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Frontiersman

The Truth Is Within You

March 1999

Principle Failure

Sam Aurelius Milam III

I was a libertarian long before the Libertarian Party began, and joined it shortly after its formation. In those early days, we didn't care if our candidates were elected to office. Our goal was to educate people. We knew that as we succeeded, and our ideas gained in popularity, they'd be pirated by the major parties. However, we didn't care if the other parties got credit for our ideas, just so long as it was our ideas that solved the problems. We were the party of principle.

Gradually, the Libertarian Party lost its purity of principle. Libertarians began to apologize for their principles and lose sight of their original goals. Expediency began to supersede principle. I saw many examples over the years, and complained about some of them. The most recent example to come to my attention appeared in the article *Toward A Libertarian World*,¹ by Mark Hinkle.

Mr. Hinkle began his article, "As always, I'll begin by restating our primary goals for 1998... 1. Build our ranks to 7,000 dues paying members; 2. Build our pledge program to generate \$6,000 per month; 3. Maintain ballot status." Mr. Hinkle has enumerated some of the necessary mechanics of running a party but inappropriately elevated them to the status of party goals. Libertarian goals should be things like trying to abolish mandatory drug testing, disarm the SWAT teams, or oppose the escalating national ID system. Raising money and boosting membership are appropriate support functions, but they are not "primary goals". This failure to understand the difference between logistics and objectives is a good example of why the Libertarian Party continues to be such a failure at solving the problems it was originally intended to address. ¶

¹ *LPC Monthly*, The Official Newsletter of the Libertarian Party of California, Nov./Dec. 1998, page 4

License to What?

Sam Aurelius Milam III

Several years ago, I observed the situation of a young lady who went into the Kaiser hospital in Santa Clara, California, to have a baby. During her few days there, every possible attempt was made to prevent her from smoking. Although she had smoked like a chimney during her entire pregnancy and fully intended to keep doing so after the delivery, the nurses couldn't stop whining about the horrible consequences that smoking would cause for her baby. They seemed to be too stupid to realize that, compared to the long-term situation, a few days of enforced abstinence wouldn't matter. However, I don't believe that they were stupid. I believe that they were arrogant. They had this lady under their control and they took full advantage of the opportunity to impose their beliefs upon her. The fact is that they weren't behaving as nurses, but as evangelists on a Holy Crusade.

I know of another, more recent example of the same kind of thing. An acquaintance of mine, a man who drinks a lot of beer, was recently in the hospital for pneumonia. Predictably, he was prohibited from drinking beer while in the hospital. Predictably, he was drinking again shortly after his release. So far as I can tell the only consequence of the prohibition was to add to his already difficult hospitalization the additional strain of temporary withdrawal from alcohol. It was another example of medical evangelism instead of medical treatment. I understand that some medicine reacts adversely with alcohol. In that case, the doctor should be sufficiently astute to avoid prescribing such medicine to an alcoholic. If he isn't, then he shouldn't be prescribing medicine. ¶

Regardless of his alleged superior knowledge, a doctor should never give a patient orders. He should give advice. A nurse should never enforce discipline. She should offer treatment and comfort. A medical license is a license to offer aid and assistance, not a license to impose belief systems or dictate behavior. ¶

Sad But True

compiled by Jeffrey Trunzer
from actual news reports

Bridgeport, Connecticut, and the unified Miami-Dade County government in Florida recently joined the growing ranks of local governments announcing they will sue gun makers in an attempt to recover the costs of gun violence.

Auto makers beware! You'll soon be reimbursing cities for the costs of high speed chases by cops, drive-by shootings, bent road signs, or any other "misuse" of a car, because you didn't control the resale of used cars.

—editor

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sam

Perhaps there is a loss of wealth in lending. But in a society lacking other safeguards against homelessness for those down on the dough, to make shutting the banks an absolute, neglects concern for human welfare. If one accepts banking as a necessary, perhaps temporary evil, it is preferable that the government do it, as an (at least for now) needed service, rather than having private parasites use it to squeeze personal profit out of the needs of others, perhaps, as you say, at a net loss to everyone.

