
FUTURE OF FREEDOM

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A man in debt is so far a slave.

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

FUTURE OF FREEDOM

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America's Forever Wars Are Not the Problem

by Jacob G. Hornberger



Ever since it became clear that the U.S. invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq were turning into disasters, a common refrain has been to end America's "forever wars." Politicians of all political stripes, commentators in the mainstream press, and various conservative and libertarian think tanks and educational foundations have embraced the refrain, thinking that if only America can bring an end to its "forever wars," everything will be fine.

But these people are mistaken. Ending America's forever wars is akin to reducing the size of a cancerous tumor. In order to cure the longstanding ailment that afflicts the American body politic, it is nec-

essary to eradicate, not reduce, the entire cancerous tumor that is taking our country down from within.

As a new book entitled *The Last Honest Man* by James Risen demonstrates, U.S. Senator Frank Church gradually came to this realization. Church was a fierce opponent of the war in Vietnam. Not surprisingly, rightwing proponents of the war called him every name in the book — traitor, Russia-lover, and commie sympathizer. None of that dissuaded Church from maintaining that America's forever war in Vietnam, which ultimately sacrificed the lives of more than 58,000 American men, was an absolute disaster and needed to be brought to an end.

The real issue in foreign policy

But Church realized that simply extracting the United States from the Vietnam War was not enough. He came to the realization that the real problem was not America's forever wars but rather the fact that the United States had become a national-security state. As long as America remained a national-security state, Church maintained, it would continue to be besieged by an endless series of forever wars.

This is what all too many opponents of America's foreign wars still

do not understand. They want to end them but want to keep America's national-security state governmental apparatus. They are convinced that the Pentagon, the vast military-industrial complex, the CIA, and the NSA are absolutely essential to the freedom, security, and well-being of the American people. They still don't see that as long as America remains a national-security state, our country will be besieged by perpetual war in the ostensible quest for permanent peace.

Consider the Vietnam War. Antiwar proponents were ultimately successful in bringing an end to U.S. involvement in that war. Yet, the Cold War and its anticommunist crusade continued, along with ever-growing taxpayer-funded largesse being heaped on the national-security establishment to keep America safe from the Reds. The forever war against communism was the national-security establishment's biggest racket, one that it was determined to revive after the racket ostensibly came to an end in 1989.

Once the Cold War ended, the national-security state didn't skip a beat. After misleading Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein into thinking that U.S. officials were indifferent to his dispute with Kuwait, U.S. officials went into overdrive to bring us the

Persian Gulf War, which turned into a forever war to secure Saddam's ouster, with sanctions targeting the Iraqi people with death and impoverishment. That forever war lasted for more than 10 years.

The forever war against communism was the national-security establishment's biggest racket.

Once the massive death and destruction in Iraq and other acts of U.S. interventionism in the Middle East gave rise to the inevitable and predictable terrorist retaliation, the national-security establishment was off to the races once again, this time with another forever war — the “war on terrorism” — which was also termed the “war on evil” and “the war on Islam.” Given the large number of terrorists, evil people, and Muslims in the world, the hope was that this forever war would prove to be more lucrative than the old Cold War, anticommunist racket.

Then came the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. The rage and hatred arising from the massive death and destruction in those two countries ensured an endless supply of terrorists, which meant that the forever

“war on terrorism” would very likely last even longer than the forever war against the communists.

The national-security state doesn't give up

But knowing that there was always a possibility that the war on terrorism could fizzle out, especially if the United States was thrown out of Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. national-security officials began planning for a reinvigoration of their old Cold War racket against Russia. That's what expanding NATO eastward toward Russia's borders was all about. Once NATO threatened to absorb Ukraine, the national-security establishment had its old Cold War, anti-Russia racket back again.

Meanwhile, just to ensure their bets, national-security state officials have done everything they could to gin up another forever Cold War with China, beginning with a vicious trade war and a big expansion of provocative U.S. military activity near China.

Let's not forget North Korea. Pentagon and CIA officials could easily reignite tensions in that part of the world as yet another part of their forever-war scheme.

Can you see why Frank Church maintained that as long as America

remains a national-security state, the country will continue to be besieged by forever wars? Limiting one's self to opposing each war as it pops up is like playing whack-a-mole. As soon as you hit one mole, another one immediately pops up.

U.S. national-security officials began planning for a reinvigoration of their old Cold War racket against Russia.

As detailed in Risen's excellent book, Frank Church displayed phenomenal courage in taking on the national-security establishment, especially the CIA. It was the Church Committee that brought to light some of the dark-side activities in which the CIA had been engaged since its inception in 1947. As you can imagine, Church was accused of aiding the enemy and threatening “national security” with such disclosures.

America's original governmental structure

Keep in mind that America was founded as a limited-government republic, a type of governmental structure in which the government's powers are limited and tightly constrained. It came with a relatively small, basic military force. No

Pentagon, no vast military-industrial complex, no CIA, no NSA, and no empire of foreign military bases. Government operations were, by and large, transparent. There was no obsession with national-security secrecy.

Combined with our limited-government republic was a foreign policy of noninterventionism. That founding policy was expressed in John Quincy Adams's Fourth of July speech to Congress in 1821, entitled "In Search of Monsters to Destroy." Adams pointed out that lots of bad things happen in the world but that America's policy was to not send U.S. troops abroad to fix them.

Instead, America had a system of open immigration, which essentially said to the world, "If you are suffering from tyranny, oppression, war, or famine, or if you just want to improve your life, know that there is one place in the world where you can come that will not forcibly return you to your country."

Those three founding principles — a limited-government republic, noninterventionism, and open borders — were major factors in the tremendous increase in the standard of living of the American people, especially in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century.

A national-security state is a completely different type of governmental system. It is a totalitarian-like system that has been grafted onto our founding democratic system. It comes with omnipotent, not limited, powers, most of which emanate from what can be called the "dark side." These include state-sponsored assassinations, torture, indefinite detention, kidnapping, coups, and alliances with dictatorial regimes.

By the time that America became a national-security state, the country had embraced not only a foreign policy of interventionism but also a domestic policy of government-controlled immigration. All three new policies led directly to America's endless series of forever wars, all in the name of "freedom" and keeping us "safe."

Adams pointed out that bad things happen in the world but that America's policy was to not send U.S. troops abroad to fix them.

If the Constitution had proposed a national-security state form of governmental structure, a foreign policy of interventionism, and a policy of immigration controls, there is no reasonable possibility whatsoever that the American peo-

ple would have accepted it. That would have meant that the United States would have continued operating under the Articles of Confederation, a third type of governmental structure in which the federal government's powers were so few, limited, and weak that it didn't even have the power to tax. That's the way our American ancestors wanted it.

The sordid history of the national-security state

Among the dark-side activities that the Church Committee disclosed to the American people in 1975 and 1976 was the CIA's infamous top-secret program MKULTRA. Headed by a man named Sydney Gottlieb, the program would have fit perfectly within Nazi Germany. It involved conducting drug experiments on unsuspecting Americans, which brought death and mental damage to many of the victims.

How many people were victimized by this Nazi-like program? We don't know because when word leaked out about MKULTRA, CIA officials destroyed their MKULTRA records to prevent Congress and the American people from ever learning the full extent of the program.

