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To really participate in the Divine Task, man must place his ideals as high as possible, out of reach if necessary.

— *Lecomte Du Nouy*

FUTURE OF FREEDOM

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Why the JFK Assassination Should Matter to Everyone, Part 1

by Jacob G. Hornberger



As everyone knows, the term that is commonly used when the assassination of President John F. Kennedy is raised is “conspiracy theory!” It is a term that the CIA long ago advised its assets in the mainstream press to employ against people who were questioning or challenging the official narrative of the assassination. The idea is that anyone who posits that the assassination was a national-security-state, regime-change operation, rather than an act of a lone nut, is doing nothing more than peddling a “conspiracy theory.” In the minds of those who use the term, the notion that the Pentagon and the CIA would assassinate a

president of the United States is simply inconceivable.

Actually, in the years and even decades following the assassination, there was some merit in referring to those who were challenging the official narrative as “conspiracy theorists.” That’s because, in my opinion, there simply was not sufficient evidence beyond a reasonable doubt to convict the national-security establishment of the crime.

In fact, if we go back to the first generation of assassination researchers, very few of them accused the national-security establishment of assassinating Kennedy and then covering it up. They were mostly focused on accusing federal officials of negligence and incompetence in investigating the crime.

There were certainly anomalies, some of which were very suspicious, but in my opinion, they were not sufficient to convict, at least not beyond a reasonable doubt. As I point out in my new book *An Encounter with Evil: The Abraham Zapruder Story*, among the biggest anomalies was the decision on the part of federal officials to shut down the official investigation into the crime immediately after the accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, was himself assassinated. That was the position taken by FBI Director J. Edgar

Hoover on the Sunday Oswald was murdered. The very next day, Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach, who was effectively in charge of the Justice Department, issued a memo stating “the public must be satisfied that Oswald was the assassin; that he did not have confederates who are still at large.”

**We know that is not
ordinarily the way that federal
officials operate.**

How could Katzenbach know that so quickly? We know that is not ordinarily the way that federal officials operate. It’s also not the way state officials operate. When someone kills a cop, all the other cops do everything they can to determine whether there were other people involved in the crime. They don’t immediately shut down the investigation as soon as the killer is apprehended or killed. The same holds true whenever a federal official is assassinated. Federal officials do everything they can to determine if other people are involved and, if so, to bring them to justice.

Thus, the decision to immediately declare the case closed and shut down the investigation is a serious anomaly, one that would cause any reasonable person to

raise his eyebrows and wonder what is going on. But obviously it is not enough to convict the national-security establishment — that is, the Pentagon and the CIA — of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt.

Another strange aspect of the Kennedy assassination involved the Warren Commission, the official entity chosen by President Lyndon Johnson to ostensibly investigate the assassination. Most of its proceedings were shrouded in secrecy, based on the grounds of protecting “national security.” Yet, if the assassination was actually committed by a lone nut who just happened to be at the right place at the right time, why would “national security” enter the picture?

Moreover, the Warren Commission ordered that much of the evidence it accumulated be kept secret until the year 2039. Why would such secrecy be necessary given that the assassination was supposedly committed by a lone nut? Yet, in my opinion, that is still not enough to convict the national-security establishment beyond a reasonable doubt.

I began studying the Kennedy assassination after seeing Oliver Stone’s movie *JFK* in 1991. The movie posited that the assassination was a highly sophisticated re-

gime-change operation carried out by the national-security establishment. I read countless books on the subject, the best of which was *JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters* by James K. Douglass. I became convinced that the assassination of President Kennedy was, in fact, a national-security-state, regime-change operation. Yet, even though I was convinced about what happened, I still didn't believe there was enough evidence to establish beyond a reasonable doubt that what happened was such an operation. Thus, it made sense to me why some people would continue to refer to the notion as a "conspiracy theory."

Yet, everyone would have to concede that it is entirely possible for a theory to materialize into fact based on the discovery of evidence that establishes criminality beyond a reasonable doubt.

The Schneider assassination

For example, consider the assassination of Chilean general Rene Schneider. He was the overall commander of the Chilean armed forces in 1970. He was shot dead that year on the streets of Santiago in an attempt to kidnap him.

Let's assume that someone posulated immediately after that as-

sassination, "I'll bet that the CIA had something to do with Schneider's murder." That clearly would be a "conspiracy theory" given that there would be no evidence to support the allegation. Moreover, after CIA Director Richard Helms testified under oath before Congress that the CIA played no role in Chile's domestic political affairs in the early 1970s, the allegation would most definitely remain a "conspiracy theory." That's because there would be no evidence to establish that the CIA was responsible for the kidnapping attempt and assassination of Schneider.

I began studying the Kennedy assassination after seeing Oliver Stone's movie *JFK* in 1991.

In 1976, however, the U.S. Senate's Church Committee uncovered clear and convincing evidence that the CIA had orchestrated Schneider's kidnapping and assassination. The evidence established that not only did the CIA secretly smuggle high-powered weapons into the country, it also paid hush money to the kidnapers/murderers after the assassination in the hope of keeping them silent. Helms was later convicted of testifying falsely during his congressional testimony.

Thus, what began as a “conspiracy theory” ended up being an established fact, even though it took several years to uncover the evidence establishing the CIA’s commission of the crime.

It’s worth examining the CIA’s motive for kidnapping and assassinating Rene Schneider, who was a totally innocent man, because it provides insight into the Kennedy assassination. In 1970, there was a presidential election in Chile. A man named Salvador Allende received a plurality of the votes. Since he had not received a majority, though, the election was thrown into the hands of the Chilean congress pursuant to the Chilean constitution.

The Cold War

This was at the height of the Cold War, a period in which U.S. officials were convinced that America was in grave danger of falling to the communists. The official mindset was that there was an international communist conspiracy that was supposedly based in Moscow whose aim was to put the entire world, especially the United States, under communist rule.

In fact, the Red threat was why the U.S. government was converted into a national-security state in the first place. U.S. officials believed

that America’s founding system of a limited-government republic, with its limited federal powers, was insufficient to defend America from a communist takeover. To ensure that America did not go Red, it was necessary, U.S. officials maintained, that the federal government be converted into a national-security state, one in which the national-security establishment would wield the same omnipotent powers as the totalitarian regimes, such as assassination, torture, indefinite detention, and mass secret surveillance.

What began as a “conspiracy theory” ended up being an established fact.

This international communist conspiracy, it was said, had already reached 90 miles away from the United States with the success of the Cuban revolution in 1959. Ever since then, communist Cuba was considered to be grave threat to the national security of the United States, which was why the CIA later initiated several assassination attempts against Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

Pentagon and CIA officials considered the Cold War to be a war to the finish. It was believed that there could never be peaceful coexistence

with the Soviet Union, Red China, North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba, or any other communist regime. Anyone who took the side of the Reds or even just remained neutral was considered to be an enemy of the United States.

Allende wanted nothing to do with America's fierce anti-communist crusade.

Salvador Allende was a dyed-in-the-wool socialist. Even worse, from the standpoint of U.S. officials, he wanted nothing to do with America's fierce anticommunist crusade. Worst of all, he actually befriended the Soviet Union and Cuba. In fact, after he became president, he invited Cuba's communist president, Fidel Castro, to visit Chile. As the two leaders motorcaded in Chile, thousands of Chileans lining the streets cheered the two leaders.

