



FACTS & OPINIONS

On Public Interest Issues

Quotes

The urge to save humanity is almost always a false front for those who want to rule it.

– H.L. Mencken

I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty than to those attending too small a degree of it.

– Thomas Jefferson

The man who doesn't read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them.

– Mark Twain

The Daring Possibility of Freedom

(Courtesy of The American Spectator)

Quin Hillyer

In a free society, even TV news-talk hosts sometimes spout a little wisdom.

The other day on MSNBC, the inimitable Tucker Carlson was being berated by some guests who were incredulous that he could even think to oppose the health-insurance mandates that are central to the newest version of Hillarycare.

At first sounding almost apologetic, but by the last word sounding more firm about it, Carlson mounted what actually is the perfect defense. “Look,” he said, “I just happen to believe in freedom.”

Ah, yes, freedom. At my Episcopal grade school, we were accustomed to singing a guitar hymn in chapel whose refrain included these lines: “The thought it was so dear to me, the daring possibility, of freedom. (Oh, oh, freedom. Oh, oh, freedom. Oh, oh, oh.)”

Conservatives would do

well to remember that freedom is indeed a daring possibility, and our best defense against almost every big-government, nanny-state, Washington-knows-best scheme of the left. In one sense, it is the answer to all questions, the solution to almost all problems of statecraft, the ideal to which all other civic ideals must bow.

All too often, we conservatives get lost in the weeds of complex arguments and wonkish debates -- when all we really need to remember, both to better ground ourselves philosophically and to win political debates in the minds of the American voters, is that the theme is freedom.

Happily, veteran conservative journalist M. Stanton Evans wrote a gem of a book in 1994 by that very name: *The Theme Is Freedom*. In 323 well-researched, indeed quite scholarly,

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FACTS & OPINIONS

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President
Dr. Don Racheter

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Focus on Iowa Wesleyan College

Iowa Wesleyan College continues to grow and prosper. A total of 252 new students have enrolled for the 2007-2008 academic year -- a 7 percent increase from last year. The student body, which represents 25 different states and 22 countries, now totals 834. IWC has also added five new members to its faculty: Dr. Stewart James-Lejárcegui (Associate Professor of Spanish), Dr. Jeffrey Martinek, (Associate Professor of English) Dr. Lori Muntz, (Assistant Professor of English), Dr. Cynthia Walljasper (Assistant Professor of Psychology), and Brenda Jeffers (Assistant Professor of Nursing). The college is also proud to announce the addition of Tony Timm, who will be the Director of the Annual Fund, helping the college to meet its fund-raising goals.

In July, IWC hosted its third annual Summer Games University. The games, which brought in excess of 300 12-17 year-olds, offer youths an opportunity to participate and compete in various activities, build friendships, and be inspired through faith.

On 28 September, Dr. Joel Brown performed a

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What's New at Public Interest Institute?

Jon Miltimore

In August, Public Interest Institute staff travelled to Ames, IA to participate in the Iowa Straw Poll. While there, the Institute team dispersed organizational information and promoted the message in its mission statement: free markets, limited government, and individual liberty.

On 27 September, Research Analyst John Hendrickson traveled to Detroit, MI, to attend the Free Market Forum, a three day conference hosted by Hillsdale College that focused on the role of markets and governments in pursuit of the common good. Notable speakers and guests included Walter Williams, Professor of economics at George Mason University, Alan Reynolds of Cato Institute, John J. Miller of *National Review*, and Mary Anastasia O'Grady of the *Wall Street Journal*.

On 21 August Institute President Dr. Don Racheter traveled to Chicago to attend
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*Have you renewed your
membership with
Public Interest
Institute?*

Diversity's Dark Side

John Luik

For at least the last twenty years the cultural and political elites of the United States have championed the cause of multiculturalism by claiming that diversity was something that made all of us better. Little effort was ever made to define precisely just what was meant by diversity, difference, or most crucially “better.” Nor was there any significant research that provided empirical support for the claim that multiculturalism and diversity translated into better people, better communities, better organizations and businesses, or a better country.