Needless to say, no one, including Gottlieb, was ever brought to justice for what they did to people

with MKULTRA. That's because under a national-security state, officials are authorized, even if only implicitly, to engage in any dark-side activity they want to, with impunity. Given the overwhelming power of the national-security branch of the government, the other three branches inevitably defer to its will. (To learn more about Gottlieb and this infamous program, I highly recommend an excellent book entitled *Poisoner in Chief: Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA Search for Mind Control* by Stephen Kinzer.)

When word leaked out about MKULTRA, CIA officials destroyed their MKULTRA records.

Frank Olson was a federal employee who worked in MKULTRA. Stricken by a crisis of conscience about what he was doing, Olson became a threat to national security. At a CIA social gathering, CIA officials spiked his drink with LSD without telling him, which caused him to experience severe mental problems. Not long after, Olson ostensibly committed suicide by supposedly jumping from a high floor in a New York City hotel.

Olson's family had never been told about the LSD. The CIA had led them to believe that Olson was

just suffering from unexplainable mental problems. However, once the Church Committee disclosed that an unnamed federal employee had committed suicide after having his drink spiked with LSD, the Olson family put two and two together. The CIA confessed to what it had done, and Congress approved a settlement payment to the Olson family. However, many years later, evidence surfaced indicating that Olson hadn't committed suicide at all but instead had been murdered by CIA operatives who threw him out of that hotel window. The Olson case is set forth in an excellent miniseries on Netflix entitled *Wormwood*.

The Church Committee also uncovered and disclosed the CIA's assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the leader of the Congo. The CIA had concluded that Lumumba was a threat to national security because he favored Congo's drive toward independence from Belgium's colonial rule. In the eyes of the CIA, he was a communist sympathizer.

The Church Committee also revealed the CIA's regime-change operations in Chile from 1970 to 1973, including the kidnapping and murder of Gen. Rene Schneider, the commander of the Chilean armed forces.

In the 1970 presidential election, Chilean physician Salvador Allende had won only a plurality of the votes, which meant that the Chilean congress would elect the next president. Since Allende was a socialist, U.S. officials deemed him to be a threat to U.S. national security.

The Church Committee also uncovered and disclosed the CIA's assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the leader of the Congo.

The CIA embarked on a two-step plan to block Allende's election. First, the CIA engaged in a bribery scheme targeting the members of the Chilean congress. Second, the Pentagon and the CIA incited the Chilean military to take control of the government in a coup.

Schneider said no. He said that the military would abide by the Chilean constitution and by the election results. Therefore, U.S. officials deemed him to be a threat to national security and orchestrated his violent kidnapping. He was shot dead on the streets of Santiago.

Not surprisingly, no one was ever brought to justice for Schneider's murder, even though part of the conspiracy had clearly taken place in Virginia and Washington,

D.C. By this time, the national-security branch of the government had simply grown too powerful. Many years later, when Schneider's children filed a lawsuit in federal district court for the wrongful killing of their father, the federal judiciary threw them out of court, declaring that America's federal judiciary would never second-guess any assassination carried out by the national-security establishment.

CIA officials and CIA veterans didn't praise Frank Church for his heroism and patriotism.

One of the fascinating aspects of the Chilean coup operations was the secrecy in which the Pentagon and the CIA enveloped their operations. That could be because in some ways, the Chilean coup resembled the national-security regime-change operation against President Kennedy several years before.

For example, in encouraging a national-security-state takeover in Chile, Pentagon and CIA officials were telling Chilean military-intelligence officials that they had a moral duty to remove their democratically elected president from office, notwithstanding the fact that the country's constitution did not

provide for such action. The CIA told them that a country's constitution was not a "suicide pact," and, therefore, if a democratically elected president is leading his country to doom, it is the moral duty of the national-security establishment to step in and save the country from this grave threat.

U.S. officials maintained that Allende constituted a grave threat to national security both in the United States and in Chile, not only because he was a socialist but also because he had established normal and friendly relations with the Soviets and the Cubans. Kennedy favored many of the same domestic policies as Allende and, at the time he was killed, was establishing normal and friendly relations with the Soviets and the Cubans.

One of the interesting by-products of the Church Committee involved former CIA Director Richard Helms. In the early 1970s, when Helms was seeking to be appointed a U.S. ambassador, he was asked if the CIA had intervened in Chile's 1970 presidential election. He said no. Helms's flagrant perjury came to light during the Church Committee hearings. Helms was given a sweetheart deal by letting him plead to a misdemeanor with no jail time. When he went to CIA headquarter-

ters, his former cohorts cheered him for his heroism and patriotism and passed the hat to help him pay his fine.

Needless to say, CIA officials and CIA veterans didn't praise Frank Church for his heroism and patriotism. They vilified him and claimed that he had severely harmed national security by disclosing the CIA's dark secrets to the American people and the world. In fact, according to Risen, they later blamed the Church Committee for the 9/11 attacks, claiming that if Church had not disabled the CIA with the disclosure of its dark-side activities, the 9/11 attacks would never have occurred.

As far as the national-security establishment was — and is — concerned, it must wield the omnipotent power to do whatever it deems necessary to protect “national security” and to keep its dark-side activities secret.

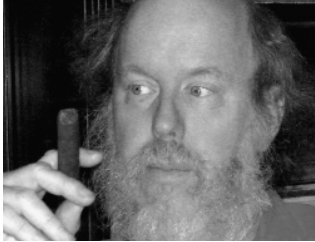
Frank Church ran for president in 1976 and lost. In 1989, he lost his bid for reelection to the U.S. Senate. In 1984, he passed away at the age of 59. The national-security establishment, including the CIA, remained in existence, along with its endless series of forever wars. Church's biggest contribution to the American people might yet bear fruit — his insight that America's problem is not its forever wars but rather its national-security state.

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

NEXT MONTH:
“The Story of Sam Bird”
by Jacob G. Hornberger

Macaulay and the Ghosts of Tyranny Past, Part 2

by James Bovard



Reposing with a favorite author in the Virginia Tech library in 1976, I savored one zinger after another in Thomas Macaulay's *History of England*. Macaulay hailed the Habeas Corpus Act of 1679 as "the most stringent curb that ever legislation imposed on tyranny," a law that adds to "the security and happiness of every inhabitant of the realm."

A petition for a writ of habeas corpus — Latin for "produce the body" — compels government officials to bring a detained person before a judge to be either formally charged or released. Habeas corpus was enshrined in the U.S. Constitution even before the Bill of Rights was added. In 1969, the Supreme

Court declared that the writ of habeas corpus is "the fundamental instrument for safeguarding individual freedom against arbitrary and lawless state action."

Macaulay provided a wonderful round-up of ghosts of tyranny past. As America celebrated the 200th anniversary of its independence, however, I assumed that stuff about habeas was as irrelevant as the flintlock muskets used at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

And then George W. Bush proved me wrong.

When President Bush promised to "rid the world of evil" a few days after the 9/11 attack, I knew America was screwed. Because dozens of bad guys hijacked airplanes on September 11, 2001, the U.S. president miraculously acquired the prerogative to arbitrarily designate and perpetually detain anyone in the world he labeled an "enemy combatant." Bush subsequently declared that he also had absolute power over "illegal non-combatants." Anyone who was suspected of supporting terrorists or violent extremists or whatever forfeited all their rights.

Bush's decree made habeas corpus as irrelevant as it had been before the Magna Carta was signed in 1215. The president's executive order also negated all the judicial pro-

cedures and protections developed since 1789 to safeguard the rights of individuals seized by the government.