In the eyes of U.S. officials, Allende constituted a grave threat to U.S. national security, not only because he was a self-avowed socialist but especially because he was befriending America's avowed enemy, one that was supposedly determined to turn America Red.

Interestingly enough, however, the CIA did not attempt to assassi-

nate Allende, or at least no evidence has yet surfaced to establish such an attempt. Targeting a democratically elected president with a state-sponsored assassination would not have been unprecedented for the CIA. In 1954, a man named Jacobo Arbenz was elected president of Guatemala. Arbenz was a socialist who, like Allende later would, befriended the Soviet Union. Therefore, five years before Castro took power in Cuba, U.S. officials deemed Arbenz to be a grave threat to U.S. national security. As part of a CIA-orchestrated coup, the CIA compiled a list of Guatemalan officials to be assassinated. We are still not permitted to see who was on that list ("national security"), but there is no question but that Arbenz was at the top of the assassination list. Fortunately for him, he was able to escape the country before the CIA could murder him.

Moreover, just before President Kennedy took office, the CIA orchestrated the assassination of Congo leader Patrice Lumumba, another totally innocent man. The justification for Lumumba's murder? As a leader in the Congo's fight for independence from Belgium's imperial rule, he was deemed to lean toward the Soviet Union.

The Chilean coup

Once the Chilean election was thrown into the hands of the Chilean congress, the CIA came up with a two-pronged plan: (1) to bribe the members of the Chilean congress into voting against Allende, and (2) to induce the Chilean national-security establishment to take control over the reins of government with a coup.

The position of the Pentagon and the CIA was that the constitution was not a “suicide pact.”

As the overall head of Chile’s armed forces, Schneider refused to go along with a coup. His position was that the Chilean constitution did not allow for the violent removal of a democratically elected president, including one who was a socialist befriending the communist world. Schneider’s position was that the Chilean national-security establishment would uphold the country’s constitution that they had vowed to defend.

The U.S. national-security establishment’s position was diametrically opposed to that of Schneider. Its position with respect to Allende had very serious ramifications for the Kennedy assassination, which had taken place ten years before. It

believed that given that Allende was leading Chile to doom through a communist takeover, the Chilean national-security establishment had a moral duty to ignore the country’s constitution and to save the country by ensuring he did not become president or by violently removing him from office if he did assume the presidency.

In other words, the position of the Pentagon and the CIA was that the constitution was not a “suicide pact.” If by following it the country would be destroyed or taken over by the communists, it was the responsibility of the national-security branch of the government to protect “national security” by violently removing its own democratically elected president from office and taking charge of the government.

Thus, the CIA determined that it needed to remove Schneider from power as the head of the Chilean armed forces. That’s what his kidnapping/assassination accomplished. Once he was removed as an obstacle, the Pentagon and the CIA were able to convince rightwing Chilean military-intelligence officials that they had a duty to save their nation by violently removing their own president from office. On September 11, 1973 — three years after Allende was elected president

— the Chilean national-security branch of the government, with the full support of the Pentagon and the CIA, declared war on Allende and the executive branch of the government. After repeated attempts to assassinate Allende with bullets and missiles failed, Allende’s allies surrendered, and he reportedly committed suicide before he could be taken captive and subjected to the brutal torture that was later meted out to tens of thousands of his supporters.

Allende’s allies surrendered, and he reportedly committed suicide before he could be taken captive.

To this day, there are right-wingers both in Chile and here in the United States who argue that the Chilean national-security establishment did the right thing in violently removing Allende from power, notwithstanding that the Chilean constitution did not authorize such an act. They say that the violent removal of a democratically elected president was justified because it saved the country from a president whose policies, they say, were leading toward a society that was no different in principle from that in Cuba and other communist nations.

In any event, what began as a conspiracy theory with respect to the kidnapping and assassination of Gen. Rene Schneider ended up as an established fact once the evidence surfaced establishing that the CIA had secretly orchestrated the event. Thus, supporters of the U.S. national-security state could justifiably cry “conspiracy theory!” if someone initially speculated that the CIA was responsible for his murder. Once the evidence surfaced several years later establishing beyond a reasonable doubt that the CIA was behind the kidnapping and murder, the cry of “conspiracy theory!” was no longer valid.

A fraudulent autopsy

That’s what has happened in the Kennedy assassination. Years and even decades went by with people postulating that the assassination was a regime-change operation that was carried out by the U.S. national-security establishment, just like the one that would take place in Chile ten years later. But the problem was that the evidence establishing criminal culpability, while persuasive, failed, in my opinion, to meet the beyond-a-reasonable-doubt standard that is used in criminal cases.

That situation changed dramatically in the 1990s during the term

of the Assassination Records Review Board. The ARRB uncovered evidence establishing beyond a reasonable doubt that the U.S. national-security establishment had, in fact, done to Kennedy precisely what it would exhort its counterparts in Chile to do ten years later.

That evidence, however, did not come in the form of a confession or other direct evidence. Instead, it came in the form of circumstantial evidence, which, as every judge in the land will tell you, is just as valid as direct evidence in a criminal prosecution in a court of law.

The circumstantial evidence that the ARRB uncovered related to the autopsy that the U.S. national-security establishment carried out on President Kennedy's body on the very evening of the assassination. The evidence surrounding the autopsy established beyond a reasonable doubt that the autopsy was fraudulent.

Now, ask yourself a question: Why would the military, which was directly responsible for the autopsy conducted on President Kennedy's body, conduct a fraudulent autopsy? I will guarantee you: You cannot come up with an innocent explanation for a fraudulent autopsy. No one ever has. No one ever will. There is no innocent explanation

for a fraudulent autopsy. It necessarily means criminal culpability in the assassination itself.

You cannot come up with an innocent explanation for a fraudulent autopsy.

After all, a fraudulent autopsy is not something that happens spontaneously. In other words, imagine after President Kennedy was declared dead at Parkland Hospital, someone at the Pentagon and the CIA saying, "Hey, what do you all think about conducting a fraudulent autopsy on the president's body?" Someone else responds, "Wow! That's a fantastic idea. Count me on board." Imagine that everyone gets so excited about this idea that it's all set into motion within a few hours of the president's death.

Ridiculous, right? There is no way that such a plan could or would have been initiated on the spur of the moment. After all, what possible reason would there be for doing that?

Instead, a plan for a fraudulent autopsy had to have been pre-planned as part of a cover-up. But for whom would they be planning to cover up? If it's preplanned, then there is only one conceivable answer: for themselves. They pre-

planned a fraudulent autopsy as part of a cover-up of their own assassination of Kennedy. There is no other reasonable answer.

Over the years, it has been alleged that Kennedy was assassinated by the Soviet Union or Cuba. But if that were the case, then why would the national-security establishment immediately initiate a fraudulent autopsy. To cover up for the communists? That makes no sense. They hated the Reds.

No, there is only one conceivable reason for a fraudulent autopsy that was carried out within just a few hours after the assassination. A fraudulent autopsy necessarily means criminal culpability in the assassination on the part of the national-security establishment.

