

remarks on the occasion of the founding of the california libertarian party

(20 may 1972)

JOHN HOSPERS

Last week a colleague said to me, "I didn't have enough money left after taxes to send my son to Harvard this fall, even though I get a professor's salary. And they didn't grant him a government pre-med scholarship; so he can't go. By the way," he added a moment later, "I'm voting for McGovern."

He didn't seem to see the connection between these remarks, so I said to him, "Well, it's all your own fault. Your chickens are coming home to roost."

He voted again and again for the policies that led to a crushing load of taxation. He voted not only to have himself taxed, but to have you and me taxed—as a liberal he voted for every conceivable scheme of legalized plunder. He voted to take more money out of the hands of the producers and give it (by government orders backed by guns) to the nonproducers. He voted for the colossal wastes of money which has landed our government into more than \$400 billion dollars of debt. He voted for the policies which led to such inflation that our dollar is now nearly worthless (although he still complains about the increase in the cost of living), not realizing that the policies he favored made it inevitable. He voted for the policies which via government have made the poor poorer. He voted again and again to take decisions out of the hands of individual citizens and into the hands of politicians and bureaucrats. And now he will vote once again for an intensification of those very same policies.

"McGovern's aim," says TIME magazine of May 8, 1972 (p. 19), "is to give the government a far greater voice in the uses to which investment is put; more of the profits of private industry would tend to be taxed away and invested instead as Government chooses." Apparently he considers the government to be his

friend and the productive people of the nation his enemy; but considering government's record in the past, can one consider it one's friend? Can one consider it anything other than something worse than one's worst human enemy? And what will he do when the producing classes have been strapped and bound, and the nation nevertheless depends on them for their daily needs? McGovern would demand more from the producers, and at the same time he would bind and gag them so that they would be less able to produce. And what would he do when the Atlases who hold up the world begin to shrug?

Albert Jay Nock, the great American libertarian, was surely right when he said that there are just two classes of people, the exploiters and the exploited. The exploited are all those who produce the world's goods—which includes of course both employers and employees, both management and labor—from whom their income is taken away by force in proportion to their success in producing it. The exploiters are the wards of government—the employees of government who spend our money in accordance with their plans or their whims, and the vast number of people—some needy and some not—on whom they choose to spend it. Civilization falls when the exploiters, often via the popular vote, become so powerful that they loot the goods produced by the exploited, or so much of it that it no longer pays the exploited to produce them.

Continuing with the TIME account, McGovern "proposed a 100% tax on all inheritances over \$500,000, but backed down when blue-collar workers in Wisconsin and Massachusetts objected that taxing anybody 100% was un-American. Said a bemused McGovern: 'I don't know whether people still think they will win a lottery or what.'" Apparently McGovern thought that the long chance of winning a

sweepstakes was the only reason the workers could have for opposing his measure. But the reason of course has nothing to do with sweepstakes: the true reason why one should oppose it is that it is out-and-out robbery, not to mention the fact that to the extent that employers are no longer permitted to employ, production will lessen, as will employment, as will the abundance of consumer goods. He would kill the goose that lays the golden egg—but of course, he will still demand eggs. Yes, there would be production, under government—but who can manage a business best, the man who built the business from the ground up and knows its every detail of production, or the employees of government who have produced nothing and come in like savages tearing down a complex piece of machinery, demanding only that they control it? And who has the right to run it but the man whose vision and courage and risk-taking gave it birth and made it develop?

"After all," said the great 19th-Century economist Frederic Bastiat (p. 243 of George Roche, *A MAN ALONE*), "I am more vitally concerned than you in not making a mistake in matters that will decide my own well-being, the happiness of my family, matters that concern you only as they touch your vanity or your systems. Advise me, but do not force your opinion on me. I shall decide at my peril and risk; that is enough, and for the law to interfere would be tyranny." But my colleague, though he talked constantly about academic freedom, had no notion whatever of economic freedom; he would willingly and gladly take a business away from those who had built it, and give it to those who would only waste it in the name of the people. He is shocked at plunder in private life, and would not dream of stealing as much as a paper clip from his neighbor; and yet he does not blink an eye at legalized plunder, performed by governments on a much vaster scale than could be performed by an single individual. He approves it so much that he is ready to vote for a candidate who will carry it out—not only on himself, but on all the rest of us, including those of us who see where it will lead and therefore oppose it. "How is legal plunder to be identified?" said Bastiat, "Quite simply. If the law takes from some persons what belongs to them and gives it to other persons to whom it does not belong, see if the law benefits one citizen at the expense of another—by doing what the citizen himself cannot do without committing a crime. Then abolish that law without delay, for otherwise it will spread and multiply."

