

ACADEMICS, INTELLECTUALS, AND POLITICS:

THE RETURN OF IDEAS TO THE POLITICAL PROCESS

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FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY

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Preface by Chris R. Tame and Brian Micklethwait

The purpose of Tactical Notes is not merely to present the personal views of the Committee of the Libertarian Alliance, but also to present the diversity of libertarian thought concerning strategy and tactics. In this essay we are pleased to present the views of Ed Crane. Mr Crane belongs to that wing of the movement adhering to an isolationist position in foreign policy (a position not shared by the leading spirits of the LA). A major figure in the rise of the American Libertarian Party, Mr Crane defends here a more “immediatist” position than that held by the LA’s Committee. This essay was originally given in 1962 as a speech, and it should be pointed out that since then the Libertarian Party has experienced a massive decline in support and vitality and has been abandoned by large numbers of sensible and decent people. Ed Crane has now abandoned the Libertarian Party and his efforts are directed through his work as President of the Cato Institute, the Washington based free market think tank. It would seem clear, however, that the same tactical/strategic vision is central to his work: a concern with both immediate political/policy impact and with translating the more abstract realm of the intellect into the public consciousness and political action.

My involvement in the Libertarian Party dates back to 1972 when a scraggly group of about 85 of us met in Denver, Colorado at the Party’s first national convention. We were, I think it is safe to say, a colourful group of people, each with a different background and perhaps a different motivation for being there, but all convinced that there was something profoundly wrong with the political system in the United States.

Ideologically, that original group clearly had more of a right wing bias than exists in the party today. There was, I’m reluctant to report, serious debate at that convention as to whether or not the United States should unilaterally withdraw from Viet Nam. Today Libertarians are more likely to be discussing whether or not the United States should withdraw from North America.

And that’s more than just an interesting anecdote because it demonstrates the irrefutable point that the Libertarian Party has in its ten year history become increasingly ideologically committed as it has grown in size and professionalism. Many people believed that it *couldn’t* be the case. Yet a perusal of each succeeding LP platform demonstrates that the application of Libertarian principles to political issues has consistently been in a clearer, ideologically sounder manner.

That, it seems to me, is most encouraging. Our libertarian principles act simultaneously to guide and to motivate us in our activities. Without them we are, in effect, a rudderless, powerless ship adrift in a sea of political compromise. And when it comes to compromise there a no way we’re going to out-compete the Republicans or Democrats.

That brings me to the subject of this paper. What I want to deal with is, in essence, what I believe to be the correct strategy for the Libertarian Party to pursue — why I believe it to be correct and what I see to be a particular danger to it that exists within the libertarian movement.

Strategy is itself a subject that gets too little attention in the libertarian movement. Everything we do as libertarian activists implies a strategic ordering of priorities. We do one thing rather than another, presumably, because we think it will, within the limitations of our own interests and abilities, be the most effective in advancing the cause of liberty. In this sense, of course, the existence of the Libertarian Party is an endorsement of political action as an appropriate strategy for achieving a free society.

It is important that we never forget the obvious: the Libertarian Party is not a party in the *traditional* sense of the Republicans and Democrats. It is not our objective to ‘run the government’. The Libertarian Party is, however, a political party and one of its objectives beyond the obvious one of educating the public about libertarianism is to dismantle the machinery of government from within: to get elected to public office.

Now, I happen to believe that the educational and electoral opportunities for advancing the cause of liberty through the Libertarian Party are enormous — that they represent the best opportunity for rolling back the state. That is not to say it is the only proper strategy, or even that it is a good strategy for everyone — political action for some libertarians *may* in fact be an inappropriate strategy. For most of us, it seems to be, it is a good and a *proven* strategy.

But it is not enough to say simply that we should pursue political action. Left unresolved is what type of political activity Libertarian Party activists should be pursuing. The key to a successful libertarian movement, which is to say the key to creating a free society, is to involve the intelligent lay public in questions of public policy, in serious debate over the political issues which affect their lives. I would argue that such involvement is a precondition to the creation and to the maintenance of a free society.