Aristotle defined form of government according to number of rulers: one — monarchy; the few — oligarchy; the many — democracy. Plato defined form of government according to which class ruled (implying economic system): aristocracy — Plato used this term for his ideal State, ruled by intellectuals; timocracy — military rule (fascism); oligarchy — rule by the merchants & bankers (bourgeois, middle-class, plutocracy, capitalism); democracy — rule by the working majority; tyranny — rule by a tyrant, often a former demagogue under democracy, like Julius Caesar. Plato's classifications seem to me more useful than Aristotle's & their "scientific" predictive character is demonstrated by the fact that Caesar's (& Hitler's) career could be predicted in the Republic. Dictatorship & despotism imply tyranny only from the democratic point of view. The ancients & Voltaire & communism believed in benevolent dictatorship or enlightened despotism — e.g. Pericles, Trajan, Frederick the Great, Lenin. The idea that representative democracy is not democracy but oligarchy is an illusion, & a confusion of terms. The Athenians had more plebiscites & referendums than the US does, but they did elect politicians to manage the state on a daily basis. If the US is an oligarchy, it's because the billionaire merchants

control the government behind the scenes. But I agree with your central idea that what is important is the behavior of the government. We must struggle to transform the government to serve rather than oppress people.

Sincerely, —Elliot; N. Merrick, New York

Democracy exists when the masses make the political decisions. Oligarchy exists when the privileged few do so. The oligarchs may be elected in the USA, but they're oligarchs just the same.

—editor
Dear Editor,

I must disagree with your Fantasy Machine article regarding your First and Second laws of Economics.

The First law example of the grocery store purchase explains that the inherent (?) value of groceries in equivalent units (?) is less than the inherent value of the money used to purchase the groceries.

In fact, the purchaser of the groceries must value the groceries more than the purchase money. Why else would purchaser buy the groceries? And the seller of the groceries must value the purchase money more than the groceries. Why else would the seller offer the groceries for sale?

The voluntary purchase of groceries (or any voluntary transaction) is a win-win situation for both parties and each party exchanges something for more value than he is giving up. Both parties have exchanged something for higher value.

An observer to the transaction may feel that the groceries are worth less or more than the purchase money, but--so what. A woman paid thousands of dollars for Elvis Presley's fingernail clip-pings. I may not agree with her, but again, so what! There is no such thing as "value in equivalent units."

All voluntary transactions take place because each party exchanges something for more value.

—Bob; Lee's Summit, Missouri

I believe that it's possible to directly and accurately compare the value of different commodities. The trick is to understand value objectively instead of subjectively. That means we must distinguish between the actual value of something and how desirable or useful it is to us. In the car example, where I've used energy as analogous to value, there is less energy in the speed of the car than there was in the gasoline. The reason the driver accepts the loss of energy in the process is that the smaller amount of energy in the speed is more useful to him than the larger amount of energy in the gasoline. In your example, the value of the fingernail

clippings was probably less than the value of the money the lady paid for them. She was willing to accept the loss in value because the fingernail clippings were more desirable to her than the money. Generally, what you buy isn't greater in objective value than what you pay for it. It is only more useful or desirable to you. If you measure value objectively, then even a win-win transaction doesn't result in each party receiving more value than he gives. That would create value out of nothing. What actually happens is that each party receives something that is more useful or desirable to him, but probably of less objective value than what he traded for it.

In the grocery store example, the value of the customer's money must pay for much more than the food he buys. It must also pay for the total cost of transferring the food from the producer to the shopping cart. This is necessary because the customer's money is the only place that the people accomplishing the transfer can get the value that is represented by their pay checks. Except when food is improved by some form of processing, it's value is never more than it was when the producer sold it, yet its cost goes up at each step of the transfer process. If the customer wants the value of the food he buys to be approximately equal to the value of the money that he pays for the it, then he must buy the food directly from the producer.