In fascist governments, there may be private property and private employers and employees, but they are all controlled by the government; the government sets the wages, the government determines how much if any profit the employer may make, the government determines what he shall produce and how much and when, and the individuals' only task is to take orders

from the controlling bureaucrats. That is the kind of society which those who vote for McGovern will get if he wins. If they put him in, we can only say, "Brother, you asked for it!" The tragedy is that if it happens these voters will not only destroy themselves but will destroy the rest of us along with them, all being sucked into the same fatal whirlpool together.

It is in these circumstances, that we attend the founding of a libertarian party. The need for it is surely obvious. The stakes are the life of a civilization. At the moment our numbers are small—just as McGovern's were half a century ago. But we may take some confidence even from this fact: perhaps if we can get through to a great many people, enough of them will see the handwriting on the wall to avert catastrophe.

To whom shall we turn? For the most part, we cannot turn to the liberals. They have long since sold their birthright for government control of our lives. Their answer to the social problems of the day, from problems of the poor to problems of school busing, is to turn with monotonous regularity to government programs and government legislation. Their policies have already sent this nation into such enormous debt that every man, woman, and child in America carries on his back a load of federal debt in excess of two thousand dollars, not to mention the debts incurred by state and local governments. And none of the problems for which these huge government programs were instituted have been solved; indeed they are more virulent than ever, not in spite of but precisely because of these very same federal programs that have drained us dry, supposedly for our own benefit. (See my book *LIBERTARIANISM*, Chapters 4-7). And yet the liberals have nothing new to offer but a continuation and an increase of these very same bankrupt policies.

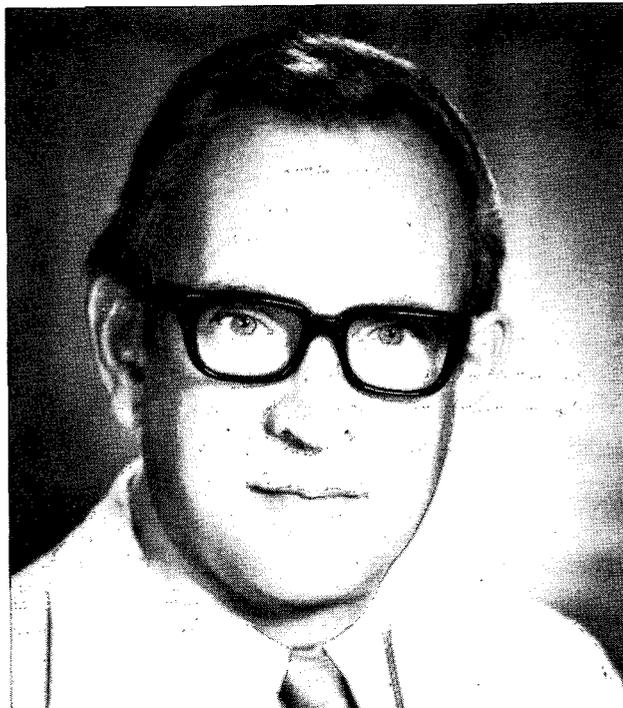
Shall we turn then to the conservatives? In some respects they are better, more salvageable; they are at least skeptical of Big Government, and recognize its foolishness and its apologists' state of intellectual bankruptcy. Moreover, unlike the liberals, they see the gravity of our fiscal policy, of continuous deficit spending and inflation. But the fundamental principle of libertarianism is that each man shall be master of his own life, and that no other man has the right to dictate by force the actions of another—and the conservatives have been somewhat vacillating with regard to this fundamental principle. Some of them, though not all, would still achieve political power over our lives, against our will and for our own good; some of them want censorship of ideas, others want censorship of pornography; many of them approve the draft and favor numerous international adventures which the draft makes possible; many of them approve compulsory prayers in public

schools—and almost all of them approve of the public institution. They want individualism and liberty on the whole, but they still want to pick and choose exceptions and qualifications. But if one person can use the vast coercive power of the law to force one policy on us, by what principle shall another be prevented from forcing a different one? The conservatives are caught in this dilemma, from which there is no escape.