The history of mankind is a history of the subjugation and exploitation of a great majority of people by an elite few, by what has been appropriately termed the ruling class. The ruling class has many manifestations. It can take the form

of a religious orthodoxy, a monarchy, a dictatorship of the proletariat, outright fascism, or, in the case of the United States, corporate statism. In each instance the ruling class relies on academics, scholars and ‘experts’ to legitimise and provide moral authority for its hegemony over the masses.

Hayekian Intellectuals Versus Academics

At this point I want to make a distinction between what I would call academics or ‘court intellectuals’ on the one hand and intelligent laymen or ‘Hayekian intellectuals’ on the other. The distinction is an important one for the purposes of this discussion. Murray Rothbard has accused me of, among other atrocities, being anti-intellectual. I would beg to differ. As I will argue in a moment, I think there is a desperate need to recruit *more* intellectuals into the libertarian movement. Now, if Rothbard had accused me of being *anti-academic* I would have had to confess to a certain bias in that direction.

Not that there isn’t a role for academics to play in society — it’s just that it’s a more limited role than they currently play, and political action is not a place for them to play it. At a minimum I would think that libertarians could agree that massive state subsidisation of higher education — ‘higher education’ is itself a value-laden term; it more properly might be referred to as *prolonged* education — that this subsidy has created more scholars and academics than the market would have, shall we say, *demand*ed. It’s not just that there are more scholars incredibly knowledgeable about the sex lives of cromagnon poets than is perhaps warranted, it’s that there are literally thousands and thousands of economists, sociologists, historians, and philosophers in our society whose life’s work in a free market system would probably be channeled in more productive directions.

An article in the *Pacific Sun* a couple of years ago offered a somewhat exaggerated but to the point discussion of the libertarian view of court intellectuals — again, not broadly defined Hayekian intellectuals — which I’d like to share with you:

“In a truly capitalist society intellectuals would be paid exactly what they are worth on the free market, which is perilously close to nothing. As a result, almost all intellectuals are court intellectuals — they tell the prince what he wants to hear. And in this country that consists of telling the President and Congress and everyone else that our government is just, important, necessary — in a word, essential. In return they are given tenure at state universities and government grants at private ones; they are plucked out of ivy league political science departments to become presidential advisers and secretaries of state; they win appointments to head bureaucracies and hold seats on regulatory commissions.

“And once in place they do what court apologists have always done — they obfuscate, complicate and intimidate the average citizen into denying what otherwise would have been patently obvious to him.

“President Harry Truman was perhaps being unduly personal when he called Senator William Fulbright an ‘overeducated son-of-a-bitch’ but he had the principle correct. Higher education doesn’t so much train people to think straight as it enables them to repeat the most blatant self-deceptions with total self-assurance.”

Of course, one of the advantages of “over-education” is that it provides the recipient with more information (or misinformation) about a given subject than is possessed by a layman. It allows the scholar or expert to intimidate through arguments from authority and reference to his PhD. It does *not* mean the scholar or expert has better judgement or is necessarily more intelligent than broad segments of the lay public — particularly today when it can be argued that the bureaucratized, politicized, and unionized academic establishment tends not to be attractive to the brightest and most creative young minds in our society.

In any case, as Marx once wrote: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.” And in order to change the world in a libertarian direction the movement needs to recruit intellectuals and to motivate those intellectuals to agitate for change. I referred to the kind of intellectuals we need to promote libertarian political action as ‘Hayekian intellectuals’. Let Hayek define them for me in this quote from “The Intellectuals and Socialism”:

“The term intellectuals, however, does not at once convey a true picture of the large class to which we refer, and the fact that we have no better name by which to describe what we have called second hand dealers in ideas is not the least of the reasons why their power is not better understood. Even persons who use the word ‘intellectual’ mainly as a term of abuse are still inclined to withhold it from many who undoubtedly perform that characteristic function. This is neither that of the original thinker nor that of the scholar or expert in a particular field of thought. The typical intellectual need be neither: he need not possess special knowledge of anything in particular, to perform his role as intermediary in the spreading of ideas. What qualifies him for his job is the wide range of subjects on which he can readily talk and write, and a position or habits through which he becomes acquainted with new ideas sooner than those to whom he addresses himself.”