But now a considerable amount of solid evidence about multiculturalism is in, and it suggests that far from something positive, it is a corroding and corrupting influence on just about everything that it comes in contact with, from social capital, trust, and community spirit to altruism, volunteering, friendship, and even happiness.

That’s the startling conclusion from Harvard’s Robert Putnam, best known as the author of *Bowling Alone*. According to Putnam a variety of research from the United

“...now a considerable amount of solid evidence about multiculturalism is in, and it suggests that far from something positive, it is a corroding and corrupting influence on just about everything that it comes in contact with...”

States, Canada, Australia, and Europe shows that ethnic diversity is associated with lower social trust, lower “investment in public goods,” less reciprocity, and less willingness to contribute to the community. In workplace situations diversity is associated with “lower group cohesion, lower satisfaction, and higher turnover.”

Putnam’s own research in the United States confirms this international picture. In the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey carried out in 41 U.S. communities ranging from Bismarck, North Dakota to Boston and involving 30,000 individuals, Putnam found that the “more ethnically diverse

the people we live around, the less we trust them.” This translates into nine particularly troubling behaviors, including reduced confidence in government and in one’s ability to influence politics, reduced voter registration and interest in social change, lowered expectations about the willingness of others to work together cooperatively, less charitable giving and volunteering, fewer close friends, a reduced quality of life and more time spent watching television. Indeed, one could hardly come up with a list of behaviors more likely to undermine democratic society.

But the consequences of the multicultural diversity extend beyond its effect on social and community engagement. For instance, criminologists have found that effective community policing is much more difficult in areas with increased ethnic diversity.

Of course it is open to defenders of multiculturalism to argue that Putnam’s findings are skewed by the fact that poverty, crime, and diversity are themselves interconnected, making causal conclusions difficult. But Putnam’s research shows that even in comparing

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The Daring Possibility of Freedom

Quin Hillyer

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pages, Evans traced the development of the idea of political freedom through the past several millennia, and convincingly demonstrated three notions. First, freedom is the quintessential American political value. (Not equality, not diversity, and not any number of other trendy concepts.) Second, freedom properly defined cannot exist without firm, and firmly enforced, limitations on governmental power and scope. Third, and most controversially, the American ideals of freedom not only are not at odds with organized Judeo-Christian religion, but actually sprang directly from those religious traditions and depend on those traditions to survive and thrive.

(Before we continue, here's a caveat: The notion of freedom and faith as mutually supportive rather than antagonistic is "controversial" only in the sense that our major media mavens and academicians are so convinced otherwise. The mutual supportiveness of freedom and faith should not be at all controversial to conservatives, however, but rather self-

evident. As Evans put it, "the oft-stated conflict between traditional values and libertarian practice in our politics is... an illusion.")

Western faith put limits on the state by insisting that there is a power higher than the state. The feudal lords (and bishops, archbishops) who forced the king to agree to the Magna Carta couched all that charter's rights in the language and traditions of their faith. The Reformation Era debates between Martin Luther and (for instance) Erasmus were all about the "Freedom of a Christian" (to cite the name of one of Luther's most famous essays) -- not whether a Christian enjoys freedom, by the grace of God, but in what way that freedom should be understood.

As Evans traced the history of Western freedom as part and parcel of the development of Western faith, he noted that "taken as a whole, this history tracks a series of ever-narrowing and more definite limits on the reach of secular power -- of which the American Constitution is (or was) the ultimate expression."

The American people do not need a scholarly exposition of all this to be able to feel, in their bones, that freedom is their most valued heritage. If awakened from their torpor (and from their consumerist mentality), the American people still will rally to freedom's cause every time they are clearly asked to do so. They merely need to be

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reminded from time to time that their freedom becomes more limited every time the state expands. If freedom is to be preserved, Evans reminds us, "whatever increases the size of the Leviathan should be prevented."