Most people, unhappy with both alternatives, are deeply discouraged, and yet they are not even aware that there is any other possibility. Once they do become aware of it, many of them will surely come to see that it is the only acceptable one. But the task of instruction, communication, and persuasion will be enormous. Libertarianism is still in its birth-pangs and its potential is staggering; but it is we who must now make this possibility turn into actuality.

Whom shall we enlist for this purpose? It would be pleasant to think that we could count on the intellectuals, the leaders in our colleges and universities who are shaping the thought of the next generation. But to count on them heavily would be to indulge in wishful thinking. There are some intellectuals who will give us their full support at once, and others who will do so once they know what we stand for. But the vast majority of intellectuals at present are much more inclined toward the liberal camp, and many of them are outright socialists. This may at first seem puzzling: some of it can be explained by humanitarian motives (however misplaced in their application); some of it by just plain ignorance of economics and the psychology of political power; and some of it by simple habit: most of them grew up during the New Deal and have come to take its tenets as unquestioned assumptions. But the principle ingredient in the total explanation, it seems to me, lies elsewhere: the professors have been bribed for too long by government aid; they want to continue their research, and government is by now the principle source of their grants; they fall over each other to get them, even when they knew the subject of the research is unfruitful, trivial, or worthless. They don't at all mind if every taxpayer in the land is forced to pay for these grants, as long as the income continues. In short, the intellectuals have become the camp-followers of power. On the whole they are too timid, or too snug in their ivory towers, to wish to assume political power themselves, but they will gladly sell their birthright of liberty in return for cash, and will vote the politicians into power as long as the money keeps flowing their way. Already they are fawning on McGovern in the hope that under his leadership they will have their "place in the sun"—never mind who else goes under in the process, or whether the economy grinds to a halt. And McGovern himself is wooing their allegiance, using the Vietnam issue as bait.

In *ATLAS SHRUGGED*, when the statist are about



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to take over the U.S. economy, one of their leaders, Wesley Mouch, says:

"Still, I'm worried, the intellectuals are our friends. We don't want to lose them. They can make an awful lot of trouble,"

"They won't," said Fred Kinnan, "Your kind of intellectuals are the first to scream when it's safe—and the first to shut their traps at the first sign of danger. They spend years spitting at the man who feeds them—and they lick the hand of the man who slaps their drooling faces. Didn't they deliver every country of Europe, one after another, to committees of goons, just like this one here? Didn't they scream their heads off to shut out every burglar alarm and to break every padlock open for the goons? Have you heard a peep out of them since? Didn't they scream that they were the friends of labor? Do you hear them raising their voices about the chain gangs, the slave camps, the fourteen-hour workday and the mortality from scurvy in the People's States of Europe? No, but you do hear them telling the whip-beaten wretches that starvation is prosperity, that slavery is freedom, that torture chambers are brother-love and that if the wretches don't understand it, then it's their own fault that they suffer, and it's the mangled corpses in the jail cellars who're to blame for all their troubles, not the benevolent leaders! Intellectuals? You might have to worry about any other breed of men, but not about the modern intellectuals: they'll swallow anything. I don't feel so safe about the lousiest wharf rat in the longshoremen's union: he's liable to remember suddenly that he is a man—and then I won't be able to keep him in line. But the intellectuals? That's the one thing they've forgotten long ago. I

“Most people, unhappy with the alternatives of liberalism and conservatism, are not even aware that there is any other possibility.”

guess it's the one thing that all their education was aimed to make them forget. Do anything you please to the intellectuals. They'll take it."