At the same time, Justice Department lawyers and FBI agents swooped down on more than a thousand immigrants, jailing them on any flimsy pretext they could find and denying them any legal rights or access to lawyers. Georgetown University law professor David Cole observed: “Never in our history has the government engaged in such a blanket practice of secret incarceration.” Federal judges vehemently protested, but the abuses continued.

Bush’s enemy combatant declaration was the epitome of the arbitrary and dangerous principle cited by Parliament.

I was astounded that Bush’s proclamation did not spur a sweeping backlash. A few pundits and Democratic members of Congress groused but not enough to raise a ruckus. Throughout history, politicians have concocted outlandish pretexts to claim boundless power, but they have usually gotten smacked down by contemporaries. But America’s purported leaders were more craven or more clueless

than the English statesmen who thwarted the absolutist Stuart kings almost 400 years earlier. A 1621 Parliament report eloquently warned: “If [the king] founds his authority on arbitrary and dangerous principles, it is requisite to watch him with the same care, and to oppose him with the same vigor, as if he indulged himself in all the excesses of cruelty and tyranny.” Bush’s enemy combatant declaration was the epitome of the arbitrary and dangerous principle cited by Parliament, but most of the Washington establishment shrugged, nodded, or applauded.

In retrospect, the Bush administration was just getting warmed up.

War crimes for the homeland

I was charmed by Macaulay’s writings because his casual comments exposed more truth than most contemporary historians reveal in an entire book. Macaulay immortalized an odious Scottish minister of the late 1600s as “the man who had first introduced the thumbscrew into the jurisprudence of his country.”

Great damn line, I thought, when I read it 40 years ago. Luckily, Americans were far too enlightened and civilized to worry about that type of ... whoops.

After 9/11, President Bush left no barbarity behind as he created a secret worldwide torture regime. On August 1, 2002, the Bush Justice Department secretly redefined torture (banned by federal law and the U.S. Constitution) to refer only to pain and suffering “equivalent in intensity” to “organ failure ... or even death.” The new definition nullified a long history of U.S. court precedents and international treaties. White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales dismissed concerns about whether the U.S. government was violating the Anti-Torture Act and other prohibitions by invoking the “Commander-in-Chief override power” — another bizarre invention of Bush’s legal wizards.

“Enhanced interrogation” quickly became Washington’s favorite euphemism. To sway detainees to spill their guts, CIA interrogators were entitled to use head slapping, waterboarding, frigid temperatures/hypothermia, manacling for many hours, blasting with loud music to assure sleep deprivation for seven days and nights, and “walling” — throwing a detainee against a wall but not more than 30 times in a row. CIA interrogators often did not speak the language of the detainees, so they compensated by beating the hell out of them. Bush’s interroga-

tors tore out toenails, relied on compulsory enemas for “feeding,” simulated live burials in coffins for hundreds of hours, burned detainees with electric shocks, and inflicted “sensory deprivation through the use of hoods.” CIA operatives or U.S. soldiers killed dozens of detainees during interrogations, but those fatalities were treated like paperwork errors, not homicides. The Justice Department slapped gag orders on torture victims to prohibit them from revealing exactly how they had been scourged.

Gonzales dismissed concerns about whether the U.S. government was violating the Anti-Torture Act.

What could be worse than systematically torturing detainees around the world? “A practice the most barbarous and the most absurd that has ever disgraced jurisprudence,” as Macaulay wrote in his damning essay on his favorite philosopher, Francis Bacon. In late 2004, a top Justice Department official announced plans to use “evidence” gained by torture in judicial proceedings. The perverse legal rationale: Bush had declared that enemy combatants “have no constitutional rights enforceable” in court,

and you can't violate rights that don't exist.

In June 2006, the Supreme Court rejected the Bush administration's claims that the Geneva Conventions did not apply to War on Terror detainees. Bush out-fearmongered himself, whipping up a backlash against any limits on his power. He warned that CIA interrogators "will not take the steps necessary to protect" America "as long as the War Crimes Act hangs over their heads." So anyone who opposed committing war crimes automatically was a threat to the safety of the homeland? This was one of the most astounding rhetorical reversals of the War on Terror, but it received scant coverage in the press.

**The Bush administration
literally copied brutal Soviet
interrogation methods and added
them to the U.S. playbook.**

Congress caved to Bush's browbeating, enacting the Military Commission Act and retroactively legalizing all the torture inflicted after 9/11 and prior to December 30, 2005. The act also effectively blocked any lawsuit from torture victims or their survivors. The act authorized the commissions that Bush created to put terror suspects on trial to ac-

cept "evidence" produced by interrogations that violated "cruel, unusual or inhumane treatment" standards as long as the abuse didn't qualify under the new "damn near died" definition of torture.

The act authorized judicial hearings that resembled a 1938 Moscow show trial. Defense attorneys could "challenge the use of hearsay information obtained through coercive interrogations [torture] in distant countries only if they can prove it is unreliable," the *Washington Post* noted, but it was almost impossible to disprove an accusation when a defense lawyer was not allowed to question or perhaps even know who made the charge.

When I was coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s, torture was something that the Nazis and the Soviets did, but the Bush administration literally copied brutal Soviet interrogation methods and added them to the U.S. playbook. I was almost as astounded by the cheerleading for Bush's torture regime as by the torture itself. When I criticized torture in speeches to libertarian and conservative audiences in those years, I was booed and heckled but didn't get waterboarded. The new Millennium was hell on old-time American idealism.

Obama's sacrosanct killings

The venality of the English monarchy was clearest when enemies of the regime were prosecuted in high-profile trials. Prior to the 1688 Revolution, Macaulay wrote, "a state trial was merely a murder preceded by the uttering of certain gibberish and the performance of certain mummeries."

Obama claimed a prerogative to assassinate U.S. citizens without a trial or warning if they were labeled terrorist suspects.

Happily, the U.S. government has never used "gibberish and mummeries" to shroud its killings, except maybe for President Barack Obama's "Terror Tuesdays." Obama claimed a prerogative to assassinate U.S. citizens and anyone else without a trial or warning if they were labeled terrorist suspects. In April 2012, to boost Obama's re-election campaign, the *New York Times* profiled the White House PowerPoint Death Parade: "Every week or so, more than 100 members of the government's sprawling national security apparatus gather, by secure video teleconference, to pore over terrorist suspects' biographies and recommend to the president who should be the next to die." Obama

personally selected who to kill next: "The control he exercises also appears to reflect Mr. Obama's striking self-confidence," the *Times* noted.

Unfortunately, this was the type of contemporary "confidence" unrelated to competence. The CIA usually had little or no idea who it was killing with the Obama-approved drone attacks. Daniel Hale, a former Air Force intelligence analyst, revealed that nearly 90 percent of people killed in drone strikes were not the intended targets. The *New York Times* reported that U.S. "counterterrorism officials insist ... people in an area of known terrorist activity ... are probably up to no good." The "probably up to no good" standard absolved almost any drone killing within thousands of square miles in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. Regardless, Obama bragged about the wrongful killings as proof that he was tough on terrorism.

I thrashed the drone-killing spree in a *Christian Science Monitor* piece headlined: "Assassination Nation: Are There Any Limits on President Obama's License to Kill?" Some readers were enraged, denounced me as a traitor, and called for adding my name to the assassination list. (Hasn't happened, yet.)