It's worth reviewing how it was that the military took control over the president's autopsy.

The assassination of President Kennedy was an unequivocal murder case under Texas state law. At that time, it was not a federal offense to assassinate the president. In all murder cases, Texas law required an autopsy to be conducted by the county medical examiner.

Thus, immediately after the president was declared dead at Parkland Hospital, the Dallas County medical examiner, Dr. Earl

Rose, declared that he was going to conduct an autopsy in accordance with state law.

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At that point, a team of Secret Service agents, headed by a man named Roy Kellerman, who was carrying a Thompson submachine gun, went into action. Declaring loudly that they were operating under orders, they informed Rose in no uncertain terms that he would not be permitted to conduct the autopsy. Rose persisted. The Secret Service agents pulled back their coats and brandished their guns. Screaming, yelling, and emitting a stream of profanities, they forced their way out of the hospital with Kennedy's body, which had been placed into a very heavy, ornate casket. One rather large Secret Service agent actually physically picked up Rose, carried him a few feet, put him against a wall, and wagged his finger in his face.

There is only one person who could have issued such an extraordinary order to violate state law. That person was President Lyndon Johnson. In fact, we know it had to

be him because after he arrived at Dallas Love Field, he had his personnel begin removing seats from the back of Air Force One to make room for the casket that he knew would be arriving shortly.

After Kellerman's team arrived at the airport, the casket was placed on board Air Force One. Johnson then flew to Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C. There is something important to note about the Washington, D.C., area: There were countless competent and prominent civilian forensics pathologists in that part of the country. Johnson could have called on any of them to perform the autopsy. After all, America is not supposed to be a military nation, like the Soviet Union or Red China. Moreover, it wasn't like Kennedy was killed in battle. What business did the military have taking control over the autopsy?

But that is precisely what happened. President Johnson delivered President Kennedy's body into the hands of the military, which then proceeded to conduct a fraudulent autopsy.

As I indicated earlier, the fraud did not become manifest until the 1990s — more than 30 years after the assassination. By that time, the

mainstream press had become passive and deferential to the national-security establishment. Moreover, thanks to the very successful propaganda campaign launched by the CIA, the term “conspiracy theory” had become a part of America's political lexicon, and many people had developed a deep fear of being labeled a “conspiracy theorist.”

But even though the evidence establishing a fraudulent autopsy came out in the 1990s, it wasn't until ten years later that it would be set forth clearly and succinctly in a watershed book that ended up sealing the case against the national-security establishment. That book was entitled *Inside the Assassination Records Review Board* by Douglas P. Horne, who had served on the staff of the ARRB.

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

NEXT MONTH:
“Why the JFK Assassination
Should Matter to Everyone,
Part 2”
by Jacob G. Hornberger

Thank Joe Biden for Your COVID-Positive Nurse

by James Bovard



If you pick up a COVID infection during your next visit to a hospital or medical office, maybe send a thank-you card to President Biden. His COVID vaccine mandate was one of the most perverse public-health edicts in modern times. Vaccination status went from being a proxy for health to being a substitute for sane healthcare policy.

Last September, Biden announced that he was mandating COVID vaccines for all 10 million healthcare workers in America — as well as for any American working for a company employing more than a hundred people. In a televised evening speech, he announced, “My job as president is to protect all Americans.” Actually, his

oath of office was to uphold and defend the Constitution, but no matter.

Biden issued the equivalent of a declaration of war on 80 million unvaccinated Americans, portraying them as Public Enemy Number One (except for postal workers, who the White House exempted from the mandate due to the clout of postal unions). Biden castigated the unvaxxed: “We’ve been patient but our patience is wearing thin. And your refusal has cost all of us.” Biden’s declaration sounded like the threat a dictator makes prior to invading a foreign nation. Biden finger-wagged: “This is not about freedom or personal choice. It’s about protecting yourself and those around you — the people you work with, the people you care about, the people you love.” But who would protect Americans from Biden’s dictatorial mandates?

Biden’s vaccine lies

The Biden administration has consistently portrayed vaccines as a pandemic panacea. Shortly before dictating the mandate, Biden promised, “You’re not going to get COVID if you have these vaccinations.” When he announced plans to impose the mandate in a September 9 speech, Biden declared that “there’s

only one confirmed positive case per 5,000 fully vaccinated Americans per day. You're as safe as possible." Biden deceived the American public by pretending that the vaccines would keep them safe by preventing all contagion. To buttress the Biden storyline, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ceased counting the vast majority of "breakthrough infections" among vaccinated people several months earlier. The *Washington Post* reported that the CDC's "overly rosy assessments of the vaccines' effectiveness against delta ... may have lulled Americans into a false sense of security." In October, Biden repeated his claim that vaccines prevent COVID transmission — even though the CDC had finally admitted its failure on that score.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ceased counting the vast majority of "breakthrough infections."

The moral principles involved in Biden's decree were showcased in numerous court battles late last year. Three days after Biden's mandate speech, a federal judge temporarily blocked New York State's vaccine mandate for all healthcare professionals, which was a mirror-

image of the new federal mandate. Seventeen healthcare workers who claimed religious exemptions had asserted that the mandate "emerges in the context of an atmosphere of fear and irrationality in which the unvaccinated are threatened with being reduced to a caste of un-touchables if they will not consent to being injected." Biden did his best to fuel hostility, assuring vaccinated individuals that "I understand your anger at those who haven't gotten vaccinated."

Biden did not formally issue his vaccine decrees until November 5, when his appointees unveiled a 150,000+-word Federal Register sidewinder announcing his "jab or job" ultimatum. The official notice touted the initial 95% claimed efficacy of COVID vaccines from the clinical trials but ignored subsequent studies that revealed plummeting efficacy. Team Biden's announcement explained that it was mandating vaccinations because the "most important inducement [for vaccination] will be the fear of job loss." And the president had the right to destroy people's jobs for the "public good" — at least according to the latest progressive version of the Constitution. The ultimatum was justified, according to the Federal Register notice, because "vac-

cination mandates have generally been more effective than merely encouraging vaccination.” In other words, compulsion produces submission.

Healthcare workers fight back

Across the nation, thousands of healthcare workers were fired for refusing to get injected. The Cleveland Clinic fired 700 employees. In New York, a hospital closed its maternity ward and ceased delivering babies because of a shortage of vaccinated nurses. One health system curtailed elective and non-emergency surgeries and reduced radiology treatment in part because of loss of health personnel due to the vaccine mandate.

After conflicting decisions on the Biden mandate in federal appeals court, the Supreme Court speedily took up the case. According to a brief from the attorneys general of Missouri and Nebraska, Biden’s mandate “threatens economic ruin and patient harm throughout the [healthcare] industry” and “will have disastrous consequences on [health care] particularly in rural communities.” The Federal Register notice on the new mandate dismissed concerns about the loss of healthcare staff because “there is insufficient evidence to

quantify” the impact. Since the feds chose not to tabulate the damage, the problem didn’t exist. Biden responded to shortages of critical personnel by sending in a thousand U.S. military personnel to assist hospitals but provided zero relief for most healthcare facilities.

