense, the gun was essential to preserving one’s life in another way: eating. “Hunting, not war, was the main use of the gun in early America,” Harsanyi explains.

In the New World, some colonial municipalities fined men for not owning and carrying firearms.

That changed during the last third of the 18th century as the English Crown and Parliament tried to control its increasingly restive subjects across the pond. In September 1774, British redcoats seized the gunpowder stores from the Provincial Powder House in what’s now Somerville, Massachusetts, for fear that colonial militias would take it first. The event was

evidence that the Crown meant to disarm the people of Boston and set off the “powder alarm,” in which the colonized and the colonizers each tried to get their hands on the precious material. “There was ... no way to defend your beliefs in natural law, the right to self-defense, or personal liberty without the ability to pour powder into your musket,” observes Harsanyi.

A month later, King George III banned the export of gun powder to the colonies. Half a year later, the first shots of the American Revolutionary War rang out on the Common in Lexington, Massachusetts. While it’s up for debate about what event made the Revolutionary War inevitable, writes Harsanyi, “it was the policy of gun and powder confiscation that sealed the deal.”

And as Harsanyi recounts, there was good reason that disarming the colonists helped induce rebellion and then revolution: It violated their rights as Englishmen under English common law. For example, the English Bill of Rights of 1689, an inspiration for our Bill of Rights, limited the power of the Crown to disarm the populace, anchoring the protection in “the true, ancient and indubitable rights and liberties” of the kingdom’s people. The Second Amendment would guarantee that

same individual right a little more than a century later on another continent — no matter that the prohibitionists disingenuously argue otherwise.

As constitutional scholar and Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Leonard W. Levy put it in his *Origins of the Bill of Rights*, “Believing that the amendment does not authorize an individual’s right to keep and bear arms is wrong. The right to bear arms is an individual right.” Harsanyi explains why. “While it is convenient for contemporary advocates of gun control to claim that evidence for individual gun rights is still inconclusive, what we do know for certain is that not a single soul in the provisional government or at the Second Continental Congress or any delegate at the Constitutional Convention ... ever argued against the idea of individuals owning a firearm,” writes Harsanyi. “Not a single militia leader asked his men to hand over their firearms after the town’s drills had ended.”

A gun culture from birth

People interested in a deep scholarly rebuttal of the collective right theory of gun ownership, however, should go elsewhere. Though Harsanyi does a fine job of debunking it for the interested av-

erage reader, most of *First Freedom* is about the men who made the gun a central pillar of American identity and culture, such as Samuel Colt, John Browning, and Eugene Stoner. But even then, Harsanyi’s exploration of the men and their times demonstrates that guns were ubiquitous and considered a critical and prized possession for defense of life, liberty, and property, repudiating the notion that guns weren’t a mainstay of American life since its founding.

“Believing that the amendment does not authorize an individual’s right to keep and bear arms is wrong.”

During the colonial era, probate records show that guns were commonplace in American homes, contradicting the claims of some historians that America’s gun culture didn’t arise until the mid 19th century. Recent studies show that male estates usually had more guns than other mundane items, such as books, chairs, or even Bibles. The records also document that the guns were in good condition, demonstrating that the owner took good care of them. Harsanyi also notes that these records probably undercount the number of people

who owned guns because the weapons were “handed from one relative, friend, or neighbor to another, without any record of the transfer.”

After the Revolution, American citizens and immigrants went west, eventually colonizing the entire continent through the force of their arms. “The peopling of the West gave birth to a new culture, disrupted the cultures of the American Indian, and ultimately created the most dynamic economy in world,” writes Harsanyi. “Guns would be a vital tool in this project, not only as a means of self-defense and war, but for hunting, trading, and exploration.”

When it comes to the American war with Indians, the progressive Left should pay special attention to the gun-control policies of the time. American governments regulated the gun trade with Indian tribes to ensure the settlers maintained the upper hand when it came to firepower. Harsanyi reports that in 1837, the U.S. Office of Indian Affairs restricted trade with tribes to “a pound of lead’ for ammunition to ‘not make less than forty-five, nor more than one hundred [shots], and must be of a length and weight corresponding properly with the size of the ball.” And in December 1890, in an example Harsanyi

doesn’t include in the book, the Seventh Cavalry went into the Lakota camp to disarm the tribesmen. In the process, a gun went off and the U.S. soldiers proceeded to massacre the Lakotas in what became known as the Wounded Knee Massacre.

Harsanyi also debunks the claims that “The Wild West” was bloody anarchy.

But for those today who still believe the gun is a unique tool of American oppression, consider the Sharps rifle of the mid 1800s. One of the nicknames given to the rifle was the “Beecher’s Bible” because of Henry Ward Beecher, an Abolitionist minister. In 1856 before the Civil War, Beecher told a New York newspaper that sending Sharps rifles to the militant anti-slavery “Free Staters” in Kansas “was a truly moral agency, and that there was more moral power in one of those instruments, so far as the slaveholders of Kansas were concerned, than in a hundred Bibles.”

Harsanyi also debunks the claims that “The Wild West” was bloody anarchy, noting that many of the “range wars” were more the product of journalists’ imaginations to sell papers back East. For exam-

ple, the Associated Press reported that Dodge City, Kansas, had broken out in open warfare. The casualties of this war, Harsanyi reports, were zero. Ogallala, Nebraska, earned the nickname “Gomorrhah of the trail,” for its violence. Between 1875 and 1884, it registered six killings.

Instead, the men and women on the frontier owned guns to hunt for food and protect their families and property from criminals. “The majority of men and women who trekked westward in the second half of the nineteenth century did so to find prosperity and peace,” Harsanyi writes. “Most never fired, or even had to point their gun, at another human being.”

The right interpretation

In 2008, in a 5-4 decision in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, the Supreme Court finally put to rest the intellectually dishonest argument that the Second Amendment did not guarantee an individual’s right to bear arms. The justices, led by Antonin Scalia, however, did not say it was an unfettered right. Government could regulate guns and gun ownership, but the majority

upheld what should be common sense, both historically and philosophically: The right to bear arms should be “understood as resistance to either private lawlessness or the depredations of a tyrannical government (or a threat from abroad).”

In other words, anyone advocating the complete abolition of gun ownership in America, whether out of ignorance or malice, should be seen for what he is: a threat to the right of self-defense — the most natural right a human being possesses. And as Harsanyi aptly shows, without the right of self-defense, all other rights are null and void, because a government bent on disarming law-abiding citizens has shown it no longer trusts them. And that’s neither limited government nor self-government. It’s tyranny.

Matthew Harwood is a writer living in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. His work has appeared in The American Conservative, the Guardian, Reason, TomDispatch, and others. He is managing editor at the American Civil Liberties Union.

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