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Farewell To The Left

Now that Spring has arrived, the Left is on the move again, but where is it going, and how is it trying to get there? After five months of torpor, the anti-war demonstrations on April 15 were a feeble shadow of last November, and the fragmented crowds seemed more interested in the irrelevant problem of the Black Panthers than in opposing the expanding war in Southeast Asia. Concentrating on the Panthers not only deflects support and attention from the anti-war cause; it also focuses efforts on purely legal defense instead of opposition to the government's war policies.

And there is another consideration. Too many in our movement are willing to sacrifice truth and the making of vital distinctions on the altar of political "unity" with our supposed allies. It is true that the police murder of Panthers Hampton and Clark in Chicago last December was unconscionable. It is also true that a systematic campaign to destroy the Panthers by all levels of government seems to be underway. But we must also distinguish the New York trial of the Panthers from the Hampton-Clark murder and the Chicago trial of the Conspiracy 7. For the Panthers in New York are charged, not with dissenting speech as was the Conspiracy, but with a conspiracy to bomb department stores—an undoubted criminal offense. The fact that their excruciating high bail discriminates against the poor and serves to imprison the Panthers before conviction is true and deplorable. But it is also true that these particular Panthers *might well* be a group of criminals and therefore deserving of no support whatever from anyone claiming to be a libertarian.

In recent months, in fact, there has been an increasingly dominant tendency on the Left—apart from the nefarious bombings—to engage in wanton violence against property that is indisputably private. The latest tactic of the Left is "trashing"—the indiscriminate breaking of windows on houses, buildings, cars. Trashing may be psychologically satisfying to those who enjoy acts of destruction; but what else can it accomplish? Strategically, trashing is an excellent means of "turning off" almost everyone, working class and middle class alike, all of whom react in horror to such wanton nihilism, and who know full well that their own properties might be next. And even apart from strategy, what is the meaning and purpose of trashing? What but an indiscriminate assault on private property, and therefore on the concept of private property itself?

In the days of the New Left, of for example the Berkeley, Columbia, San Francisco State and Peoples' Park struggles, their assault was against property that was either clearly governmental, or was governmental down-deep (such as Columbia). It was then possible for libertarians to support such people's campaigns against State and State-created property. But the current, or Newest Left, shows no interest

in any such distinctions; it seems to be against all property period, and especially property that is private. Take, for example, last year's seizure of a small, undeniably private, and non-governmental Spanish church in East Harlem by a Puerto Rican gang called the Young Lords. The Young Lords seized the church by force and violence, and demanded the "right" to use the church premises to feed and indoctrinate the public, all in the name of calling themselves "the community" and "the people". As if the congregation that owns the Church is not just as much a part of "the people" as this youth gang! Being anti-Christian, furthermore, the Young Lords could only see the Church space as remaining "unused", since religious services cannot qualify as legitimate "use".

The shocking point about this hooligan action was not so much the act itself, but the response on the part of New Yorkers. The entire Liberal community reacted by lavishing praise upon the Young Lords, and it chastised the church for not being responsive to the "needs of the people". Not one word was devoted to attacking this deed as aggression against private property. Even the libertarian movement in New York was strangely silent.

Recently, hooliganesses of the Women's Liberation Movement seized the offices of Grove Press, and issued numerous "demands". One particularly revealing demand was the call upon Grove Press to stop printing "dirty books" which "degrade women". Once again, Women's Lib shows itself to be a twisted 20th-century reincarnation of Puritanism, of the old harridan Carrie Nation destroying bars and saloons with her ax. But the point is that once again the Left, almost automatically, employed violence—not against government property, or quasi-government property, or against the police—but against property that is indisputably private. Fortunately, Grove Press did not answer in the spineless Liberal manner of John Mack Carter, editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, to a similar recent invasion. Instead of defending his office, Carter spoke to these intruders for 11 hours, and wound up paying them to put out a women's lib supplement of the *Journal*. Grove Press called in the police to carry those female invaders out, and proceeded to charge them with criminal trespass. Crime is crime, and it must be put down with due and proper firmness; otherwise, appeasement of the criminal aggressor will only encourage his (or her) voraciousness for further aggression. As libertarians, and as people, we want a non-aggressive world; and to achieve this we must reinforce the general reluctance to commit crime by apprehending and punishing the criminal.