Since the feds chose not to tabulate the damage, the problem didn’t exist.

In its brief to the Supreme Court, the Biden administration declared that the vaccine mandate was “critical to preventing outbreaks of (COVID-19) that had devastated Medicare- and Medicaid-participating facilities earlier in the pandemic.” However, two weeks before the Supreme Court heard oral arguments, the CDC changed its previous guidance on healthcare workers isolating after testing positive for COVID-19. The CDC decreed that the quarantine time for COVID-infected health employees can be sharply reduced if there are staffing shortages. Some COVID-19-positive nurses across the country have been told to come into work and treat patients even if they still have symptoms.

People who contract a virus and recover have natural immunity that

subsequently protects them. But the Biden administration ignored post-infection immunity, perhaps because it did nothing for presidential bragging rights – “100 million shots in 100 days,” as Biden crowed in March 2021. According to Biden policymakers, it was better for hospital patients to be treated by fever-ridden COVID-positive nurses (whose COVID-19 vaccinations failed to safeguard them from the virus) than by unvaccinated nurses with no COVID. Zenei Triunfo-Cortez, president of National Nurses United, said the new policy “will only result in further transmission, illness and death.”

The CDC stopped publishing vaccination details on COVID deaths in October.

Shortly before the Supreme Court heard the case, Biden declared that “almost everyone who has died from COVID-19 in the past many months has been unvaccinated.” But the fully vaccinated accounted for 21% to 27% of COVID-19 fatalities in Oregon from August through November and 40% to nearly 75% of deaths in Vermont from August into October. The data had become so embarrassing to the Biden administration that

the CDC stopped publishing vaccination details on COVID deaths in October.

Biden admits “no federal solution”

Biden also admitted in late December that there is “no federal solution (to COVID-19). This gets solved at the state level.” That was a far cry from his pledge in his final debate with Donald Trump in October 2020, when Biden promised: “I will take care of this. I will end this. I’m going to shut down the virus, not the country.” Biden’s “no federal solution” offered ample justification for the Supreme Court to reject Biden’s mandate.

On January 7, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments amidst the worst COVID surge ever. “Mandates have curbed almost everything except COVID-19 cases,” Yahoo editor Javier David quipped. Even though almost two-thirds of the U.S. population was fully vaccinated, more than a million new COVID cases were being diagnosed every day in early January. But that surge did nothing to stop Biden from prattling about a “pandemic of the unvaccinated.”

During oral arguments, Justice Elena Kagan declared that the Biden policy is saying to healthcare providers “the one thing you can’t

do is to kill your patients.” Workers must get vaccinated, Kagan said, “so that you’re not transmitting the disease that can kill elderly Medicare patients.... You can’t be the carrier of disease.”

Unless the carriers of disease are CDC-approved, as my *USA Today* op-ed on the morning of the court’s arguments noted. At that point, more than half a million healthcare workers had already had COVID-19 infections, and more than 99+% of them survived. However, the Biden mandate presumed that vaccines were the sole source of good health and protection and ignored postinfection immunity because of perceived “uncertainties ... as to the strength and length of (natural) immunity.” However, a major Israeli study in August found that people who had COVID-19 have far better protection against the delta variant than people who have received multiple COVID-19 vaccine injections.

The Biden mandate ignored postinfection immunity.

The Supreme Court’s deliberations occurred in a make-believe world that tacitly assumed that the vaccines were still the miracle cure that politicians like Biden initially

claimed. But the effectiveness of the COVID booster shot had fallen to 31%, according to CDC. Nobel Laureate scientist Luc Montagnier noted in the *Wall Street Journal* that Moderna and Pfizer vaccines after 30 days had no “statistically significant positive effect against Omicron infection, and after 90 days, their effect went negative — i.e., vaccinated people were more susceptible to Omicron infection.” Later studies confirmed that vaccines and boosters increased the odds of contracting Omicron. CDC later admitted that almost half the COVID deaths in early 2022 were among the fully vaxxed. On January 11, Biden’s FDA acting chief Janet Woodcock told a Senate committee that “most people are going to get COVID.” So what was the point of mandatory vaccines?

SCOTUS vaccine rulings a mixed bag

On January 13, the court voted to uphold the vaccine mandate for all healthcare workers by a 5 to 4 vote. (A separate ruling struck down Biden’s mandate for employees of large companies.) The court’s healthcare mandate ruling declared, “Ensuring that providers take steps to avoid transmitting a dangerous virus to their patients is consistent with the fundamental

principle of the medical profession: first, do no harm.” Unfortunately, federal policymakers were exempt from the “do no harm” admonition. The justices ignored or failed to comprehend how the Biden administration’s welcome mat for COVID-positive nurses obliterated both its legal and moral case for mandates.

Shortly after the decision was announced, *The Lancet*, one of the most respected medical journals in the world, editorialized that health-care workers who recovered from COVID should be exempt from vax mandates.

COVID vaccines can help reduce the risk of severe outcomes from COVID among the elderly and people with compromised health. But there was never any scientific rationale for forcing every healthcare worker or every American to get an experimental jab that performed worse with each new COVID-19 wave.

Biden’s vaccine mandates are another demolition of freedom that

do nothing to end the most politically exploited pandemic in American history. But the government has no liability for the injections it mandates or the freedoms it destroys. For bureaucrats and politicians, gaining power and compelling submission are victory enough, even when their policies fail to vanquish a virus. How much longer will politicians pretend that their iron fists are a magic bullet?

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

NEXT MONTH:
**“Biden’s ‘Begging for Barrels’
Saudi Disgrace”**
by James Bovard

It has long however been my opinion, and I have never shrunk from its expression (altho' I do not chuse to put it into a newspaper, nor, like Priam in armour, offer myself its champion) that the germ of dissolution of our federal government is in the constitution of the federal judiciary; an irresponsible body (for impeachment is scarcely a scare-crow) working like gravity by night and by day, gaining a little to-day and little to-morrow, and advancing its noiseless step like a thief, over the field of jurisdiction, until all shall be usurped from the states, & the government of all be consolidated into one. To this I am opposed; because, whenever all government, domestic and foreign, in little as in great things, shall be drawn to Washington as the center of all power, it will render powerless the checks pro-

vided of one government on another, and will become as venal and oppressive as the government from which we separated. It will be as in Europe where every man must be either pike or gudgeon, hammer or anvil. Our functionaries and theirs are wares from the same work-shop; made of the same materials, & by the same hands. If the states look with apathy on this silent descent of their government into the gulp which is to swallow all, we have only to weep over the human character formed uncontrollable but by a rod of iron; and the blasphemers of man, as incapable of self-government, become his true historians.

— Thomas Jefferson

Vouchers Are Not the Answer

by *Laurence M. Vance*



The deadly shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, earlier this year has Americans once again focusing on the dangers of the gun-free zones known as public schools. And if it is not a shooting, then it is acts of violence by students against other students or teachers or bullying and harassment by students that result in other students committing suicide. An investigation by the Associated Press a few years ago uncovered roughly 17,000 reports of rapes or sexual assaults by students over a four-year period. And those numbers were just from official reports.