Banishing passive obedience

One of the most frequently recurring villains in Macaulay's essays and *History of England* is the doctrine of passive obedience. In the 1660s, after the English Civil War and the restoration of the monarchy, Church of England preachers hectored people on "the folly and wickedness of all resistance to established government." The king was God's chosen and must be obeyed, regardless of how depraved and abusive he or his agents became. As one 1660 English pamphlet warned, "Were not the King a God to man, one man would be a wolf to another."

Preachers and politicians told people that they were obliged to submit to the king no matter how many laws the king violated. English liberty survived because the English people "were much more perfect in the theory than in the practice of passive obedience." Macaulay wisely declared that a society is not "bound to endure passively all that tyranny can inflict, because nobody has ever been able precisely to define the amount of misgovernment which justifies rebellion."

The new version of "passive obedience" tells Americans that they have a duty to believe every proclamation by presidents and

other officials. As in the Soviet Union, distrust of government is derided as a mental illness ("Oppositional Defiant Disorder," according to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). Cynicism is the ultimate target of the Biden administration's National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism, which explicitly aims for "enhancing faith in government." Federal agencies are browbeating social media companies to censor dissent. The FBI has 80 agents on a task force to curb "subversive data utilized to drive a wedge between the populace and the government."

**Federal agencies are
browbeating social media
companies to censor dissent.**

Scores of millions of people will unquestioningly obey no matter what Washington commands. Conspiracy theories are practically the only reason that someone would distrust the U.S. government — at least according to the Friends of Leviathan. But when people blindly assume their leaders are trustworthy, the biggest liars win. To swallow the lie is to almost guarantee submission. If people are trained not to doubt the government, poli-

ticians need only keep lying and denying until they have smashed all limits on their power.

But why should citizens intellectually disarm themselves in the face of political aggressors? Why should they accept the passive obedience that was preached for centuries to the politically downtrodden? Are citizens obliged to continually cast their common sense and memories overboard as if they were seeking to placate an angry pagan god?

A cure may be coming for the servility that is widespread nowadays. Macaulay summarized England's path to the 1688, Revolution: "Oppression speedily did what philosophy and eloquence ... failed to do." After trampling the law and subverting rights, King James II was ousted in 1688, and Parliament speedily enacted laws to curb all subsequent monarchs. Will American politicians heed that lesson?

Obedience can vanish after one decree or government muzzle flash too many.

The Liberty Fund has kindly posted free copies of Macaulay's essays in its Online Library of Liberty at <https://oll.libertyfund.org/person/thomas-babington-lord-macaulay>.

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:
**"Congress's Unconstitutional
Pay Raise Scandal"**
by James Bovard

There Is No America First Case for Supporting Ukraine

by *Laurence M. Vance*



After the United States foolishly and unnecessarily intervened in World War One — against the warnings of the Founding Fathers about getting involved in European wars — and lost over 116,000 of its young men, American sentiment underwent a shift toward neutrality and nonintervention.

With Europe once again embroiled in war beginning in the late 1930s, the America First Committee (AFC) was organized in September 1940 to keep America out of another European war. In May 1940, a Gallup poll found that only 7 percent of Americans believed that the United States should declare war on Germany, but public

opinion had started to shift after the fall of France.

The origin of the AFC had nothing to do with fascism, nativism, isolationism, or anti-Semitism. The organization's 800,000 dues-paying members was politically, religiously, and culturally diverse, and included Robert E. Wood of Sears-Roebuck, Robert R. McCormick of the *Chicago Tribune*, future presidents John Kennedy and Gerald Ford, future Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, aviator Charles Lindbergh, progressives John Dewey and Robert La Follette, American Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas, and popular radio priest Charles Coughlin. The AFC staged mass rallies and broadcast radio advertisements until it disbanded after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Trump's America First

Enter Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump. He adopted the term *America First* in a March 2016 interview with the *New York Times*. After the interviewer, David Sanger, suggested that Trump was taking something of an "America First" kind of approach, a mistrust of many foreigners, both our adversaries and some of our allies, a sense that they've been free-loading off of us for many years."

Trump replied, “Not isolationist, I’m not isolationist, but I am ‘America First.’ So I like the expression. I’m ‘America First.’” He then made the phrase the centerpiece of his presidential campaign. In a speech at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C., in April 2016, Trump said that his “foreign policy will always put the interests of the American people and American security above all else.” He pledged that America First would be “the foundation of every single decision” he made and “the major and overriding theme” of his administration.” In his inaugural address, President Trump stated, “From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land. From this day forward, it’s going to be only America first, America first.”

Trump’s vision of America First should not be confused with the historic AFC. Trump himself, in another interview with the *New York Times*, said, “America First is a brand-new modern term. I never related it to the past.” Trump’s America First policy included a large military buildup with foreign military actions, “buy American” campaigns, economic nationalism, “fair” trade, higher tariffs, trade wars, increased immigration restrictions, Cuba travel restrictions,

anti-flag burning legislation, foreign aid, and the continuance of NATO membership, foreign military bases, and U.S. troops stationed all over the globe. Trump’s foreign policy was militaristic, jingoistic, and interventionist, just like his predecessors.

Trump’s America First policy included a large military buildup with foreign military actions.

Trump’s idea of America First did put some Americans first — like businesses that didn’t want foreign competition, and individuals who were connected with or stood to benefit in some way by the military-industrial complex. Some pundits have recently taken Trump’s catch phrase and applied it to the war in Ukraine — but just like Trump, they have perverted the meaning of the term.

RAND’s America First

The RAND Corporation — no connection to Ayn Rand — “is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous.” Although it claims to be “a nonpartisan organization,” the

RAND Corporation receives the majority of its funding from the federal government.

Earlier this year, two RAND senior scholars — Raphael S. Cohen, the director of the Strategy and Doctrine Program of RAND Project AIR FORCE, and Gian Gentile, the deputy director of the RAND Arroyo Center, “the United States Army’s sole federally funded research and development center for studies and analysis” — penned a commentary for *The Hill* in which they argued that “support to Ukraine continues to be for America first.”

“American support for Ukraine remains squarely in its own self-interest.”

Cohen and Gentile lament that “some Americans, particularly those on the political right, are questioning American support for Ukraine.” They ask and answer the question, “Why should the United States spend tens of billions of dollars on a war a half a world away?” That Russia “launched an unprovoked attack on a smaller, nascent democracy,” “killed thousands of innocent Ukrainians and raped and tortured many more,” and caused “almost 8 million Ukrainians” to

flee the country and “almost 18 million” more to need humanitarian assistance are enough to “make a compelling enough case for the United States to support Ukraine’s war against Russia.” But “American support for Ukraine remains squarely in its own self-interest.”

First, because Europe is one of America’s “largest trading partners,” and European allies contribute “tens of thousands of troops and billions of their own dollars to American-led operations,” America’s “security and prosperity has for decades been intertwined with Europe, and it remains so today.” The success of Ukraine “protects not just the country itself but the whole of Europe and, with it, American economic and security interests.”

Second, “a victory for Ukraine fits squarely within U.S. interests because it would also mean a Russian defeat.”

Third, “if the United States wants to deter a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan, or Iranian aggression in the Middle East, then ensuring Russia’s defeat would send a vivid message of deterrence.”