But, it might be asked, isn't it a terrible thing to call in the State police for self-defense? Certainly not. While no

(Continued on page 2)

FAREWELL TO THE LEFT — (Continued from page 1)

libertarian enjoys calling upon the State for defense, the fact remains that the State has arrogated to itself a compulsory monopoly of the function of police protection. In such a situation, the State police are the only ones we can call upon for defense. Who among us, set upon by a gang of muggers, would fail to call for the police if we could? But the defense of property against Left hooligans differs not one iota from its defense against non-political muggers. To say that calling in the police for defense against crime is immoral is also to say that walking on the streets is immoral or flying on planes is immoral, or sending a letter is immoral, because these are all, unfortunately, monopolized or subsidized by government. If it is moral to use the monopoly Post Office, it is equally moral to use the services of the State police to aid in one's defense against crime. For while the State is the *major* criminal organization in our society, it is by no means the *only* one.

And it is not only the current *means* employed by the Left that I am attacking; it is their new-found *ends* as well. Of what relevance to libertarianism, for example, are the demands of the Women's Liberationists? In what way is it "libertarian" to foist their perverted values upon the general culture and upon society? In what way is it libertarian to agitate for black studies institutes, or for a 5% raise for cafeteria workers? In what way is it libertarian in any sense to call for umpteen billion dollars of tax money to "beautify" the environment? Let us take, for example, the current demands of the student rebels and contrast them to the student rebellions of 1968 and 1969. The major 1968 demand at Columbia, the main purpose in view, was eminently libertarian: the divesting of Columbia from support of the American war machine. The 1968-69 student demand at Fordham was similar: to divest Fordham of the mercenaries of ROTC. But what are the current demands of the student rebels? At Columbia, the demand is so absurd as to be understandable only to the psychotic participants in our "counter-culture": that Columbia put up the bail money for the Black Panthers. What in the world has Columbia to do with the Panthers? The absurdity and irrationality of this "December 4" movement at Columbia should be evident. This is apart from the important point that the Panthers may well be guilty of the serious charges against them.

The current Fordham rebellion is demanding . . . what? Equal student participation with the faculty in determining curriculum and policy, and, in particular, the retention of an English professor who was denied tenure. Is this what the student "revolution" has come to? Once anti-militarist, are we now going to the barricades to enforce the principle that any teacher, no matter how incompetent, must be continued for life once he is hired? But who is better able to determine his competence, or who should be more in a position to pass such judgment, than his own colleagues in a department? Furthermore, to call for a voice for students in decision-making is scarcely the same as calling for equal or total student power. Students, after all, *do* know far less than their teachers; otherwise, why do they agree in such large numbers to pay considerable sums in tuition to supply salaries to those same teachers? The educational theory of the counter-culture: that students and teachers are all "equal", that no one knows more than anyone else, that courses should consist not of content and knowledge but of "rapping" about students' feelings; all this makes nonsense of going to school or college in the first place. For this kind of rapping can far better take place at the local candy store.

We can go further than this. If both the ends and the means of the current Left have become either irrelevant or antithetical to liberty, we must then ask ourselves: do we *want* the current Left revolutionary movement to succeed? Let us put it this way: if we could push a magic button, and replace Nixon and his Administration by, say, Mark Rudd

or Robin Morgan of Women's Lib, would we push that button? In my view, no rational libertarian could answer Yes to this crucial question. To contemplate America in the grip of the Weathermen or Women's Lib is to envision a truly nightmare world. Not only does Dick Nixon shine in comparison; I would venture to predict that a Rudd or a Morgan reign would make even Joe Stalin seem like Albert Schweitzer. For make no mistake: the Left is now in the grip, not just of Marxists-Stalinists, but also, for the first time in the history of Marxism, it is a movement that is Marxist in ideology but totally nihilist in attitude, worldview, and lifestyle. There have been few more repellent blends in the history of social thought than the current one of the goals of Stalin blended with the attitude and tactics of the nihilist Nechayev. For at least the Marxism of Stalin's day tried its best to be rational, to pursue the goals of science and reason; they did not pursue insanity almost for its own sake, or as a "liberating" force.