Hayek goes on to include within his definition of intellectuals: journalists, teachers, ministers, writers, cartoonists, scientists, and doctors. He makes it clear that he would include *everyone* who is concerned about ideas enough to learn the facts about an issue and attempt to convince others of the validity of his position based on those facts. Hopefully, that would include the leadership of the Libertarian Party.

The key characteristic of the ‘Hayekian intellectual’ in his desire and ability to convince others of the correctness of his point of view. In this sense, the intellectual is, or should be, more important than the academic expert in terms of political action. That is why, as Hayek puts it:

“It is not surprising that scholars and experts often feel contemptuous about the intellectual, are disinclined to recognise his power and are resentful when they discover it.”

Academics Versus Liberty

I would argue that this contempt and resentment of the broadly defined intellectual class represents a potential threat to the libertarian movement. Before the advent of the Libertarian Party the movement was run by and to a large extent consisted of scholars. Most of them were experts in

libertarian theory. None of them, apparently, had any real talent for organising the movement or popularising its ideas. Now, I don't want to blow this point out of proportion — the main point I want to make is the need for active, real-world intellectual proselytising. But in a movement that has for so long been dominated by scholar experts it is important that activists feel a sense of intellectual *independence*. If they don't, if they take the attitude that the great scholars on high are going to do all their thinking for them, then they are not going to undertake the hard work of learning the issue: and taking the libertarian cause to the American people — and we'll be stuck with a movement like we had in the late sixties, which is to say no movement at all.

The actions of court intellectuals to justify the state and to mock those who would challenge its legitimacy have been well documented by, among others, Murray Rothbard. But it would be a mistake to assume that the dynamics of 'experts' shouting down the public is limited to the government. Duncan Neuhauser has written, for instance, that:

"The professional ideology assumes that the professional is an expert as a result of his years of education and learning. Since he knows more about his area he should tell others what they 'need'. Consistent with this is the idea that the public is unwise and unknowing."

In other words, the more the public understands about a given profession, the less prestige, the less money, and the less influence each profession will have. The church has, of course, for centuries kept the secrets to salvation in the hands of its appointed experts. Examples of this sort of thing abound. Consider the American Dental Association's code of ethics which states:

"It is unethical for a dentist to give lectures or demonstrations before lay groups on a particular technique that he employs in his office. It is unethical for specialists to furnish so-called patient education pamphlets to general practitioners for distribution to patients where pamphlets in effect, stress unduly the superiority of the procedures used by specialists."

You know how it goes. The barbers union requires you to pass a test which asks, among other things, how many bones there are in the human hand, before you can cut hair.

Now, when it comes to the field of political ideology, the unfortunate fact is that the same unwillingness to grant non-experts the right to practice in that field exists. Consider the case of one Murray N. Rothbard. Rothbard has written an extraordinary 170 page document which discusses what he perceives to be the correct strategy for the philosopher-king. Some of the distinctions between what he is saying and what I am recommending may be subtle, but they are important. To quote Rothbard:

"Most people have neither the time, interest, or ability to be experts in every area important to their lives and concerns. They therefore *have* to rely on expert authorities to form their judgements in these areas from politics to morals to economics to medicine."

So understanding politics, like medicine, must now be left to the experts. To continue Rothbard's quote:

"But since, in most of these areas, the authorities are in the well-paid service of the state, it becomes vital for

libertarians to *desanctify*, to deligitimate these alleged authorities in the eyes of the deluded public. And since the public is not equipped to engage in technical investigations of each of these fields, the major weapon must be to desanctify these people as paid hirelings and propagandists of the exploiting state. Once seeing this light — and it requires little or no technical expertise to see this broad truth — the public will then have to turn to those experts and authorities who have remained free of the blandishments of the state."

The public will then have to turn to those experts and authorities who have remained free of the blandishments of the state. Oh? And who do you suppose *that* will be?