And fourth, support for Ukraine supports the U.S. military. From a military standpoint, “The United States is finding out which systems work, and which do not, on a 21st

century battlefield, all without costing American lives. When Congress pays for military aid to Ukraine, it is functionally allowing the United States to replace its older weapons with new ones,” they argue, and “Ukraine aid also boosts the American defense industry and the American economy in the short-run, and, in the long-run, expands the United States’s capacity to build everything from artillery rounds to air defense missiles.” Cohen and Gentile conclude that “America’s support to Ukraine is for America first.”

Thiessen’s America First

Marc Thiessen is no Trump supporter. He is “a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) where he studies and writes about American presidential leadership and counterterrorism” and “also writes about general U.S. foreign and defense policy issues and contributes to the AEIdeas blog.” In addition, Thiessen writes a column for the *Washington Post* and is a contributor to Fox News. He was “a member of the White House senior staff under President George W. Bush” and “served as chief speechwriter to the president and to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.” Thiessen infamously defended the use of CIA torture techniques dur-

ing the Bush administration as necessary to save American lives and stated that Trump’s assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani was “defensive, preemptive, and lawful.”

Thiessen infamously defended the use of CIA torture techniques during the Bush administration.

Thiessen likewise believes that there is an America First case for supporting Ukraine. In his *Washington Post* article on the subject, he laments that “GOP support for Ukraine” is “softening,” and that some Republicans are “beginning to ask whether U.S. support for Ukraine is really in the nation’s interest.” Thiessen believes that “most conservatives are not isolationists; they are reluctant internationalists, willing to support U.S. leadership on the world stage — as long as they are convinced our national interest is involved.” Conservatives demand “an ‘America First’ case for supporting Ukraine.”

Thiessen makes, and then elaborates on “10 clear points”:

- A Russian victory would reinforce a narrative of American weakness and embolden our enemies.

- A Ukrainian victory would help deter China.
- Defeating Vladimir Putin would weaken the Sino-Russian partnership.
 - Support for Ukraine will restore the Reagan Doctrine.
 - Victory in Ukraine will save the United States billions of dollars.
 - Support for Ukraine allows us to test new weapons and defense concepts that will increase U.S. military preparedness.
 - Arming Ukraine is revitalizing our defense industrial base.
 - The Russian invasion has strengthened U.S. alliances.
 - A Russian victory could spark new wars of aggression and a global nuclear arms race.
 - Victory in Ukraine is achievable.

He saves his “most powerful argument” for last: “Helping Ukraine is the right thing to do. It is the American thing to do.” Thiessen believes that “the war in Ukraine is a struggle between right and wrong and good and evil, and in that struggle, America must not remain neutral.” His conception of putting America First “requires us to project strength and deter our enemies from launching wars of aggression — so that U.S. troops don’t have to

fight and die in another global conflagration.” His “America First” conclusion is that “helping Ukraine is a supreme national interest.”

After penning his article, Thiessen doubled down on his America First case for supporting Ukraine when he appeared with AEI’s “distinguished senior fellow in foreign and defense policy studies” Danielle Pletka on the AEI “What the Hell Is Going On?” podcast. After demeaning the House “Freedom Caucus” and Tucker Carlson for not supporting Ukraine, she termed Thiessen’s article “persuasive, hard to refute, and full of facts — whether you care about China, Taiwan, Israel, Iran, North Korea, NATO, or just your own safety, security and prosperity.” Since President Biden is not sufficiently making the case that “supporting Ukraine in its defense against Putin’s Russia is a vital national interest,” Thiessen “decided to do the job of the President’s speechwriter and make the American case for supporting Ukraine.”

No case

But the fact is that Cohen, Gentile, and Thiessen have a warped view of America First. There is no America First case for supporting Ukraine, but there is certainly an America First case for not doing so.

It should first be said that the case for not doing so does not depend on the unworthiness of Ukraine. To argue that the United States should not support Ukraine because it is the most corrupt country in Europe, has a proto-fascist government, has antagonized Russia, has suppressed churches and the press, has shelled civilians for years in the prominently Russian areas of the country, has ties to the Biden family, or has soldiers with Nazi symbols on their uniforms has nothing to do with why the United States should not support Ukraine. If the case against supporting Ukraine depended on these things, then it would fall to pieces if these things ceased to exist.

Even if we assume for the sake of argument that none of the above things are true, that the simplistic “Russia bad, Ukraine good” narrative that is peddled by the U.S. government and the media is true, that Russia is aggressing against Ukraine for no good reason, that Russia longs to reestablish the USSR, that Vladimir Putin is the personification of evil, that Russia wants to turn Ukraine into a vassal state, and that Russian soldiers have committed atrocities and acts of genocide against Ukrainians, there would still be no “compelling enough case

for the United States to support Ukraine’s war against Russia,” and certainly no America First case for doing so.

If there is an America First case for supporting Ukraine, then it should be evident.

If there is an America First case for supporting Ukraine, then it should be evident. Americans should not have to be bombarded with pro-Ukraine and anti-Russian propaganda from their government and news media to convince them to “stand with Ukraine.” Do a significant number of Americans believe there is an America First case for supporting Ukraine? Thiessen and the RAND scholars both cite polls which report that the majority of Americans say that the United States should support Ukraine.

But how many Americans who responded to these polls would actually reach into their pockets and pull out some money to support Ukraine? It is easy to say that the U.S. government should support Ukraine if it is not costing you anything. How much money out of their pockets have Cohen, Gentile, and Thiessen given to support Ukraine? How much money would be collected for Ukraine if govern-

ment agents actually went door to door and asked Americans to contribute?

How many Americans know — or even care to know — the most basic history of Ukraine and Russia? How many Americans could even locate Ukraine on a map unless it was labeled with big, black letters? How many Americans have lost a minute of sleep fretting over the war in Ukraine? How many Americans are concerned about the territorial integrity of Ukraine? How many Americans actually care anything about what happens in Ukraine?

The America First case for supporting Ukraine is disingenuous. Thiessen makes the claim: “Victory in Ukraine will save the United States billions of dollars. Russian adventurism is a drain on U.S. resources. By decimating the Russian military threat, Ukraine is reducing the amount of money the United States will have to spend defending Europe — without risking American lives to do it.”

There are a number of underlying false premises here. How is the war in Ukraine Russian adventurism? And why should Russian adventurism be a drain on U.S. resources? Since when is Russia a threat to Europe? Since when does the United States have the obliga-

tion to defend Europe? Why should the lives of American soldiers ever be risked in defense of some other country? It is *not* supporting Ukraine that will save the United States billions of dollars.

It is *not* supporting Ukraine that will save the United States billions of dollars.

The U.S. government giving weapons, equipment, supplies, and money to Ukraine is just a form of foreign aid. Yet, foreign-aid spending is not authorized by the Constitution, is not a legitimate purpose of the federal government, and is not supported by the overwhelming majority of Americans if the money has to come out of their pockets.

The America First case against supporting Ukraine is ultimately based on the principles of neutrality and nonintervention. The United States has no constitutional requisite, popular mandate, legal obligation, or moral authority to take sides in territorial disputes or military conflicts, guarantee the security of any country, police the world, or seek to change the governments in other countries.

Neutrality respects the sovereignty of other nations; guarantees

a peaceful, noninterventionist foreign policy; prevents hatred of America and Americans; ensures that the military is not misused; keeps U.S. soldiers from dying in senseless foreign wars; and doesn't cost the taxpayers anything. Neutrality and nonintervention are not isolationism. They are just minding our own business. Remaining neutral and not intervening in other countries is the right thing to do. It is also the American thing to do.