If, then, we have nothing in common with either the means or the purposes of the current Left, then we must cease thinking of ourselves, in the current political and ideological context, as "Leftists". We must bid farewell to the Left.

One tragedy in this whole affair is that many of the libertarians of New York, New England, and Washington, D. C. have completely forgotten the crucial strategic principle of Lenin: that, in associating with other groups, one must remain firm and steadfast in one's principles, while remaining open and flexible in one's tactics, in response to ever-changing institutional conditions. The original idea in allying ourselves with the New Left was to work with a new generation permeated with strong libertarian elements. Now that the New Left has died, and its genuine libertarian elements have disappeared, objective conditions require that we make a tactical shift away from the current Left. Instead, too many of our young East Coast libertarians have done just the opposite of Lenin's strategic advice: they cling as a vital principle to the mere tactic of alliance with the Left; and they abandon their original principles (free-market, private property rights) that led them to becoming libertarians, and therefore into making tactical alliances in the first place. They have placed their very libertarian principles in the category of a disposable tactic, while they raise to the status of a mighty principle a mere tactical alliance. They have tragically allowed the means to become an end, and the end to become a mere means.

It was several years ago, I believe, that the brilliant young Marxist historian, Eugene D. Genovese, began denouncing the New Left as "nihilistic gangsters". At the time, I thought he was unfairly traducing a great and hopeful young movement. Now I think he might well have been more prescient, more far-seeing, than the rest of us. Perhaps Gene saw more deeply into the processes of change as they had begun their work. At any rate, "nihilistic gangsters" is certainly

(Continued on page 4)

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Karl Hess is no longer associated with the Libertarian Forum and has had no responsibility for the material published in the Libertarian Forum other than that which appeared under his own name. For mechanical reasons his name failed to be removed from the masthead of this issue.

The shaky alliance was originally predicated on the assumption that, despite their obvious differences, they were really "natural allies" beneath the surface. Now that the breach on the Right has become a permanent fissure it might be worthwhile to re-examine this premise more closely to see just how valid it was to begin with.

Surely the rhetoric delivered by both camps was similar if not identical. Rand and Reagan, von Mises and Buckley have all spoken in terms of "individualism", "self-reliance", "free enterprise", "private initiative"; without exception libertarians and conservatives alike have denounced "collectivism" as the prime evil afflicting modern society. Theoretically, they appeared to be cut of the same cloth and when they disagreed on specific issues it was regarded more as a family squabble than as a serious falling-out over fundamentals.

The main bond cementing the libertarian-conservative alliance was an economic one; both schools identified themselves primarily with free-market economic principles. When conservatives became repressive on questions of civil liberties, censorship, sex and abortion laws, military conscription, libertarians took them to task but still continued to fall back on the "natural allies" argument. After all, conservatives were still champions of the free market. If they got a bit touchy on other issues it was because their basic premises were mangled. So what if they were a little inconsistent? Everybody knew that most conservatives were anti-intellectual and none too clever. All they needed was a little education. Stick with them and pretty soon they would all be libertarian radicals, quoting Aristotle instead of Jesus and Pope Paul, starting their own post offices and hiding draft dodgers in their finished basements.

Slowly it became apparent that the *only* common ground uniting libertarians and conservatives was their theoretical adherence to the free market. On virtually every single issue that came to prominence in the '60's—anti-abortion legislation; censorship of "offensive" literature; civil disobedience and dissent; repressive sex laws; the war; draft resistance; decentralization and neighborhood control; pollution; ad infinitum—libertarians and conservatives found themselves on opposite sides of the fence. It was at this point that libertarians began to ask themselves a key question: just what is the free market anyway? Is the free market merely the elimination of public welfare? Is it an end to income and corporate taxes? Is it freedom for company A and company B to produce war machinery for an overseas military escapade?

