

Mark My Words: Prefatory Comments

A good many years ago, I was active in the Santa Clara County Libertarian Party, in northern California. Sometime during 1987 or 1988, I made the assertion, on the Liberty Bell electronic bulletin board, that a U.S. citizen is, in fact, a slave. A debate ensued. As the debate became increasingly heated, another local party member, Mark Hinkle, unexpectedly intervened and demanded that we should all “lighten up or else”. He hadn’t previously been involved in the debate and I was annoyed by his unexpected insertion of a vague threat. In response, I wrote the poem shown below, intending to send it to him. Some of my friends convinced me that I was overreacting, so I didn’t send the poem. In retrospect, I can see that my friends were wrong. I wasn’t overreacting. I should have sent the poem.

Subsequently, Hinkle continued to participate in the deterioration of The Libertarian Party. Eleven years later, I mentioned him in that regard in an article, [Principle Failure](#), on page 1 of the March 1999 issue of the *Frontiersman*. Twenty-seven years after the debate, I’m still trying to convince people that a U.S. citizen is, in fact, a slave. See my article [A Slave by Any Other Name](#), on page 3 of the May 2015 issue. Meanwhile, my poem languished in my files for almost 27 years, until I came across it recently, sometime during April of 2015.

If I’d gone ahead and objected to Hinkle’s authoritarian intrusion into our debate, back in 1988, then who knows how things might have turned out differently? A small nudge near the beginning can have an exaggerated effect, later.

It is easier to resist at the beginning than at the end.

—Leonardo da Vinci

However, I didn’t object. To this day, people are still struggling to maintain freedom in the use of the various electronic media. Other people are still trying to restrict that freedom. Thus, even after all of these years, both Hinkle’s behavior and my poem remain relevant.

—Sam Aurelius Milam III
Thursday, May 7, 2015

Mark My Words

Sam Aurelius Milam III
Thursday, May 19, 1988

Before you read another line, peruse another word,
Put on your hard hat. Do it now. The warning has occurred.

Before you read another word, peruse another verse,
I say again, put on the hat, for nothing could be worse

Than bringing into danger here an unprotected mind
Although I’d like to think we all possess the other kind.

But I was given once to know that such is not the case,
And felt compelled to leave a while, and write some other place.

But since we’re on the subject now, I might as well persist
And grind my axe and whet my claws and decline to desist.

So there I was intent upon the unending debate
Determinedly discoursing. I was really doing great!

I had a stable of opponents and supporters too,
And we just talked our asses off. We talked our faces blue!

But then one day, midst rhetoric and other forms of talk
A dreadful thing impeded me. It made me sort of balk

At further speech in Liberty Bell, that erstwhile wrestling ring.
A thing unheard of! At least I’d not heard of such a thing!

— continued —

Mark My Words (continued)

A Libertarian, a man who forswore fraud or force,
Apparently did not approve of our enraged discourse.

He told us we must lighten up, and then he laid his curse.
He said “or else!” I ask you now, could anything be worse?

In shock, I answered that I didn’t see compelling need
For threats or for restrictions and I added that, indeed,

I had believed the BBS was there for us to use.
Since we were there by choice, I thought that no one feared abuse.

I waited for an answer then, and I am waiting still.
I heard a ringing silence, though I listened with a will.

The silence rang in place of ringing bells of liberty.
And I admit I joined in its ignoble poverty.

But now I know the lesson that was hidden in the threat.
It’s there for all of us to see who haven’t seen it yet.

The threat was silence. That was it. He threatened to withdraw.
And waiting for his answer I was silenced, too, we saw.

To stop debate is worse than any other consequence
In an arena where to argue’s only common sense.

But now you have a hard hat place, so I am back again.
And here’s a place where I can heavy up and sink right in,

And rant and rave on liberty and wave my arms around,
And criticize those folks who want to give a little ground

To forces that oppress us just a little more each day.
If I should speak my mind and if the things that I might say

That I might think, that I believe, that I might advocate,
Just don’t sit right with someone else that I might aggravate.

Then heavy up! Go get your hat! You now have no excuse!
If you can’t take the heat in here, then stick to Dr. Seuss!