Support for Ukraine doesn't put the American people first; it puts the military/industrial complex first.

Support for Ukraine doesn't put the American people first; it puts the military/industrial complex first, the warfare state first, and the stockholders and employees of defense contractors first. And above all, support for Ukraine puts Ukraine first, not America first.

Ukraine first

Americans who want to put Ukraine first should stop suggesting or telling us what the U.S. government should do and appeal directly to the American people to do something. It is not the business of the U.S. government to take sides in

disputes between countries, to take money from Americans and give it to foreigners or their governments, to boost the defense industry, or to intervene in the affairs of other countries.

Americans who want a proxy war with Russia, who want to deter China, who want to defeat Putin, who want regime change in Moscow, who want to boycott Russian goods, who want to weaken the Sino-Russian partnership, who want to restore the Reagan Doctrine, who want the military to test new weapons and defense concepts, who want to revitalize our defense industrial base (military Keynesianism), who want to include Ukraine in NATO, and who want to support Ukraine "as long as it takes" should put their money where their mouth is and persuade their fellow Americans to do likewise.

Americans who want to put Ukraine first should encourage their sons and grandsons to fight for Ukraine. They should go door to door seeking money for Ukraine. They should start a direct-mail campaign appealing for support for Ukraine. They should enlist corporate sponsors to send goods to the Ukrainian people. They should write a check to the government of Ukraine. They should donate guns,

ammunition, and supplies to Ukraine. They should start a boycott-Russia and buy-Ukrainian campaign. They should use persuasion to convince their fellow Americans to support Ukraine, not the power of the government to force Americans to do so.

Only by a tortured redefinition of “America First” can an America First case for Ukraine be made.

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NEXT MONTH:

“Why I Will Never Change My Mind about Marijuana”
by Laurence M. Vance

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; there is where they should be. Now put foundations under them.

— Henry David Thoreau

There are to be a number of places fitted out for arsenals and dockyards in the different states. Unless you sell to Congress such places as are proper for these, within your state, you will not be consistent after adoption: it results, therefore, clearly, that you are to give into their hands all such places as are fit for strongholds. When you have these fortifications and garrisons within your state, your legislature will have no power over them, though they see the most dangerous insults offered to the people daily.

— Patrick Henry

Thomas Nixon Carver on the Economics of Conflict versus Cooperation

.....
by *Richard M. Ebeling*



Human beings have had two fundamental ways of associating with each other: conflict or cooperation. Both methods have run through all recorded human history, as well as long before human beings left intelligible residues of their actions to be deciphered by those who came after them. Group conflicts have seemed to have a variety of causes: religious, political, linguistic, or racial, as well as the desire for physical possession of things. All of these have been inseparable from death and destruction.

At the same time, human beings have also peacefully cooperated with each other. They have sought

bases of agreement and collaboration for mutual purposes and benefits that have spared or reduced the occurrence of violence and the use of force in human relations. Rather than death and destruction, peaceful cooperation can bring forth prosperity and harmony among people.

It should not be too surprising that economists turned their attention to understanding and analyzing both the reasons for and the institutions facilitating either conflict or cooperation. One of these in the early part of the twentieth century was Thomas Nixon Carver. If mentioned at all nowadays, Carver is remembered as one of the early formulators of the marginal productivity theory of the determination of relative income shares in a competitive market system, outlined in his book *The Distribution of Wealth* (1904).

From Iowa farm boy to Harvard professor

Thomas Nixon Carver was born into an Iowa farming family in 1865 and never went to high school. However, he applied and was accepted to Wesleyan College, although his education was constantly interrupted by responsibilities on the family farm. He completed his

undergraduate degree at the University of Southern California after his father decided to move the family out west to start another farm.

Wanting to pursue an academic career, Carver entered the graduate program at Johns Hopkins University and completed his doctoral degree at Cornell University. After graduation he taught both economics and sociology at Oberlin College in Ohio. In 1902, he was appointed to a chair in political economy at Harvard University in Boston, a position he held until his retirement in 1932.

Carver was concerned with the economic and ethical well-being of the United States.

Carver wrote a series of economic textbooks, including *The Principles of Political Economy* (1919) and *The Principles of National Economy* (1921), focusing on the core concepts of economics as a means of drawing a variety of policy implications from the perspective of desiring to create and increase the economic well-being of the country. In other words, like Adam Smith, he attempted to enable the student or interested reader to understand the nature and causes of the wealth of nations. In this

sense, Carver may be categorized as a national liberal. He was concerned with the economic and ethical well-being of the United States, but he saw no inherent conflict between the economic well-being of the United States and other countries. He believed that one's own country's well-being was bettered by opportunities for gains from trade with potential trading partners. The better off they were economically, the greater the gains from trade resulting from exchange with those in other lands.

A liberal though not a laissez-faire market economist

Carver had been influenced by the writings of Herbert Spencer as a young man, and he adopted not only Spencer's philosophy of individualism and free association but also Spencer's emphasis on social evolution from simple to complex social orders and the transformation from the "militant" society of war and plunder to that of "industrial" society based on contract and individualism rather than the tyranny of the collective. The unique characteristics of the American social and economic landscape, highlighting the reality and potential of the free "industrial" society, were emphasized by him in *The Present*

Economic Revolution in the United States (1926) and *This Economic World, and How It May Be Improved* (1928).

He was not as laissez-faire in his economic philosophy as Herbert Spencer had been, especially on the issue of restrictions on immigration of the unskilled, whose numbers, Carver feared, constantly put undue downward pressure on the wages of American citizens. Some “progressive” critics have highlighted his views on immigration and the similar negative effects from the unskilled and uneducated excessively increasing the domestic population from irresponsible early marriage before the parents had the market income to appropriately support a family at a decent standard of living on their own.

They have attempted to tar him as a racist and a xenophobe. No doubt the rhetoric and turn of phrases he sometimes used ring uncomfortably on the modern ear, given the greater sensitivity in today’s use of language. No doubt he was influenced by some of the now out-of-date sociological views of the early twentieth century, but there is little or nothing to suggest that Carver believed that racial or ethnic minorities should be selected for “special treatment.” Indeed,

Carver was adamant in various places in his writings that to treat certain people in such discriminatory ways based on race or religion or language was inconsistent with the spirit of American liberty for all and contradicted the principles of the U.S. Constitution. The desirable goal was assimilation of those coming to America into a common culture of liberty and individualism.

Carver called for an open debate on these topics rather than any presumed dogmatic position.

Other classical liberals may challenge his views on immigration restrictions and early marriage in terms of their effects on wages and the labor supply based on the general principles of the freedom of movement and association; in fact, Carver called for an open debate on these topics rather than any presumed dogmatic position. It would be wrong to conclude that he was a “racist” in that he wanted to restrict the immigration of unskilled labor from Europe just as much as from other parts of the world.

Critic of New Deal collectivism and the war economy

Carver moved back to southern California after leaving Harvard

and came to know Leonard E. Read, (the future founder of the Foundation for Economic Education), who was then working for the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. In fact, according to former FEE resident scholar Ed Opitz, it was Carver who introduced Leonard Read to the writings of the nineteenth-century French liberal economist Frederic Bastiat when they met in southern California in the 1930s.

It was Carver who introduced Leonard Read to the writings of the nineteenth-century French liberal economist Frederic Bastiat.