Or is the free market something else? Is the free market primarily the right of people, individually or cooperatively, to trade voluntarily without interference? If the free market is another name for voluntarism, voluntary trade and voluntary association, then does it not include *all* the issues enumerated above? Is not abortion a free-market decision between doctor and patient; "offensive" literature a free-market decision between seller and buyer; civil disobedience a free-market decision by individuals not to put up with legalized violence; sex a free-market decision between or among consenting adults; decentralization a free-market attempt to take power away from centralized bureaucracies? If the answer to all these questions was *yes*, then could it be said that conservatives really believed in the free market?

So it has come to pass that the free-market rhetoric of conservatives is just that: flimsy sloganeering. Neither Nixon in Washington nor Reagan in California is any more a free enterpriser in practice than were the liberals who

administration with a conservative one and you have merely come up with a change in priorities. The conservatives would rather fill the bellies of cops than those of welfare recipients, and perhaps they would prefer to raise public funds through a different set of taxing procedures—but these are the only real differences. It's difficult to see how any one administration is more *laissez-faire* in the economic sense than another.

If this is the case, it follows that the only bond left uniting libertarians and conservatives—dedication to the free market—is actually nonexistent. In fact, on an issue-to-issue basis, a better case can be made for the claim that there are more points of agreement between libertarians and liberals. At least liberals are more frequently libertarian on noneconomic questions and, as we are witnessing, *not much worse* than conservatives on the economic issues.

One practicing liberal who has grasped this fact lately is Tom Wicker of the *New York Times*. His article in the January, 1970 issue of *Playboy*, "Forging a Left-Right Coalition", was a perceptive look at the startling similarities between libertarians of the Left and Right. His column in the *New York Times*, March 29, 1970, "Will the Real Conservatives Please Stand Up?", describes how Senator Sam Ervin's bitter attack on No Knock and Preventive Detention laws is not inconsistent with his opposition to civil rights legislation. "Ervin's kind of conservatism . . . is not the kind . . . that holds cheap the rights themselves. It is not affected with the myopia that prevents fearful men from seeing that if individual rights are taken away from any man or class of men they are taken away from all; and that once suspended or destroyed they are most unlikely to be recognized again by a state power that will have been loosed from the restraints of the ages." We hear little talk of this kind from conservatives these days who talk instead of suspending certain liberties until the world is safe from communism.

Murray Rothbard has frequently spoken of the importance of both revolutionary and reformist tactics in the struggle for liberty. While we are organizing our tax rebellions and anti-war protests we might also consider the possibility of turning libertarianism into a major political force in the United States. The Free Democrats of West Germany have served a useful purpose, aligning themselves with whatever party comes closest at the time to their own ideals. The election of civil libertarians to office is useful for the very practical reason that they are less likely than conservatives to use repressive measures in order to crush anti-state activities. If we can stop thinking of libertarianism primarily in economic terms, and consider it instead in its broader aspects involving civil, social, moral, and intellectual freedoms as well, we will finally stop regarding ourselves as a "rational" subdivision of the Republican Party.

Libertarians and conservatives are no more "natural allies" than were Lysander Spooner and Edmund Burke. As free enterprise becomes less and less a part of Right Wing economic policy in America, the bond that tied libertarians to the Right grows more and more threadbare. So we find ourselves once again assuming the traditional libertarian position: intellectuals in opposition to authoritarian government—the disloyal opposition. As radicals in opposition to the status quo we are, by definition, members of the Radical Left as far as political posture is concerned.

As the '70's roll on it will, I think, be on the Left among the Paul Goodmans, Carl Oglesbys, and Norman Mailers that we find our future allies for freedom.

—Jermone Tuccille

FAREWELL TO THE LEFT — (Continued from page 2)

what the Left has become. Let us therefore bid them farewell.

