

## Abstain From Beans

With Commentary by Robert LeFevre

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Grocer John Roscoe, owner of the 102-store Northern California chain of Food & Liquor mini-markets began distributing grocery bags bearing the two commentaries shown below, before the 1988 elections. Customers grabbed up the bags as collector's items, mementos of an election that has turned off many voters.

Mr. Roscoe, who started the Benicia-based chain 28 years ago, said government has become "more and more coercive" since he went into business. "There's a lot less freedom than I had 30 years ago." He said he faces more regulation every time a city council meets. "I'm for more self-government." Roscoe claims he's a member of no political party and distrusts politicians in general. "I have greater faith in the American public than most politicians do," he said.

Mr. Roscoe received a stern letter from California Secretary of State March Fong Eu, condemning him for expressing his opinion.

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### On One Side of the Grocery Bags...

In ancient Athens, those who admired the Stoic philosophy of individualism took as their motto: "Abstain from Beans." The phrase had a precise reference. It meant: DON'T VOTE. Balloting in Athens occurred by dropping various colored beans into a receptacle.

To vote is to express a preference. There is nothing implicitly evil in choosing. All of us in the ordinary course of our daily lives vote for or against dozens of products and services. When we vote for (buy) any good or service, it follows that by salutary neglect we vote against the goods or services we do not choose to buy. The great merit of market place choosing is that no one is bound by any other persons selection. I may choose Brand X. But this cannot prevent you from choosing Brand Y.

When we place voting into the framework of politics, however, a major change occurs. When we express a preference politically, we do so precisely because we intend to bind others to our will. Political voting is the legal method we have adopted and extolled for obtaining monopolies of power.

Political voting is nothing more than the assumption that might makes right. There is a presumption that any decision wanted by the majority of those expressing a preference must be desirable, and the inference even goes so far as to presume that anyone who differs from a majority view is wrong or possibly immoral.

But history shows repeatedly the madness of crowds and the irrationality of majorities. The only conceivable merit relating to majority rule lies in the fact that if we obtain monopoly decisions by this process, we will coerce fewer persons than if we permit the minority to coerce the majority. But implicit in all political voting is the necessity to coerce some so that all are controlled. The direction taken by the control is academic. Control as a monopoly in the hands of the state is basic.

In times such as these, it is incumbent upon free men to reexamine their most cherished, long established beliefs. There is only one truly moral position for an honest person to take. He must refrain from coercing his fellows. This means that he should refuse to participate in the process by means of which some men obtain power over others. If you value your right to life, liberty, and property, then clearly there is every reason to refrain from participating in a process that is calculated to remove the life, liberty, or property from any other person. Voting is the method for obtaining legal power to coerce others.

### On The Other Side of the Grocery Bags...

Don't Vote. It Only Encourages Them! – If you want good things to happen in your community you'd better get out and do them yourself. Voting doesn't improve a situation. Hard work does. By voting you allow a politician to do whatever he wants to do. Then he says he did it because you told him to.

Do You make a Difference? – We doubt it. Politicians do whatever they want to do. Then they say "it's the will of the people." Experts think that 98% of the Senators and Representatives who run for reelection this year will win. Incumbents have enormous campaign funds, financed by special interests. Since most candidates and propositions win by thousands of votes, scholars speculate that people realize their vote won't make a difference. Maybe they vote for the entertainment value. They vote for the fairy tale; that we're all going to get something for nothing.

Why Elections Aren't In April – Elections are about money. Tax money. Your money. Politicians compete in order to spend it. It makes them powerful. It makes some of them rich. When you vote, you give them justification for spending your taxes. Politicians call it a "mandate." They always have enough mandate, but never enough money. Here's what they want to do: make you think they're going to spend more on you than you paid in taxes. Politicians want you to think you're going to get a free lunch.

There's No Free Lunches! – You can't get something for nothing. Think of what you want for your community. You want peace and prosperity. You want safe neighborhoods and good schools. You want to be protected. You can't buy those things, not for any amount of money. You can't get them by a speech, or a vote, or a law. Good things come from hard work. If you want good things to happen, you'd better do it yourself.

Voting Isn't Freedom – Some of you may write in and say that if we don't vote, we're against America. Or you'll suggest we go live in a communist country where we'd be forced to vote. If this country is really free, you must be able to abstain from voting. Free people don't have their lives dictated by the votes of their fellow citizens. Voting is the method the majority uses to tell the minority how it's going to be.

Might doesn't make right, we say. Don't vote! It only encourages politicians! Instead, think of some good things that need doing. Let's get out there and do them!