Though retired, Carver continued to write on the political-economic issues confronting the United States stemming from Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs during the Great Depression. His books on these issues, including *What Must We Do to Save Our Economic System* (1935), *How Can There be Full Employment After the War?* (1945), and *The Economics of Freedom* (1948), all criticized the expansion of the government's command and control of economic affairs before and during the Second World War. He forcefully argued that Roosevelt's policies were anath-

ema to the preservation of personal freedom, economic liberty, and limited government in the United States. Indeed, he said, they were the opposite of the American tradition.

All of man's "conflicts" arise from inescapable scarcity

Carver was one of the American economists thoroughly imbued with the ideas of the marginalist, subjective-value revolution of the late nineteenth century that had begun with such economists as those of the Austrian School, especially Carl Menger and Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk. He saw in the logic of marginal decision-making the analytical key to understanding individual conduct and the workings of much of the social order.

This included an analysis of the origins and forms of human conflict and cooperation. His most detailed study of this is found in his *Essays on Social Justice* (1915) and *Human Relations: An Introduction to Sociology* (1923), though he uses and applies it in various forms in many of his later writings.

If all that men wanted were in sufficient quantities and qualities to satisfy more than all their conceivable uses for them, no human wants would go unfulfilled, and no conflicts could ever arise. After all, in

such a material utopia, nothing would be foregone or done without due to its unavailability, and no disputes could ever arise among people, since one person having or using more of any one thing would not result in some other individual having to do without or with less than what was desired.

But in the world in which we live, Carver explained, individuals find themselves in conflict with three things: nature, themselves, and with others. Man is in conflict with nature because nature does not provide most things in the amounts or the qualities needed to satisfy his needs, whether it be food, clothing, or protection from the elements. To have more, man must work to extract greater amounts than nature provides. He must plant and harvest crops, he must hunt for wild game to have for food and materials to cover his body, and he must construct forms of shelter to protect himself from animals and from the rain, heat, and the cold.

Scarcity forces man to make choices

This scarcity of material goods puts man in conflict with himself. Since he cannot have all that he wants from nature without effort, and given the limits to his own abilities and only so many hours in the

day, he must now decide in what directions to assign his labor, skills, and time. To have more of some things extracted from nature, he must give up, forego, delay, or permanently renounce the opportunities to fulfill or better satisfy other desired ends and purposes.

As Carver explained, individuals find themselves in conflict with three things: nature, themselves, and with others.

Conflict is therefore inseparable from the human condition, even for that hypothetical Robinson Crusoe alone on his island. He fights with a niggardly nature to obtain more of what it can surrender through his appropriately applied labor and effort, and he battles with himself to decide what he is willing to give up to obtain (marginal) amounts of other things that he wants. Shall he not work at all and live off what he can pick off the trees by simply lifting up his hand? Or shall he incur the cost of physical and mental effort to clear a field, plant a crop, and bring it to harvest?

Will he devote time, imagination, and effort to make the tools — the capital equipment — to cut down a tree, hollow out its trunk to carve out a canoe, and shape the

paddle, along with pulling down the tree vines to construct a net, so he may fish more successfully in terms of quantity and variety of catch? In weighing these decisions, Carver also pointed out, man had to consider the element of time and his willingness to forego satisfaction and benefits in the present in order to provide more satisfaction and benefits in the future.

The inescapable scarcity of means to serve human ends also means that humans find themselves in conflict with each other.

The individual, Carver argued, must find within himself a “balance” to solve his battle with nature and the conflict in his own mind concerning how to apply his means to obtain his desired ends at the margins of choice. But the human conflict does not stop there. The world in which we each live is populated with other human beings, each of whom finds himself in the same dilemma of conflict with nature and within himself.

Destruction or production as answers to conflict among men

The inescapable scarcity of means to serve human ends also means that humans find themselves

in conflict with each other, since more of the scarce things of the world obtained and used by one individual or group of individuals limits the amounts available for others. For primitive man, those scarce things included the waterhole, the wild animals to hunt for food and clothing, and the limited fruits and vegetables nature provides for simple picking. Explained Carver:

We talk and argue interminably about proper adjustment of antagonistic interests of various kinds, all of which, it must be remembered, grow out of the initial fact of scarcity — the fact that there are not as many things as people want.... In this antagonism of interests, growing out of scarcity, the institutions of property, of the family, and of the state, all have their common origin.... By the Militant form of conflict is meant any form in which one’s success depends on one’s power to destroy, to harm, or to inflict pain or injury [on others].... In order to succeed in this form of conflict, one must develop one’s powers to destroy.”

If we repress, for example, all the militant forms of con-

flict, the combative instincts of mankind together with the conflict of interests will cause them to compete or contest with one another in other fields.... Of the forms of economic competition, the most advantageous and least harmful is that of competitive production; production in service. Competitive production is, therefore, rivalry in the performance of service.... Of all the forms of human conflict, economic competition is the highest. In no other form of conflict does success depend so much upon production or service and so little upon destruction or deception.

In the free, peacefully competitive marketplace and system of law and individual rights of the type which Adam Smith referred to as a “system of natural liberty,” Carver said, individuals are restrained and incentivized to apply themselves in ways to better themselves by improving the circumstances of others. The goods and resources in the legally recognized possession of others may only be obtained from them by offering some alternative good, service, or resource that they value more highly than that which

you are asking them to part with.

Under a system of productive competition, the reward of success in one’s own betterment comes from devising ways to produce more of what people want, in the forms and qualities they desire, and at lower costs of purchase than other peaceful and honest individuals attempting to offer the same goods and services to other members of society. This avenue of solving conflicts through production and trade cumulatively reduces the scarcities that generate the conflicts among people.

Individuals are restrained and incentivized to apply themselves in ways to better themselves by improving the circumstances of others.

Nonetheless, it remains an unending conflict due to the fact, Carver reminded his readers, there are two counteracting influences at work: first, the fact that people’s wants for the new, the better, and the different constantly outstrips the satisfaction of our desires from existing supplies of goods and services, and second, the reality that the number of mouths to feed and wants to be fulfilled increases as the population grows.

Carver's misplaced fears concerning immigration

The latter can arise within any country when procreation outstrips the number of those who pass away. But it also can grow due to net increases in the number of people due to immigration. Carver was not opposed to immigration, per se. His concern was that increases in certain segments of the unskilled working population would outrun the rate of growth in complementary capital formation and therefore result in lower wages relative to the other factors of production.

In retrospect, his concerns were unfounded. In 1900, the number of people in the United States was 76.3 million. In 1920, that had grown to 106 million, and now, more than 100 years later, in 2023, there are an estimated 333 million people. Since 1900, the number of immigrants to the United States has totaled about 40 to 50 million, or almost 20 percent of the population increase in the country since the beginning of the twentieth century.

In 1900, the average real income was about \$9,000 a year (in 2022 dollars). Today, average real income is over \$70,000, or an almost eight-fold increase in real income during this period when there was a 4.4-fold increase in the number of peo-

ple. By some estimates, 56 percent of the U.S. population in 1900 lived in poverty. Currently, using the government's somewhat biased benchmarks, poverty in the United States is said to be 14.5 percent of the population, a 75 percent decline since the beginning of the last century.

Solving conflicts through production and trade reduces the scarcities that generate the conflicts among people.