The Leninist and Nazi Models of Political Action

One of the remarkable aspects of Rothbard's strategy paper is that about a third of it is devoted to praising the strategic genius of two rather anti-libertarian chaps: Vladimir Lenin and Adolph Hitler. Aside from the fact that the course of action chosen by two such despicable human beings as Lenin and Hitler should be viewed with extreme skepticism, the obvious problem with an approach which tries to superimpose strategic successes of the past — in one case a past which is almost 60 years old and in both cases strategies employed during wartime — on today's situation, is that they have little *relevance* to today's situation. Yet Rothbard, I can tell you from personal experience, persists in his obsessive role-playing as a modern day Lenin. For evidence I refer you to a recent *Libertarian Forum* in which he rates each and every National Committee member on the basis of what percentage of their votes coincided with his own. Rothbard even rated state delegation votes at the National Convention according to his self-determined party line. To me this sort of breathless accounting of others' deviations which *was* typical of Lenin's cadre during the revolution is ludicrously out of place in today's libertarian movement. It is not only counter-productive, it is childish.

But here is Rothbard again in his strategy paper describing his plumbline vision of a strict intellectual hierarchy for the movement:

"Probably the most successful historical instance of a continuing protracted adherence to this (i.e. his) centrist line ... is Vladimir Lenin."

And later:

"That the Nazis understood the importance of hierarchical organization is made clear by Godfrey Pridham, who writes that 'the nature of the Nazi party's organization with its elaborate system of graded commands provided headquarters with a framework for controlling activities at the grass roots level'."

Some more of the philosophy which I think helps explain Rothbard's recent tirades and machinations:

"The Bolshevik Party, the Fascist Party, the Nazi Party, all had gradations of leadership in their organizations. In fact we can now see with greater clarity that one of Lenin's great accomplishments was simply to take the modern theory of organization, of hierarchy of ability and corresponding leadership, which had come to fruition in the corporation, and to introduce it, for the first time, in a movement for radical social change."

Wonderful. There's more good stuff in this paper which serious Libertarians should be aware of if they want to understand Murray Rothbard. Here's another one:

“Hitler also understood the importance of having a dedicated cadre within a broader party organization. Thus, Hitler once said, ‘It is necessary to have something ... within the organization of the law of association (as) a further organization which carries through the further idea to the full degree in order to preserve the instrument of the unity of the movement against all attempts to destroy it.’”

Hitler, Rothbard tells us, was

“particularly impressed with the graded hierarchical organization of the Roman Catholic Church.”

I could go on. But let me say here that I'm not trying to equate Rothbard with Lenin and Hitler. Rothbard has been a giant in the fight for liberty. His scholarly work in philosophy and economics has earned him a much deserved stature among libertarians. However, this does *not* make him a political strategist or tactician. Rothbard, it seems to me doesn't want to admit he can't do everything. The similarity between him and these historical figures whose strategies he desires to emulate lies in the self-delusion of his own infallibility. And that would not be dangerous if not for his desire to project his vision for the movement through his beloved hierarchy. If there is a chain of command and Rothbard is at the top, then, he reasons, we are all spouting libertarianism according to Rothbard and all is well with the world. Murray Rothbard fervently wants to do our thinking for us.

Perhaps a couple of final quotes from his strategy paper will make this point clear. Rothbard criticises the Libertarian Party because

“First, *anyone* can become a party member simply by signing a vague (and non-enforceable) pledge, and once a member he cannot be expelled; and second every party member, regardless of how ignorant, un-libertarian, or moronic, is encouraged to think of *himself* an cadre, or being as good as any other libertarian.”

And finally, in praise of communist parties that have understood the problems created by the unbridled independence of members cited above, he says:

“Every party member is not equal to every other. From the very beginning, the new party member *knows his place*.”

And here Rothbard has underlined in the manuscript “knows his place”.

If Rothbard were simply running a corporation which he had designed in a hierarchical manner to sink or swim based on his commands perhaps one could forgive him these excesses. But as I've stated before, for the libertarian movement to succeed we need real world intellectuals who think for themselves and are out promoting the libertarian philosophy. Ours is a philosophy that can't succeed with an army of robots. Yet that is what I am convinced the scholar-expert Rothbard wants.