... "For once," said Dr. Ferris, "I agree with Dr. Kinnan. I agree with his facts, if not with his feelings. You don't have to worry about the intellectuals, Wesley. Just put a few of them on the government payroll and send them out to preach precisely the sort of thing Mr. Kinnan mentioned: that the blame rests on the victims. Give them moderately comfortable salaries and extremely loud titles—and they'll do a better job for you than whole squads of enforcement officers." (Ayn Rand, *ATLAS SHRUGGED*, pp. 546-47)

I would certainly not wish to saddle the above description on all intellectuals, but as a general characterization, I submit that the description hits the mark with painful accuracy.

Who, then, will be enlisted in the ranks of libertarians? One obvious group is business men—at least those who have not sold their souls for government contracts. These are the people who know first-hand (unlike the academicians)—what skill and dedication it takes to start an enterprise and keep it going, when one wrong decision could put a quick end to years of planning, effort, and investment. They are the self-made men whose enterprises the academicians would like to collectivize and whose incomes they propose to loot in order to realize their utopian dreams. These men, whose traditional home has been the Republican Party, have now been betrayed by it, and today they have no political home at all. They would be "a natural" for the Libertarian Party. Most of them are too busy providing goods and services for the nation to read widely in political, economic, or philosophical matters, and as a result, they have been comparatively inarticulate. But, if we help to give them a voice, there is no doubt that they will be on our side; in fact, they will say, when they hear our program, "What you're saying is what we knew all the time"—and of course they will be right.

Any person of reasonable intelligence and a working knowledge of the economic facts-of-life could easily be led to join our ranks. It was just a few years ago that in a national poll, the farmers of the United States indicated their preference for total abolition of government controls over agriculture—even when this meant no more government subsidies for growing grain (or for not growing it). This fierce pride and independence, which characterized most Americans and virtually all farmers a generation ago, has faded somewhat with years of government interference with the intricate machinery of production—but these valuable qualities, and the political convictions that

go with them are not beyond resuscitation.

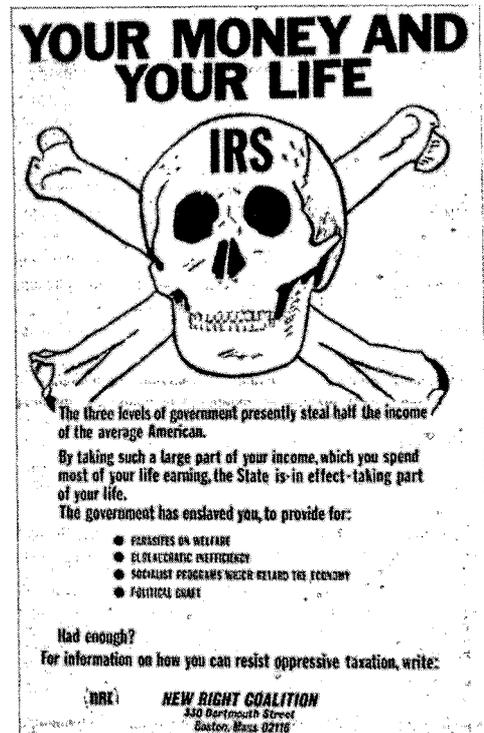
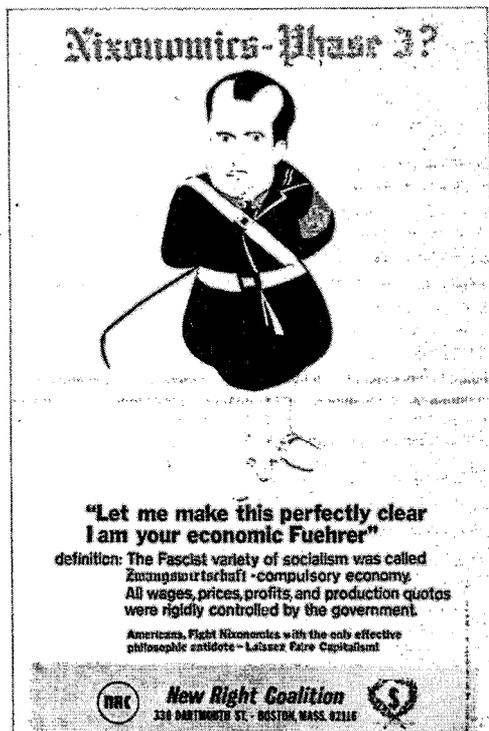
Much the same, I suspect, is true of the labor force in general—except that in this case, there is much more convincing to be done, for labor has been subjected to an incessant barrage of propaganda for the last forty years: they have been told that their employer is their enemy, that their employer is getting fat with enormous profits, and that it is their sacred duty to make him bite the dust—never realizing, for the most part, that profits are the reward conferred by the consumer for efficient production; that profits are also the best guarantee of high wages and continue employment; that when the employer is thrown out, the government will step in; and that government, with its power of the gun over their lives, is a far worse enemy than even the worst employer had ever been.