I agree with all of Jerry Tuccille's strictures against conservatives in this issue; but the Left provides us no solace either. The distinguished Leftists he mentions are only a few of the honorable exceptions to the bleak Left-wing landscape.

We must face the hard facts: in the current world, we should think of ourselves as neither Leftists nor Rightists. We are libertarians period, with precious little hope of allies among the organizations of either wing. Since there is therefore no hope whatsoever for alibertarian revolution in the foreseeable future, our only viable strategy is to abandon the current thirst for mindless activism, and to build a long-run libertarian movement. In short, to leave the streets for the study, to place our emphasis on education, not just

for other people but also for ourselves, to build up and add to the noble structure of libertarian theory and scholarship that already exists. There is much work to be done, in developing libertarian theory as well as in spreading the gospel of that theory to those who have not yet heard of it. For those who are looking so desperately for something "to do", here is an enormous task waiting to be done:

We must abandon the range-of-the-moment view so typical of our counter-culture, and we must return to the long-range view of such of our founders as Albert Jay Nock. Nock, writing in an age (the 1930's and 1940's) of rock-bottom hope for libertarians, said that he did not despair, because in every age, no matter how benighted, there are always a few, a Remnant, that understands. At the very least, that Remnant will pass the torch of rational libertarianism to future generations. *There* is a goal which, while limited, has the virtue of being eminently attainable, if we but have the will.

Recommended Reading

Anarcho-capitalism, the idea that the free market can supply police and judicial protection by means of privately competitive agencies, was once only a gleam in the eye of the editor of the *Libertarian Forum*. In the past, the libertarian French economist Gustave de Molinari championed the idea in 1848, shocking his mentor Frederic Bastiat with his "extremism"; but Molinari didn't elaborate the concept, and in later years he partially retreated from it. The American individualist anarchists of the late 19th century, Benjamin R. Tucker and Lysander Spooner, also championed the idea, but again rather sketchily. The major flaw in their proposal was that each jury was supposed to make an *ad hoc*, on-the-spot decision, without any guidance from a rational, objective Law Code requiring adherence to the rights of person and property.

In the last year or so, however, anarcho-capitalism has come into its own, and there are now available three expositions on how Stateless, privately competitive courts and police forces could work.

One, published last year, is a booklet by Jarret B. Wollstein, *Society Without Coercion*, available for \$1.50 from the Society for Individual Liberty, 800 Hillsboro Drive, Silver Spring, Md. 20902. Another is the booklet by Morris and Linda Tannehill, *The Market for Liberty*, available for \$3.95 from M. G. Tannehill, Box 1383, Lansing, Mich. 48904. And finally, there is an article by David Friedman, one of the most recent converts to anarcho-capitalism,

"The Prescriptions of 2001", in his column, "The Radical", published in the YAF magazine, *The New Guard* (March, 1970), available at 60¢ a copy or \$4 a year, at 1221 Massachusetts Ave., N. W., Washington, D. C. 20005. Bets are now open on how long Friedman will be able to put up with YAF, and/or vice versa.

A fourth exposition will soon be available in the midst of a new, full-sized book by Murray N. Rothbard, called *Power and Market*. More news later.

Jerry Tuccille's scintillating new book, *Radical Libertarianism: A Right-Wing Alternative* (Bobbs-Merrill), will be available in early May. The price is \$5.00, a veritable bargain!

Three excellent articles have appeared recently which, from different perspectives, strongly and trenchantly attack the irrational counter-culture of today's youth, while at the same time attacking the "rational" statism of the Establishment against which the youth are reacting. These are:

Robert Brustein, "Revolution as Theatre", *The New Republic* (March 14). The young left as irrational "guerrilla theatre".

Michael Novak, "Do Students Want Education?", *Commonweal* (March 13). No, answers Novak, sadly but strongly.

Robert Nisbet, "Subjective Si! Objective No!", *New York Times Book Review* (April 5). Assailing the anti-objectivity of recent radical "social science".

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