Perhaps the most obvious example of this can be seen in Rothbard's vicious attacks on the Clark for President White

Papers. These studies, which detailed the four major planks of Clark's campaign, were singled out, one by one, as unconscionable sell-outs. They were referred to collectively by Rothbard as “infamous”.

“Libertarian principle was betrayed, the LP platform traduced and ignored, our message diluted beyond recognition ... they sold their souls — ours, unfortunately, along with it — for a mess of pottage.”

It was Rothbard's outspoken criticism of these White Papers that first really got me thinking about what motivates the man. Here were the four best libertarian analyses of current policy questions ever written and they are viciously attacked by the man who, presumably, was the leading proponent of advancing libertarian ideas. Could it be, I wondered, that Rothbard was like the Dental Association that didn't want general practitioners to pass along the secrets of the specialists to the lay public? The White Papers consisted of one on education written by Bill Burt, one on foreign policy written by Earl Ravenal, one on social security written by Pete Ferrara and one on Clark's tax and spending cut proposal, which would have reduced the size of the federal government by one-third in one year, written by David Boaz. Now, these papers were meticulously researched, professionally written, and scrupulously edited to ensure that they didn't compromise libertarian principle. They are excellent examples of what libertarian intellectual activists need to compete successfully in the real world of political debate. As I told Ed Clark, Jack Kennedy would have been proud of those White Papers. Seriously, I was amazed at what Rothbard had to say about those papers.

Rothbard said it wasn't clear from the White Paper on education that Clark's tuition tax credit proposal was only a transitional plan. Here's what the White Paper said:

“It is fundamentally contrary to the principles of a free society for government to involve itself in education ... It is time that we establish freedom of education, ... and remove government from this area altogether.”

Rothbard said the White Paper on foreign policy abandoned a *principled* policy of non-intervention. Here's what the White Paper says:

“The case for non-intervention is based on the moral principles of peace and respect for other peoples.”

That's what a principled policy on non-intervention means. Rothbard said the White Paper on taxing and spending proposed a tax cut that was not “perceptibly” more radical than Reagan's. Well, to say that an immediate 50% reduction in everyone's taxes, which is what the White Paper proposed, cannot be perceived as more radical than Reagan's proposed reduction in tax increases, is equivalent to saying the Queen Mary can't be perceived to be larger than a rowing boat. Rothbard also accused us — in writing — of not calling for the abolition of OSHA in that white Paper. The section on OSHA concludes with this sentence:

“It should be abolished.”

But perhaps that *is* a little ambiguous.

Libertarianism will prevail in our society only if we can make it relevant to real people — only if its proponents are armed with the information, the facts necessary to flesh out the theoretical framework. Libertarianism isn't important because it is a beautifully integrated political philosophy,

which it is, but because it is consistent with the nature of human beings — it allows them to live in peace, to secure prosperity, to pursue their individual values, to control their own lives. But when libertarian intellectual-activists try to convey this to the public the philosopher-king gets indignant. Libertarian ideas are Murray Rothbard's private domain. He's the expert, so forget how good the Clark White Papers are, unauthorised people are dealing in ideas. And I'm not talking solely about anyone who reaches out to other people on behalf of libertarianism.

Here's Rothbard in an issue of *Libertarian Forum* writing in a column he calls "This is the Movement You Have Chosen". His byline, incidentally, is "Old Curmudgeon", a title he bestowed upon himself many years ago. Rothbard takes Ken Fanning, a libertarian legislator in Alaska, to task for having said in a newspaper article:

"To the extent that we keep offering a philosophical diversion for PhDs we're in trouble."

Fanning goes on to say that libertarians

"see individualism in a very specific way, cutting wood tonight an opposed to waiting a week to cut wood" [because of some government regulation].

At which Rothbard explodes. He mocks Fanning for espousing "folk wisdom" and suggests he campaign on the slogan "Chop wood now!" He concludes condescendingly:

"I'm afraid, big boy, we might have to keep some intellectuals around and even, you should excuse the expression, PhDs."

But what Rothbard doesn't realise is that for the Libertarian Party to succeed it needs White Papers and Ken Fanning much more than it needs PhDs scrutinising NatCom voting records. It needs folk wisdom that Rothbard mocks more than it needs scholarly nostalgia over Vladimir Lenin's organising genius.