I believe that there is such a thing as objective value, or value in equivalent units, as you called it. We just haven't figured out how to measure it. If we use an objective unit of measure, instead of dollars, that measurement might not be as difficult as it seems. If we do learn how to precisely compare the values of different things using a unit of measure that is constant from time to time and place to place, then we will have transformed economics from legerdemain into science. —editor

Dear Sam

.... Are you enjoying the "comic tragedy" as much as I am? I guess that the 130 or so who were convicted of "perjury" will be filing their H/C [habeas corpus] writs as soon as the "trial" is over?! —Eric; Tehachapi, California

I presume that you refer to the impeachment situation. I haven't printed much about it in this newsletter, but here's my opinion. I believe Clinton didn't owe the citizens an apology at all. There's nothing in his oath of office about marital fidelity. The marital contract is a separate agreement and it's between him and Hillary, not between him and the citizens. Hillary is the only person to whom an apology might have been due,

and we don't even know that for sure. Maybe she knew about Monica, and didn't object. Maybe they have an open marriage. It wasn't anybody's business except theirs, which Clinton correctly stated in his first coerced "apology". The level of puritan venom directed at him by self-righteous critics is far more a condemnation of the critics than it is of Clinton. I doubt if there's a man among us (or them) who hasn't had an occasional affair, or who hasn't wanted to have one, and who wouldn't have done the same thing Clinton did if he thought he could get away with it. I've had a number of affairs and I don't intend to apologize for any of them. Therefore, I won't criticize Clinton for having an affair. That's Hillary's job, if anybody's.

The argument that an "elected official" should have a higher ethical standard than the citizens is just another way of saying that the citizens should have a lower ethical standard than the elected officials. That's a cop-out for self-righteous citizens, and it's absurd. Since the officials are drawn from among the pool of citizens, you have to expect the officials to have the same standards as the citizens.

Our "culture" has assumed such a malicious condemnation of sexual pleasure that no politician in his right mind would admit to having an affair. I'm amazed that Bob Livingston did. If you make it plain that all witches will be slowly burned at the stake, then ask a man if he's a witch, you have to expect him to deny being a witch. It was naive of anyone to expect Clinton to admit to an affair.

As the sorry situation developed, I didn't see anybody lambasting the feminists for being too stupid to foresee the predictable consequences of forcing men and women together in the same workplace. I've been proclaiming those consequences for years. All I got for my trouble was to be accused of hating women. I didn't see anybody lambasting the Holier-Than-Thou Fundamentalist Christians for proclaiming sexual pleasure to be a filthy perversion. Has this mess taught members of either group anything about normal sexual behavior or about the consequences of sexually integrated workplaces? Don't bet on it. They're to blinded by their agendas to actually learn anything. The years-long barrage of escalating feminist and Fundamentalist Christian brainwashing that created the current repressive mindset never gets considered among the causes of things. The lunatic reformers just select another set of victims and launch another witch hunt. It's a fitting pastime only for hypocrites, evangelists, and fools.

—editor



Nation in Distress

Crime prevention is
more dangerous than crime.
Crime is a tool of
scoundrels.
Crime prevention is
a tool of government.



Buck Hunter Shoots Off His Mouth

Dear Buck

I just don't understand it. What causes
popcorn to pop? —Baffled

Dear Baffled
Heat.

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Funnies For You

Source unknown. Forwarded by Warren, of Pocatello, Idaho

The Interior Dept. is spending \$100,000 to train beagles to sniff out brown tree snakes in Hawaii. The snakes have destroyed a large number of bird species and cause power outages by crawling on to electrical transformers. Unfortunately, there aren't any brown tree snakes in Hawaii. They're in Guam. (The gov't. is also considering \$100,000 for mongooses to keep cobras out of North Dakota.)

During the 1980s, Defense Dept. efficiency experts saved between \$27 million and \$136 million each year. However, the efficiency experts work cost between \$150 million and \$300 million each year. (...efficiently conning the government!)

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—Sam Aurelius Milam III, editor