In fact, any laborer who knows the value of work, and what it takes to accomplish production in a technological society, is probably salvageable for libertarianism. Whether one works with his hands or his head, whether in the soil or in a factory, certain facts about what it takes to achieve a nation's prosperity are inescapable if one thinks at all. This, for example, is why farmers are as a rule more intelligent voters than academicians: the farmers know that when it comes to matters of survival, one can't go by one's whims or fake reality: that one must be free in order to produce, that production requires planning and effort and doesn't come automatically, that one can sustain oneself and one's family but not carry the burden for entire classes and nations of other people, and that if parasitism is rewarded (as it is by government), then production will falter and finally cease. The nearer to nature and the land one is, the more indelibly these lessons of reality are daily impressed upon one's mind? that is why (in my opinion, at least), the farm vote, if not utterly corrupted by what is euphemistically called education, is a more intelligent vote than that of academicians, whose contact with reality is often, (to put it mildly), at several light-years removed.

People with the capacity for clear thought, who do not have mountains of accumulated garbage in their minds to unlearn (or who are able and willing to unlearn it), are all, it seems to me, potential libertarians. And this, surely adds up to millions of people in this country alone. So the reservoir to be tapped is enormous—the possibilities are so great as to be almost incalculable. But the hour is very late, and the harm to be undone boggles the imagination.

What shall we do if our efforts fail, and year follows year and the present madness continues unchecked? Then, I suggest, it will be time for Hank Rearden to go on strike. □

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medical care as a right: a refutation

ROBERT M SADE MD

The current debate on health care in the United States is of the first order of importance to the health professions, and of no less importance to the political future of the nation, for precedents are now being set that will be applied to the rest of American society in the future. In the enormous volume of verbiage that has poured forth, certain fundamental issues have been so often misrepresented that they have now become commonly accepted fallacies. This paper will be concerned with the most important of these misconceptions, that health care is a right, as well as a brief consideration of some of its corollary fallacies.

RIGHTS—MORALITY AND POLITICS

The concept of rights has its roots in the moral nature of man and its practical expression in the political system that he creates. Both morality and politics must be discussed before the relation between political rights and health care can be appreciated.

A "right" defines a freedom of action. For instance, a right to a material object is the uncoerced choice of the use to which that object will be put; a right to a specific action, such as free speech, is the freedom to engage in that activity without forceful repression. The moral foundation of the rights of man begins with the fact that he is a living creature: he has the right to his own life. All other rights are corollaries of this primary one; without the right to life, there can be no others, and the concept of rights itself becomes meaningless.

The freedom to live, however, does not automatically ensure life. For man, a specific course of action is required to sustain his life, a course of action that must be guided by reason and reality and has as its goal the creation or acquisition of material values, such as food and clothing, and intellectual values, such as self-esteem and integrity. His moral system is the means by which he is able to select the values that will support his life and achieve his happiness.

Man must maintain a rather delicate homeostasis in a highly demanding and threatening environment, but has at his disposal a unique and efficient mechanism for dealing with it: his mind. His mind is able to perceive, to identify percepts, to integrate them into concepts, and to use those concepts in choosing actions suitable to the maintenance of his life. The rational function of mind is volitional, however; a man must *choose* to think, to be aware, to evaluate, to make conscious decisions. The extent to which he is able to achieve his goals will be directly proportional to his commitment to reason in seeking them.

The right to life implies three corollaries: the right to select the values that one deems necessary to sustain one's own life; the right to exercise one's own judgment of the best course of action to achieve the chosen values; and the right to dispose of those values, once gained, in any way one chooses, without coercion by other men. The denial of any one of these corollaries severely compromises or destroys the right to life itself. A man who is not allowed to