But it is not just to the physical body that public schools can be dangerous. For many years now, public schools have been hazardous to the minds of students as well due

to their dumbing down of the curriculum and their promotion of socialism, relativism, diversity and inclusion, environmentalism, climate change, and political correctness. SAT scores have fallen, high schools have graduated functional illiterates, discipline and standards have gone by the wayside, teachers have been caught having sexual relationships with students, and school-based “health clinics” have given out birth control without parental consent.

To this can now be added the teaching of critical race theory and transgenderism, the allowing of boys masquerading as girls to use the girls’ restroom and play on girls’ sports teams, and the promotion of cancel culture and extreme woke-ness. Earlier this year, a school district in Wisconsin accused three eighth-grade boys of sexual harassment and launched a Title IX investigation for referring to a classmate using the biologically correct pronoun “her” instead of the classmate’s preferred pronoun “them.”

Education and the state

There is no question that public education is a disaster, and for that reason alone should be abolished. But even if public schools were safe spaces, actually educated students,

and didn't promote progressive political, economic, and social policies, they should still be shuttered.

Education should be completely separated from the state — just like religion. Imagine if the national or state governments enacted laws taxing people to support churches, synagogues, and mosques that they might provide religious services and then mandated that parents send their children to one of them. People would be outraged, and rightly so. But it is just as much an illegitimate purpose of government to have anything to do with education.

Public schools maintain their existence by coercion (taxation) and compulsion (mandatory-attendance laws). They are first and foremost government schools. It is not the proper role of government to provide educational services any more than it is the proper role of government to provide pest-control services, landscaping services, manicure and pedicure services, hair-styling services, or car-repair services.

There is nothing special about the business of education that necessitates that the government be involved in it. If there is no constitutional right to receive basic necessities like housing, clothing, and food, then there is certainly no con-

stitutional right to receive a government-provided or government-funded education.

Public schools maintain their existence by coercion (taxation) and compulsion (mandatory-attendance laws).

In a free society, there would be no such thing as public schools because public education would not exist. All educational services would be privately provided and privately funded. All schools would be self-supporting. Not only would no American be forced to pay for the education of his own children, neither would he be forced to pay for the education of any other Americans or their children.

In a free society, parents would be the ones solely responsible for the education of their children, just as parents are now solely responsible for their children's eating, drinking, clothing, lodging, potty training, health, entertainment, recreation, religious instruction, transportation, and disciplining. This doesn't mean that they have to personally teach their children reading, writing, and arithmetic anymore than it means that parents must personally perform circus acts to entertain their children.

This means that on the federal level, there would be no student loans, Pell grants, research grants to colleges and universities, math and science initiatives, school breakfast or lunch programs, school-accreditation agencies, Head Start, Higher Education Act, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Education for All Handicapped Children Act, special-education or bilingual-education or Title IX mandates, and no Department of Education. This is a no-brainer and has nothing to do with politics or ideology. There is simply nothing in the Constitution that authorizes the federal government to have anything to do with education.

With a free market in education, there would be endless variety in K-12 education.

But this also means that on the state and local level, there would be no public schools, charter schools, public-school teachers, state colleges or universities, teacher-education requirements, teacher licensing, teacher-certification standards, property taxes earmarked for public schools, truancy laws, truant officers, school boards, state boards of regents, regulation or accreditation of private, religious, or home

schools, and no state departments of education.

The market for education would operate the same as any other market. Profit opportunities for entrepreneurs would abound. Competition would keep prices in check. Even now, the average cost per pupil in public schools is about twice that of private schools. With a free market in education, there would be endless variety in K-12 education, much like there is in colleges and universities today. Not only would there be for-profit and not-for-profit schools as well as religious and secular schools, there would also be schools that catered to particular religions, political viewpoints, ethnic groups, genders, socio-economic statuses, nationalities, or world views. Most school controversies over things like dress codes, prayer, head coverings, religion, sex education, and critical race theory would disappear if education were left up to the free market instead of the government.

Vouchers

But instead of calling for the wholesale elimination of government-provided and government-funded education, many conservatives and some libertarians advocate government-provided educational

vouchers as the way to rescue children from dangerous and failing public schools and put them in private schools that will educate them instead of indoctrinate them. It has been over 30 years since Milwaukee began offering the nation's first school vouchers to allow low-income children to use taxpayer money to attend private schools. Since that time, many cities and states have introduced a wide variety of voucher programs. According to the Education Commission of the States, "There are currently 27 voucher programs in 16 states and the District of Columbia."

Voucher proponents were ecstatic earlier this year when the Tennessee Supreme Court and then the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in their favor on two "school choice" programs. In 2019, Tennessee enacted the Education Savings Account Pilot Program. Beginning with the 2020–2021 school year, it was to provide state scholarships worth up to \$7,300 to families from Shelby County (Memphis) and Metro Nashville school districts to send their children to private schools. In addition to tuition, funds could also be used for textbooks, tutoring and therapy services, transportation to educational institutions or services, computer

hardware and software, and school uniforms.

To be eligible, children would have to come from households earning less than 200 percent of the federal free lunch program (about \$68,000 for a family of four), have attended a Tennessee public school during the prior school year or be newly eligible to do so, and be enrolled in a state-approved private school. About 68 percent of students in Memphis and Nashville were estimated to be eligible to receive a scholarship.

"There are currently 27 voucher programs in 16 states and the District of Columbia."

But in February of 2020, a lawsuit was filed against the program alleging *inter alia* that it violated the Tennessee Constitution's "home rule" provision that restricts the legislature from targeting a particular county for legislation. In May of 2020, the county Chancery Court ruled that the ESA pilot program violated the provision, and in September of 2020, the Tennessee Court of Appeals agreed. This put a halt to the implementation of the program. In May of 2022, the state Supreme Court ruled against the "home rule" decision of the lower

courts and sent the case back to the Chancery Court to deal with the other issues.

Because many of Maine's school districts do not operate their own high schools, the state instituted a voucher program to pay for students to attend private schools in order that Maine children receive a free public education in accordance with the state constitution. The program stipulated that approved private schools must be nonsectarian, that is, not related to a religious organization. Three sets of parents who wanted their children to go to Christian schools sued in U.S. District Court, alleging that the program violated their First Amendment right to the free exercise of their religion. The court ruled against them, as did the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit.

The people actually paying for “school choice” don't have any choice in the matter at all.

The case was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which, by a vote of 6–3 on June 21, reversed the ruling of the lower courts, holding that: “Maine's ‘nonsectarian’ requirement for its otherwise generally available tuition assistance payments violates the Free Exercise

Clause of the First Amendment. Regardless of how the benefit and restriction are described, the program operates to identify and exclude otherwise eligible schools on the basis of their religious exercise.”

These decisions, and others like them in previous years, are viewed as a victories for “school choice.” But what is “school choice” but giving some Americans the choice of where to spend other Americans' money? The people actually paying for “school choice” don't have any choice in the matter at all. The whole concept of “school choice” is a misnomer. Before the government can issue a voucher to one American for education, it must first take money from another American.

The government — which has no money of its own — forcibly takes money from people (many of whom don't even have any children) through compulsory taxation and uses it to pay for the education of other people's children. Where is the choice in that? Why don't the people paying the bill get a choice? Giving one group of Americans the choice of where to spend other Americans' money to educate their children is immoral and unjust.