As it so happened, Evans was writing the book just when Hillary Rodham Clinton was trying to foist her first monstrous version of "health care reform" onto the American public. As Evans wrote then: "Connect the dots, and the resulting picture is quite familiar: we are being asked to adopt the style of top-down rule that proved calamitous for Eastern Europe." He also wrote that "zealots with plans for making over the world by fiat are a deadly menace, and should be resisted wherever they show themselves, on whatever pretext.... Problems

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The Daring Possibility of Freedom

Quin Hillyer

are inherent in any collectivist regime. In this respect at least it doesn't seem to matter whether the planners are psychotic tyrants or mild-mannered civil servants; the trouble is built into the nature of the system."

Stan Evans is right -- not just about Hillarycare (which this essay isn't really about, except insofar as it provides a current example of the battleground), but about the centrality of freedom itself to our political heritage and mission. Freedom, ensured by limits against government interference (including in economic matters), must ever remain our byword and our guiding star. An outgrowth of our historical religious faith, it is the prime component of our civic faith as well.

That's why, whether we are pushing for proactive policies (personal savings accounts, for instance) or defending against the threatened encroachments of risky schemes such as Hillarycare, the best answer isn't some defensive proclamation that we really aren't bad guys; and it's not a long-winded discussion of the merits and demerits of particular programs. Instead,
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Facts & Opinions Question of the Quarter:

Should the Legislature restructure
Iowa's income tax system?

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We may publish some of your ideas in the next issue
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Diversity's Dark Side

John Luik

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equally poor and equally crime-infested neighborhoods the outcome is the same "greater ethnic diversity is associated with less trust in neighbors."

Putnam's findings should not come as a surprise. For instance, studies from business, which has been one of diversity's greatest champions, have shown that diversity produced few if any positive effects on business performance. One major study even concluded that industry should move beyond trying to build a business case for the benefits of diversity and multiculturalism, since there was no empirical evidence to support such a case.

In part this is due to the fact that homogeneous teams tend to outperform diverse groups because diverse

groups often suffer from communication and process problems. As psychologists Katherine Williams and Charles O'Reilly have noted "The preponderance of empirical evidence suggests that diversity is most likely to impede group functioning."

As a champion of multicultural diversity, Putnam finds his results disturbing and has been reluctant to publish them. The only place to find them is in a speech reprinted in the academic journal *Scandinavian Political Studies*. And even there the data is not provided, only summarized. Putnam told the *Financial Times* that he "had delayed publishing his results until he could develop proposals to compensate for the negative effects of diversity."

John Luik, a former Rhodes Scholar, is a writer and consultant.

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Defining Conservatism

Jon Miltimore

It would not be unfair to suggest that the conservative movement is at a crossroads. Following the conservative revolution of '94 and the GOP triumphs of 2000 and 2004, optimism percolated among enthusiastic conservatives who anticipated the dawning of a new era, a U-turn from our seemingly inevitable journey down the road toward collectivism and serfdom. Yet as we approach the twilight of 2007 the conservative revolution has sputtered and disillusioned conservatives have relatively few achievements to point to.

The size of the federal government has ballooned, as has spending. Where conservatives once talked about eliminating bureaucracies like the Department of Education, many right wing policy wonks now discuss how we can more effectively administer our schools from Washington, D.C. Instead of addressing the \$50 trillion (yes, you read that right) unfunded liability, the government has added a new prescription drug entitlement.

All of this, mind you, has occurred on the watch of the Republican party -- which is widely considered the "conservative party." Yet when it came to packing bills with

unnecessary and expensive earmarks, the GOP proved as adept (and corrupt) as the Democratic party. It seems that the sentiment is bipartisan: the federal government is simply a massive dispenser of goodies. It is the era of "big government conservatism."