Bringing Ideas to the People

If the Libertarian Party in to succeed we must create the subjective conditions that existed more than 200 years ago in colonial America and which gave birth to the first great libertarian revolution. I'm not talking about strategy here, I'm talking about a society in which the intelligent lay public is actively engaged in debate over questions of public policy. We have seen the bias court intellectuals and academics have toward increasing state power. In colonial America and for most of the nineteenth century, the informed public, the broadly defined Hayekian intellectuals of the period, had a self-confidence in dealing with ideas and public policy that made attempts by the would-be ruling class to subjugate the population a very risky business. People knew they had rights, they understood what caused inflation, they opposed taxation, they fought subsidies to business, they were literate, informed, and un intimidated by so-called experts. It was a time when people thought for themselves and cared enough about their beliefs to try to convince others.

According to historian Bernard Bailyn, there were some 1,500 political pamphlets published during the 20 year revolutionary period, mostly by ordinary Americans.

"They did not transcend the ordinary limitations of their trade. They were rarely principals in the con-

troversies of the time. The American pamphleteers were almost to a man lawers, ministers merchants, or planters heavily engaged in their occupations ... The American writers were profoundly reasonable people. Their pamphlets convey scorn, anger, and indignation; but rarely blind hate, rarely panic fear. They sought to convince their opponents, not, like the English pamphleteers of the eighteenth century, to annihilate them."

And, of course, Thomas Paine's little booklet, *Common Sense* — full of folk wisdom — was read by about every literate person in the colonies. More than 120,000 copies were printed in a population of three million. That would be equivalent to 9 million copies of the book today. In addition to each copy of *Common Sense* typically being read by several people, it was not uncommon for it to be read aloud in taverns and other public meeting places. According to historian Eric Foner:

"What unified Paine's ideology was that he embraced the dual transformation which undertook America in these years — the emergence of mass political participation and the expansion of market relations in the economy and society."

Foner underscores the importance of popular involvement in political debate.

"The politicization of the mass of Philadelphians — from the master craftsmen to a significant segment of the laborers and poor — was the most important development in Philadelphia's political life in the decade before independence.

"The politicization of the artisan class was one of the fundamental political changes of the revolutionary generation."

This active involvement of non-academic intellectuals and business people in political affairs is something that continued for more than a hundred years after the revolution. As Leonard Liggio has pointed out, the Democratic Party of the nineteenth century was remarkably libertarian, favouring individual rights and hard money while opposing mercantilism. Political debate during much of that century was *ideological* and focused on the dangers of governmental actions relative to the rights of the individual.

Experts and the Decline of American Freedom

As time went on, however, ideology gave way to coalition politics, to special interest pressure groups, and to pork barrel legislation. The concept of 'experts' and 'authorities' in the social sciences began to take hold. Politics became a game of delivering block votes, with political leaders doing the thinking and the general public becoming less and less interested in political ideology *per se*. The court intellectuals and government apologists finally began to have their way at the turn of the century as the gates to statism were thrown wide open. Why this happened is a subject of some controversy. Liggio has pointed out that when PhDs became fashionable, in the early nineteenth century, the only place to get them was in Europe and the young American academics travelled there to get their certificates of authority. They returned to the U.S. with the old world intellectual baggage of anti-individualism. But whatever the reasons, it's clear the twentieth century has witnessed the rise of the academic expert and the subjugation of the average

person. Just like things have been arranged for most of human history. Coincident with that phenomenon, of course, has been the growth of the state to proportions the average colonial American would never have tolerated. The state prevails, as it always has, by convincing the intelligent layman that he shouldn't think for himself. It is in government's interest — as you know — for you and me to think that other people have an expertise that permits *them* to make decisions about *our* lives. Happily, the state has been singularly unsuccessful in convincing the people in this room that its hired academic experts are anything other than social leeches. Because of our independence of mind, we represent the only significant long term threat to state hegemony in our society.