Vouchers are not what enables parents to have “school choice.”

Parents throughout the United States have many choices right now when it comes to the education of their children: public schools, parochial schools, Montessori schools, Jewish schools, Christian schools, Muslim schools, independent private schools, private tutors, home-schooling, online schooling.

Parents can choose their children's education right now just like they can choose their children's food, drink, clothing, entertainment, recreation, and toys. There is right now no government entity at any level that is preventing or seeking to prevent any American parents from exercising choice in the matter of their children's education. And certainly no educational institution is doing so on the private level. They all welcome the tuition payments.

Once vouchers for education are deemed to be acceptable, no reasonable or logical argument can be made against the government's providing vouchers for other services. If education vouchers are *legitimate*, then how can vacation vouchers, entertainment vouchers, and recreation vouchers be labeled *illegitimate*? But those are not necessities like education, it is argued. Okay, then what about vouchers for food, housing, clothing, and medi-

cine? Certainly, these things are more necessary than education.

There is nothing libertarian about government educational vouchers.

It doesn't matter if "school choice" produces good results. It doesn't matter if "school choice" works. It doesn't matter if "school choice is a way of giving families with modest incomes the same opportunities that have always existed for rich families," as one libertarian commentator wrote earlier this year. There is nothing libertarian about government educational vouchers.

Not the answer

There are many reasons why vouchers are not the answer to the shortcomings, failings, and evils of public education.

Vouchers are not the answer because they will lead to increased government regulation of private schools.

Vouchers are not the answer because there is no such thing as a "right" to an education.

Vouchers are not the answer because they don't separate education from the state.

Vouchers are not the answer because it is an illegitimate purpose of

government to fund anyone's education.

Vouchers are not the answer because they will lead to increased dependency on the government.

Vouchers are not the answer because no American should be forced to pay for the education of any other American or their children.

Vouchers are not the answer because it is the responsibility of parents to educate their children.

Vouchers are not the answer because they are a form of welfare.

Vouchers are not the answer because they are not an intermediate step toward a free market in education.

Vouchers are not the answer because all educational services should be privately provided and funded.

Vouchers are not the answer because the free market can provide a wide range of educational services just like it can provide a wide range of other services.

Vouchers are not the answer because government spending on vouchers doesn't necessarily mean that less is spent on public schools.

Vouchers are not the answer be-

cause the government shouldn't subsidize private entities.

Vouchers are not the answer because the provision of education should not be any different from the provision of any other service on the free market.

Vouchers are not the answer because they are inferior to tuition tax credits.

Vouchers are not the answer because they come with government strings attached.

Vouchers are not the answer because there is nothing inherently special about the business of education that necessitates the government be involved in it.

Vouchers are not the answer because no one should have the "choice" of where to spend other people's money.

Vouchers are not the answer because parents already have an abundance of choices as to how to educate their children.

Vouchers are not the answer because they will put many private schools out of business that refuse to accept them.

Vouchers are not the answer because they make private schools accountable to government instead of parents.

Vouchers are not the answer because they are a form of welfare.

Vouchers are not the answer because no one has the right to an education at the expense of someone else.

Vouchers are not the answer because they are only valid at state-approved private schools.

Vouchers are not the answer because the consumers of educational services should be the ones bearing the costs.

Vouchers are not the answer because they are not educational freedom.

Vouchers are not the answer because the answer to a flawed and illegitimate government program is never another government program.

Vouchers are not the answer because the government's transferring taxpayer money to private schools is no different from the government's transferring taxpayer money to any other business.

Vouchers are not the answer because the fact that some people don't have the money to pay for their preferred education choice doesn't justify the government's forcing someone else to pay for it.

Vouchers are not the answer because they distort the marketplace by establishing a floor under which tuition will not go below.

Vouchers are not the answer because if it is not the business of gov-

ernment to fund public schools, then it is certainly not the business of government to fund private schools.

Vouchers are not the answer because when they are used for anything besides education, they are rightly denounced as an income-transfer program.

Ludwig von Mises had the answer many years ago in his book *Liberalism*: "There is, in fact, only one solution: the state, the government, the laws must not in any way concern themselves with schooling or education. Public funds must not be used for such purposes. The rearing and instruction of youth must be left entirely to parents and to private associations and institutions."

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We can all no doubt remember having found ourselves suddenly under the influence of an idea, the source of which we cannot possibly identify. “It came to us afterward,” as we say; that is, we are aware of it only after it has shot up full-grown in our minds, leaving us quite ignorant of how and when and by what agency it was planted there and left to germinate.... For some time it is inert; then it begins to fret and fester until presently it invades the man’s conscious mind and, as one might say, corrupts it. Meanwhile, he has quite forgotten how he came by the idea in the first instance, and even perhaps thinks he has invented it; and in those circumstances, the most interesting thing of all is that you never know what the pressure of that idea will make him do.

— Albert Jay Nock

If America Were Totalitarian, Where Would You Want to Live?

.....
by Richard M. Ebeling



Suppose that one evening as the sun was setting and dusk was settling in, a strange mist fell over the United States that resulted in the entire population of the country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, falling into a deep and restful sleep. Similarly, as evening settled in across the Russian Federation, the same type of mist enveloped the entire country from the Pacific to the Baltic Sea, with the Russian people falling into an equivalent restful and deep sleep.

When the people of the two countries awoke from their night's slumber, they found themselves, respectively, living under two radically different political regimes

from the ones that they had been under the day before. In Russia, the country was still physically the same. There still were the deep forests, the rich soil of the steppes, the mountains of the Urals, and the stark, frigid terrain of the Siberian north.

But the Russian political system had been transformed into a constitutional, strictly limited government, with every citizen secure in his personal and civil liberties under an impartially enforced rule of law. In their economic affairs, the Russians found themselves living under a *laissez-faire*, free-market order in which every individual was free to peacefully live his life as he personally chose, with all interpersonal relationships based on honest and voluntary associations inside and outside of the marketplace.

In the United States, the Rocky Mountains still stretched southward from the Canadian border, the central plains still had miles upon miles of corn and wheat fields, the wide Mississippi River continued to flow from Minnesota south into the Gulf of Mexico, and New York and Chicago still had their majestic skylines. On the other hand, however, the country had been transformed into a fully totalitarian political regime.

The American people possessed no individual rights, no constitutional guarantees of their civil liberties, and no legal recourse if abused or imprisoned by those in dictatorial control through a one-party political system. In economic affairs, everything was now owned and controlled by the government, with a central planning agency determining and dictating what, how, and where all production would occur, with that government the single employer of all in the society. Standards and qualities of life for each and every citizen were decided by those in political power. There existed no corners in the society, no interstices in which to hide and live outside of the controlling and commanding power of the state.

Young Americans know little about the past

Over the years, I have sometimes posited this “dream” in some of my classes in which I have taught the principles of economics and the political institutions underlying a free society. I have asked the students, if this were the world into which they woke up one morning in America, in which of these two countries would they prefer to live and to give their support and loyalty?