Capital formation for greater and better output, technological improvements in the use of land, resources and raw materials, and dramatic increases in skills and educational training (all of which Carver said could counterbalance increases in the unskilled population) have been more than enough to bring about the dramatic rise in the standards of living for a much larger American population than Carver could imagine. Contrary to Carver's fears, population growth from births and immigrants have been a boon and not a burden on the American economy, especially with the complementary growth in capital and technological innovations that have raised the marginal value and real wages of workers in

general, while eating away at the poverty that has been the plague of mankind for all of human history.

Political competition creates waste and reinforces prejudices

Carver was a strong proponent of the case for free markets under constitutionally limited government. Any and all growth in the size and scope of government beyond the protection of individual rights and honestly acquired and used property not only slowed down the peaceful and protective competition of the marketplace, it also shifted human conflict into an alternative unproductive and destructive direction. If market competition is reduced or repressed or regulated by government, it merely shifts the resolution of conflicts to the political arena. Explained Carver:

The more the state absorbs the enterprises now carried on by private initiative, the more will political competition displace economic competition. Political competition is a lower form.... Under such a system as this [of government control and regulation].... We show our rivalry and our preference for ourselves by struggling more intensively than

we now do for political office or preferment.... This would be an exceedingly wasteful form of competition.... When two farmers compete with one another in producing corn, more corn is likely to be grown as the result of that competition. When two candidates compete for a given office, the time they spend in campaigning is wasted — it produces nothing.

Carver was a strong proponent of the case for free markets under constitutionally limited government.

Furthermore, Carver argued, the market is a far more “democratic” means of expressing the desires of the population and more pluralistic in not limiting the results to majoritarian outcomes, including racial and religious prejudices. As Carver wrote:

Does the average man when he votes spend his vote as intelligently as he does his dollar when he buys products or services? If he is more likely to be prejudiced in his votes than in his purchases or is more likely to vote ignorantly than he is to

purchase ignorantly, one should conclude that buying is a more accurate test of merit than voting, and vice versa. Suppose that a private individual should produce and put on the market a good product which appeals to a buyer, but the producer is a member of an unpopular race or an unpopular religious body, that is, that there is a great deal of prejudice against him and his class; is this prejudice as likely to interfere with the sale of his product or his services as it is to interfere with his getting votes for a desirable position? It would seem not. To that extent, at least, buying is a less inaccurate method of determining merit than voting, that is, racial and religious prejudices are less likely to be factors in buying than in voting. If that be true, the man who succeeds in getting the money of purchasers is in this respect, at least, more likely to have earned that money than is the man who gets votes through racial and religious prejudices likely to have deserved their votes....

Anyone who will examine himself or his own experience

will probably agree that he votes very unintelligently, that is to say, he knows very little about the candidates whose names appear on the ballot, and he has very inadequate methods of finding out about them.... It would seem to imply that the average man votes very unintelligently, and therefore there is little reason to expect that the individuals who get his votes have earned them or deserved them.... If that is the case, then the economic form of rivalry is superior to the political form, in that business rivalry merit wins more frequently or less infrequently than in the political form of rivalry. It is the author's deliberate opinion that the process of buying and selling, when it is properly safeguarded [from force or fraud], is a better method of testing economic value of men than is the process of voting.

Market competition depoliticizes racial and other prejudices

Economic competition, Carver was saying, depoliticizes religious and racial prejudices far more than political competition. How many of us know or think about which

church someone may go to or the color of the skin of the numerous individuals who have participated in the growing and the processing of the foods we eat, or in the manufacturing of the cloths we wear, or in the producing of the household items we purchase?

In the competitive marketplace, racial and other bigotries are not costless alternatives to follow.

We are interested instead in the quality of the products we are interested in buying, along with the competitive attractiveness of the price at which they are offered to us. The anonymity of many market relationships in the complex system of division of labor helps remove racial and other prejudices from the potential for mutual gains from trade.

In more direct face-to-face settings of buying and selling, it may be the case that a prejudiced person may choose not to buy from or sell to someone belonging to a group against whom they are negatively biased. Or that they refuse to hire or accept employment from someone against whom they hold negative prejudices. But Carver's point was that this forces such a biased person to confront an element of that con-

flict within himself. He cannot follow his prejudice against someone without incurring the cost of missing out on the opportunity to acquire a better or less expensive product, or without losing out on the chance to hire an experienced or skilled or less expensive employee that reduces his profit opportunities. In the competitive marketplace, racial and other bigotries are not costless alternatives to follow.

Market democracy and civilized man vs. the savage

In addition, compared to the political democracy, market decision-making allows for entrepreneurial opportunities without majoritarian approval.

The simple fact is that industry is more democratic without the ballot than government can possibly be made even with the ballot.... First as to the open road to talent; that has always existed industry in a higher degree than in politics. However meritorious a man may be in politics, if his opinions are in advance of those of the majority he gets no advancement. A very small and select minority may approve his work in industry

and reward it. He secures his advancement as the result of this without waiting for the crude majority to approve.... It is obviously easier for an advanced person to secure the support of a small and highly intelligent minority than to transform this into a majority, which would require that much less intelligent people should be convinced.... Individuals come more nearly getting what they want from businessmen than they do from politicians and government agents.

Individuals come more nearly getting what they want from businessmen than they do from politicians and government agents.

This led Thomas Nixon Carver to the stark distinction between “civilized man” and “the savage” in his 1923 volume on *Human Relations*:

So long as one is pursuing the method of production or usefulness, he needs no weapon, when dealing with other good citizens, except the power to bargain freely with his fellow

citizens. He can get what he wants by voluntary agreement with other free citizens. The savage, however, needs other weapons than his productive power. His weapons are of destruction, or weapons which add to his power to terrorize....

A civilized tribe is one in which the dominant element is made up of men each of whom stakes his prosperity or success on his ability to contribute to the life of others in exchange for the means of his own livelihood; the savage community is one in which the average citizen is willing to resort to terrorism to get what he wants. So long as the former class of citizens is gaining in numbers and power, the community is growing more civilized. When the latter class is gaining in numbers and power, civilization is declining.

When Thomas Nixon Carver wrote these last words exactly 100 years ago, America was still a country mostly made up of what he called “civilized” men interested in pursuing peaceful and voluntary trade for mutual betterment. Now, in 2023, America is populated far

more with those he classified as “savages,” as more and more of our fellow citizens turn to the destructive and terrorizing methods of coercion and force to get what they want through the power of the state.

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 Hillsdale College, president of the

Foundation for Economic Education, and served as vice president of academic affairs for FFE.

NEXT MONTH:

**“Albert Jay Nock on
‘Doing the Right Thing’
versus Government”
by Richard M. Ebeling**

The importance of decentralized information extends beyond standard markets. Even in activities that do not involve markets directly, people act on their decentralized information in effective ways that no centralized body could mimic.

— *David R. Henderson*

*When the rights reserved to the several states by the Constitution are deliberately violated, it is the right and duty of those states to intervene so as to stop the progress of the evil, oppose the usurpation, and maintain within their respective limits the powers and privileges that belong to them as **independent sovereigns**. If the states did not possess this right, in vain would they pretend to be sovereign. South Carolina recognizes no tribunal on earth that stands above her. It is true that she, along with other sovereign states, has entered into a solemn contract of union, but she claims and will exercise the right to explain what that means in her eyes, and when that contract is violated by her partners and by the government they have created, she will use the unquestionable right to judge the extent of the infraction and what measures are to be taken to obtain justice.*

— South Carolina Ordinance of Nullification

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