H. L. Mencken put it this way:

“All [that government] can see in an original idea is potential change, and hence, an invasion of its prerogatives. The most dangerous man, to any government, is the man who is able to think out things himself: without regard to the prevailing superstitions and taboos. Almost inevitably he comes to the conclusion that the government he lives under is dishonest, insane and intolerable, and so, if he is romantic, he tries to change it. And even if he is not romantic personally he is very apt to spread discontent among those who are.”

Alexis de Tocqueville put it this way:

“After having thus successively taken each member of the community in its powerful grasp and fashioned him at will, the government then extends its arm over the whole community. It covers the surface of society with a network of small, complicated rules, minute and uniform, through which the most original minds and the most energetic characters cannot penetrate, to rise above the crowd. The will of man is not shattered, but softened, bent, and guided; men are seldom forced by it to act, but they are constantly restrained from acting. Such a power does not destroy, but it prevents existence: it does not tyrannise, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.”

To a large extent experts in all fields want us to be “a flock of timid animals”. Government does, professional groups do, and, it seems, certain libertarian experts do. But those of us who are serious about creating a free society have an obligation to stand up for what we believe, to take our case to the people, and to enlist as many intellectual activists to our cause as possible. I submit that the time for such a renaissance of intellectual activism by the intelligent lay public is at hand. The objective conditions are there.

To quote a recent editorial in *Commonweal* magazine, which they felt compelled to entitle “In Defence of Government”:

“Not since Herbert Spencer have there been so many intelligent people bent on proclaiming that the state is the enemy.”

It's about time. The fact is that more and more serious people are coming to the conclusion that the emperor has no clothes, that the so-called experts in government don't know what they're talking about.

The federal budget is literally out of control. Reagan is proposing a budget of \$757 billion and a \$100 billion deficit. The social security system has a \$6 trillion unfunded liability and most younger people want out. The famous Reagan tax cut has been exposed as a fraud. Militarism and defence spending are coming under increasing criticism — for instance, David Broder of the *Washington Post* in an article last month entitled “Rising Isolationism” quoted a woman officer worker in Peoria, Illinois:

“I don't know why we should take responsibility for Poland when we can't handle the problems of our own country. That's none of our damn business. We can't police the whole world.”

Then there is the economy. High unemployment, stagflation, a severe liquidity crisis. Times are bad. Republicans are defending deficits and Democrats are wringing their hands over them. Both parties seem to think that risking nuclear war makes a lot of sense but they can't seem to agree on where we should precipitate one. The two major political parties are, in fact, viewed with less respect by the public than at any time in this century.

People no longer care what government says it is doing to fix our economy or stop the communists. They go in thousands to private hard money conferences to try to protect their wealth. They attend standing-room-only lectures sponsored by Physicians for Social Responsibility to learn the truth about nuclear war. They participate by the millions in the underground economy where taxes don't exist. Americans are beginning to think for themselves again. And that's good news for us if we're willing to do something about it.

The decade of the eighties could witness the return of ideas to the American political system. Just as people are learning to think for themselves about social issues and financial issues, so could they start thinking for themselves politically. The Libertarian Party has the philosophy for America's future but, it is up to libertarian activists to apply that philosophy and theoretical framework to the real world to make it meaningful to intelligent Americans. We need to become intellectual activists who learn the facts about issues and bring the libertarian analysis of those facts to the rest of our society. We need candidates, of course, but *intellectual activists* as candidates. Libertarian candidates need to debate their Republican and Democratic opponents armed with more knowledge of facts, figures and history, for if we can demonstrate to the public that we know what we're talking about, the public is going to listen. And listening and learning about libertarianism can be an exciting thing for people starved for common sense and concerned about their future.

Friedrich Hayek was, I think, writing to those of us involved in the libertarian movement when he wrote:

“Unless we can make the philosophic foundations of a free society once more a living intellectual issue, and its implementation a task which challenges the ingenuity and imagination of our liveliest minds, the prospects of freedom are indeed dark. But if we can regain that belief in the power of ideas which was the mark of liberalism at its best, the battle is not lost.”

The mark of liberalism at its best, of course, was America's revolutionary period. It is up to us to reawaken that spirit of independence and love of liberty that was the first libertarian revolution.