Most of the students found the question very disconcerting. But, of course, many of them said America. I then followed up with the simple question, why? What makes America the place you would want to live? Is it merely the physical landscape that you are used to? Is it the flag to which you gave a pledge of allegiance at the start of every day in grammar school? Is it your family or friends whom you have known all your life, or the convenience of speaking the language you learned as a child?

Many of these students know little about why an earlier generation of their families made the journey to America.

I’ve looked around the classroom and usually found that a large majority of those in the class were the children, or grandchildren, or great-grandchildren of earlier generations who chose to leave the “old country,” the native lands in which they had been born. They had left places in many other parts of the world to travel to America and make it their new home and start a new life.

I’ve asked them why they would have done that. It is amazing how many of these students know little

or nothing about how, why, when, or even from where an earlier generation of their families had made the journey to America. Some know some things about their family's histories, but many do not, and equally amazing, some of them don't care.

Many chose America to escape from tyranny

I explain that, historically speaking, many in those earlier generations of immigrants were escaping from political oppression, or religious persecution, or the destruction and agonies of war and civil wars, or the lack of economic opportunities due to the controls and corruptions of the political systems under which they had been living in their countries of origin. And that the current waves of immigrants coming to America today, legally or illegally, are usually motivated by the same factors that influenced their own ancestors.

What these waves and generations of immigrants arriving in America wanted and were searching for was freedom in some or all of its facets that they were denied in the places from which they had come. Making a choice to emigrate, to leave the country of one's birth, is never an easy matter for most of

those who do so. You leave behind your family and friends, the customs and traditions under which you have grown up, the familiar surroundings that psychologically feel like "home." You lose, usually, the comfortableness of speaking the language you learned from childhood and, instead, have to master a new language with which you may have no starting knowledge. The migrant often finds himself or herself in a social environment in which he or she knows no one or only a small number compared to "back home." At first, it can be lonely and scary.

And, yet, tens of millions have made that choice and undertaken that journey from the "old country" to America. Since many of my students, as I said, seem to know little or nothing about the reasons and circumstances behind their own earlier family members coming to the United States, I remind them of what often guided their decision.

An imperfect America offered freedom and opportunity

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Italian classical-liberal historian Guglielmo Ferrero (1871–1942) visited America. In several of his writings over the years before the First World War, he wrote about

the social and economic uniqueness of the United States and its appeal for so many who made the journey to make America their new home. For instance, in his work on *Militarism* (1899), he contrasted European life and circumstance with that in the United States. Ferrero did not presume that America was some perfect and pure utopia of liberty and opportunity. For example, he said:

How can one give an unreserved opinion on a nation that possesses the most perfect penitentiary institutions in the world for the shelter and education of criminals, and which at the same time tolerates the arbitrary punishment of crime by infuriated mobs? A nation which protects the rights of inventive genius so rigorously and wisely by the law of patents, a society which has thus reached a most perfect comprehension of this last and subtlest ideal of property, but which countenances also the public organization of those associations of malefactors which are allowed to impose the most monstrous levies on the populations of entire cities by means of in-

trigue and fraud [government-bestowed municipal monopolies].... A nation whose Government retains so much of the wolf nature inherent in the worst European Governments, which allows the most colossal squandering of public moneys ... such as that most ingenious of all, protectionism?" (p. 15)

In spite of all this, in America, the immigrant, the new arrival in this new land, usually had chances for work and wealth-making not open to him or her wherever they may have come from. Though Ferrero noted that "brutal and degrading works devolve upon negroes, Chinese, and Italian immigrants" (p. 18), nonetheless, when looking over American society as a whole, Ferrero continued:

In the United States ... the extreme freedom and ease of the individual, not handicapped as we are [in Europe] in changing occupations, habits, social caste, received ideals, and social axioms by a social tradition, become almost sacred; the innumerable opportunities in the midst of such constant material and intellec-

tual change for the association of individual talents and energies; the prodigious rapidity with which these combinations can be formed and dissolved; the frequent return of opportunities brought about by the rapidity of revolving wheel of fortune; the instability of all things — of good but no less bad; the purely temporary nature of all conditions; the almost complete want of any definite solutions; — of necessity imply that there is no defeat without reconquest, nor decay without rebirth.

These conditions prevailing in America, render it easy for any ordinary intelligent and energetic man to obtain for his work remuneration which errs rather on the side of being beyond than beneath his deserts ... Thanks to the almost complete lack of Intellectual protectionism — thanks, in consequence, to the lack of government curriculum of unprofitable and obligatory studies, America is exempt from an intellectual proletariat and the declasses, the chronic disease of the middle classes in Europe. Let him who can do a thing well step forward and do

it, no one will question where he learnt it; such is the degree required of an American engineer, barrister, clerk or employee. And as the opportunities to do well are innumerable, everyone can develop the talents with which Nature has endowed him, changing his occupation according to circumstances and opportunity... An American is always ready to see the particular stream at which he has been drinking dried up, and be prepared to pack up his belongings and set off in search of another.” (pp. 17, 19)

Liberty and dignity in a freer America

Finally, in Ferrero’s view, the basis for these never-ending opportunities and chances for prosperity for most in the late-nineteenth-century United States arose from the moral foundations that guided the thinking and acting of the vast majority of Americans, including a belief in individual rights and responsibilities and the accompanying principle of respect for the equal rights of others and yourself. Once more, as Guglielmo Ferrero expressed it:

The greatness of a nation depends on a high standard of

moral solidarity, and this is high only where each respects in others the rights he himself claims, and admits for himself the same duties which he would impose upon others under similar circumstances; it arises from the recognition of the fact that if men differ from one another in talent, culture, and wealth, they are nevertheless morally equal, and that no one of them is morally bound to serve his fellow without receiving just and equivalent remuneration. Where this sentiment of the moral equality of men is most deeply felt, everyone resents the injustice done to others, and in thought and action aims at social justice.

But the conditions most favorable to the development of this sentiment are those under which no one depends for his livelihood on the capricious benevolence of others, but like the Americans and the Englishmen, only on his own capacities to serve in some way his fellows, receiving their services in exchange, and these not measured arbitrarily by some power outside himself, but governed by his own

judgement. This liberty develops in him the sense of moral dignity, which is the backbone of the human character and of the sentiment of moral equality.... In short, what has made American society appear to Europeans in the light of an enchanted world, is ... the freedom of the individual from those oppressive historical, political, moral, and intellectual tyrannies which the State accumulates and imposes on all our anciently civilized countries.” (pp. 24–25)

Space does not permit Ferrero to continue to directly speak for himself, but in summary, and in the context of the then-recent Spanish-American War of 1898, he juxtaposes this description of America with the domestic policies of the Spain of that time: a society of hierarchical power and privilege in which civil liberties were not recognized and honest labor of free men was neither fully permitted nor socially respected, since status and social positions were based on the plunders and corruptions of the past kept in their static place by a government dedicated to limiting or even preventing any liberal market freedoms as were widely present

in America. Innovation and change, whether societal or economic, were frowned upon and resisted as threats to the government-secured monopolies, subsidies, privileges, and protections assured for a few at the expense of the rest.

