Rumor
Unfounded!
by M.N.R.

A friend of mine recently heard, as solemn fact from a self-proclaimed reliable source, that I had become a convert to Catholicism. Amusingly enough, this is probably the longest-lived rumor in the history of the modern libertarian movement. As long as four decades ago, a friend waggishly warned me that I “was setting out on the road to Rome.” The rumor is, as usual, not true, as in the case of most movement rumors that have not been sifted and published by Sarah Barton.

There is, through all the revelry, a serious point about the persistence of this rumor. For it reflects the inability of most libertarians, who are not only ignorant of but implacably hostile to religion in general and Christianity in particular, to conceive how anyone could possibly be an admirer of Christianity or the Catholic Church without being an actual convert. From a generation and a movement that knows little about history or theology than The Inquisition or the complete works of Ayn Rand this comes of course as no surprise.

solemn pundits, such as David Broder and E.J. Dionne Jr., are lamenting “cynicism” these days. But with people like the Clintons in power, cynicism is not a luxury, it’s a necessity. And the same pundits who bemoan our cynicism are treating the bagging of that old rascal Daniel Rostenkowski as Sophoclean tragedy—the noble hero undone by a single character flaw: stamp-collecting. That’s because Rostenkowski is their old buddy.

Clinton whined that Limbaugh gets to talk for three hours a day, and he, the poor little commander-in-chief of the mightiest forces in history, doesn’t get to answer. It just isn’t fair! But George Stephanopoulos hinted afterward that the Fairness Doctrine could just be revived, if things don’t get fairer around here on their own.

Now: did this outburst, and this thinly-veiled threat, have the same result as Spiro Agnew’s complaints about press bias back in 1969? Did the major media howl about the “chilling effect” on free speech, the First Amendment, and our endangered liberties? Not at all. On the contrary, the major media don’t like Limbaugh and the religious right either. Some liberal pundits even joined Clinton and Stephanopoulos in denouncing them.

The establishment media and the political establishment, in other words, are closing ranks against the populist uprising and the