Wanting freedom and risking your life to have it

This now gets us back to the students in my classes, to whom I have asked those questions. Clearly, I explain to them, many of their ancestors were looking for a land of freedom and opportunity to which to come and give their energies and loyalties. The country in which accident of birth had first placed them did not permanently dictate where they had to make their home. The Italian, or Irishman, or German, or Swede, or Pole may still have had personal roots and memories and cultural nostalgias that gave psychological connectedness to the places from which they had come. But for most of them, they chose to become “Americans” because what America stood for and offered was a better place to call their home than the homes from which they had departed.

So, again, if you were to wake up one morning, I say to them, and America was now a totalitarian

state and Russia was a completely free country of personal liberty and economic freedom, where would you want to live? What makes a place worth living in, defending, and fighting for? Is it an accident of birth and the familiar things around you as you grow up, or is it the ideas and ideals that a country stands for and at least seriously attempts to practice?

**Their ancestors became
“Americans” because of what
America stood for and offered.**

A few of the students sometimes respond that they would want to stay to fight and try to make America a free country once again. I often have responded that that is, of course, a meritorious position, to want to restore freedom to your homeland if it has been lost or, perhaps, never experienced. But suppose some of your fellow Americans decided that for their own wellbeing and that of their families it was desirable, even necessary, to make a new life in a now-free Russia compared to a totalitarian America.

I have asked, would you view them as traitors to their homeland, or as individuals deciding their own futures and that of their loved ones rather than be prisoners with no

liberty in a totalitarian state? I have reminded them that in the actual totalitarian states of the twentieth century, their governments did all in their power to prevent their citizens from leaving their respective countries. Since it all happened before they were born, I tell them about how the Soviet government constructed the Berlin Wall to deter attempts to escape from the communist regime in East Germany. In spite of this, many hundreds of people between 1961 and 1989 devised ways to make their way out of that socialist paradise, and many of them not merely risked but lost their lives in the attempt to make it to a freer West Berlin.

But isn't America still free today?

Other students have sometimes replied that they understand the point I'm trying to make, but that, luckily, it is a moot point since America still remains a free country, far better than many, many other places around the world. If America is so bad, how come so many people still want to come to the United States by legal and illegal means? I usually have responded that, yes, in comparison to many other places around the globe, America still offers greater freedom and opportunity.

But I suggest that that is not the only basis of comparison: for example, America versus places like North Korea or Afghanistan today. An equally relevant benchmark of comparison is America today versus the America of the late nineteenth century, the period that Italian Guglielmo Ferrero described earlier in this article. I emphasize that Ferrero did not claim that the United States was some kind of heaven on earth. I highlight the fairly large number of instances of hypocrisy and inconsistency in the practice of liberty and lack of protected equal rights before the law that Ferrero enumerated for his European readers, as well as how governmental corruption and interest group politics were scars on the American landscape.

In comparison to many other places around the globe, America still offers greater freedom and opportunity.

But what he saw in the United States of that time was a country in which the individual, either born in America or newly arrived, was almost unrestricted in peacefully and honestly pursuing virtually any profession or occupation without government approval or license. He

was able to freely and voluntarily associate and negotiate the terms of trade on the basis of which he might be hired or at which he might sell the product or service he had brought to market. Regulations over the methods of production and trade were scarcely known in the America of that time.

The American government spent what Ferrero considered too much of the citizen's money.

The American government spent and squandered what Ferrero considered too much of the citizen's money, with politicians buying votes and interest groups acquiring favors and privileges, including a variety of trade protections against foreign competitors and domestic subsidies and contracts from the political authorities. But when Ferrero visited the United States, all levels of government siphoned off barely 7 percent of all the wealth produced by those earning a living in the private sector. There was no federal income tax and no presumption that government had a lien on all that was earned by the citizens, with those income earners being permitted to keep the residual not claimed by those in political power.

It was not considered the gov-

ernment's business where you lived, how you earned a living, when and for what purpose you traveled, either inside the United States, or between America and the rest of the world. The students are astonished when I tell them that for most of the years before the First World War, almost anyone could travel to the United States without a passport or a visa. Freedom of movement was considered a natural accompaniment to freedom of association and freedom of trade. (The embarrassing and immoral blemish on the American principle of free entry and residence were the anti-immigration laws passed in the last decades of the nineteenth century against Chinese and Japanese due to racial prejudice.)

The narrower range of liberty in modern America

I compare that earlier America with the United States of today. Yes, there are many things better in the United States now than back then. Racial and religious prejudices are far less than in the 1890s. The Southern segregation laws are a thing of the past, and social acceptance of interracial relationships is practically universal in modern America. Women have the vote and greater marketplace opportunities

and freedoms of choice. And due to the extent that market openness and competition have persisted, all Americans of today have standards and qualities of life that were almost unimaginable in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

The Americans of the 1890s would have never imagined the United States in a 20-year war in Afghanistan or Iraq.

Yet, in spite of all this, government interferes, regulates, controls, prohibits, and compels far more corners of our everyday lives than anyone could have imagined during the time of Guglielmo Ferrero's visit to the United States. Government siphons off a percentage of people's earned income and wealth that would have been considered confiscatory and oppressive by the ordinary and average American of the 1890s. The government operated back then with a modest and limited budget, with an almost nonexistent national debt. Today, government gorges on trillions of dollars of tax money every year, and still has to borrow a trillion dollars a year on top of all that, which has created a huge national debt.

Back when Ferrero wrote about his impressions of America, the

Spanish-American War was a recent event, with the United States having acquired its first war-based overseas imperial territories in the form of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, a protectorate over Cuba, and the annexation of the Philippine Islands in East Asia. But this fledgling American empire seemed almost trivial compared to, say, the global-encompassing British and French empires of that time.

Today, the America taxpayer covers the cost of a worldwide network of foreign bases and alliances that at any time can drag the United States into overseas wars. The Americans of the 1890s would have never imagined the United States in a 20-year war in Afghanistan or Iraq, with the accompanying abridgments of freedom and loss of wealth and lives that such foreign adventures have entailed.

I ask my students, at the end of such discussions, how free is America, really, today? What is the direction toward which we seem to be continuing to head? And if this road were at some time to lead to a far more comprehensive government control-and-command society in the United States, and if there was some place at that time that was closer to the freer society that America was in the late nineteenth

century, where would you want to live, and to which society would you want to give your loyalty and support?

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NEXT MONTH:

“Two Agendas”

by Laurence M. Vance

“Liberalism, True and False”

by Richard M. Ebeling

What a cruel thing is war: to separate and destroy families and friends, and mar the purest joys and happiness God has granted us in this world; to fill our hearts with hatred instead of love for our neighbors, and to devastate the fair face of this beautiful world.

— Robert E. Lee

No major culture has ever emerged that was built upon possession and force exclusively. For production to occur there must be long periods of time in which peaceful non-molestation is the order of the day. Force is a poor tool with which to obtain lasting calm and serenity. Production and trade, the devices which build what we call civilizations, are erected on ideas of ownership rather than ideas of possession. It is in this sense that human society is constructed upon a moral base: a recognition of the difference between right and wrong. There must be an understanding of the sanctity of boundary, and a broad adherence to support of such sanctity, for a culture to endure or advance.

— Robert LeFevre

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