Yet there are those who would contend (and I consider myself among them) that the ideas "big government" and conservatism are antithetical. And this begs the question: what is conservatism? There is no single answer to this question, but it is worthwhile to probe the characteristics that define a conservative:

- 1) Conservatives maintain a healthy skepticism of the competence, sincerity, and usefulness of government as it becomes further removed from the people. Historically, the state has more often been a source of corruption and oppression than virtue and benevolence. Hence, a federal government with narrowly defined and specific powers (which can be expanded or curtailed through constitutional amendment) is ideal to conservatives.
- 2) Conservatives bear in mind that government, being by its implicit nature a tool of coercion, is a body more deserved of circumspection than veneration. Government should be regarded as an unfortunate necessity; it is not to be too much loved.
- 3) Contrary to popular belief,

"Yet there are those who would contend that the ideas 'big government' and conservatism are antithetical. And this begs the question: what is conservatism?"

conservatives are tolerant of others and less dogmatic than liberals. Conservatives understand that political and ethical homogeneity is neither practical nor desirable and recognize that federalism (not judicial fiat) is the appropriate mode to address diversities in custom, religion, culture, and taste. Uniformity is not essential and should not be compulsory, especially when addressing volatile social or religious issues. As Robert Frost once said, "I am against political homogeneity because I want the cream to rise."

4) Conservatives actually love equality more than liberals. They maintain, however, that the idea of "equality" has changed from the time of the Framers. Conservatives believe that equality means that the law applies equally to all persons. Today, equality tends to mean equality of outcome. When we hear "inequality" we understand this means,

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not inequality before law, but that some people have more material wealth than others. Conservatives neither applaud nor condemn these disparities in wealth, believing they are a natural product of a free society.

5) Conservatives tend to favor liberty over equality of outcome. This is not attributable to some vestigial hostility to equality, but rather to doubts as to the [notably federal] government's ability and prerogative to correct disparities in wealth. Conservatives reject the Marxist notion that we are defined by material and a perpetual struggle exists between "the haves" (bourgeoisie) and "have nots" (proletariat). The dream of absolute material equality is considered facile by conservatives.

6) Conservatives tend to be cynical of social and economic engineering proposals that allege to vastly improve the populace or human condition. This would include highly ambitious projects such as "nation building."

7) Conservatives are skeptical of the notion that history is, by definition, progressive. Change is not anathema

to conservatives, but it is something to be wary of and is certainly not an end in itself. Conservatives believe that the ideas, establishments, and customs of those who came before them should not be precipitously abandoned for newer models simply because they are fashionable.

8) Conservatives tend to believe that humans are inherently flawed creatures that exist in a universe governed by a Higher Order or a natural law. They are highly skeptical of the notion of the perfection of man or the human condition. Because government is an apparatus driven by flawed creatures, conservatives believe the state will be similarly imperfect and possess many of the same defects.

9) Conservatives possess a healthy and robust respect for culture. They do not reject multiculturalism; they simply understand that ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural diversity creates challenges that are better addressed than ignored.

10) Conservatives tend to embrace private competition and choice over government solutions to problems, believing that people acting in self interest will apply resources to problems efficiently and effectively. Harnessing the human

proclivity to enhance one's own condition is, in the mind of conservatives, a more effective method of problem solving than top-down control systems. In essence, conservatives trust markets (free choice of contracts between human beings) and freedom more than bureaucracies and force.

For conservatives, the road out of the political wilderness is not long, arduous, or thorny. It can be found, not in some grand and ambitious policy proposal, but by recalling the most basic and fundamental tenet of conservatism, articulated effectively by Ronald Reagan: "Government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem."

Government is power and power is a seductive mistress. Good intentions and noble sentiments will be of small value when the oppressor's hand strips one's freedoms. As George Washington once said, "Government is not reason; it is not eloquent; it is force. Like fire it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master." Conservatives would do well to recall this.

Jon Miltimore is a Research Analyst at Public Interest Institute.

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Focus on Iowa Wesleyan College

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piano recital in the Chapel Auditorium, covering such celebrated artists as Bach, Schubert, and Ravel. The event honored the refurbishing of the college's Steinway Piano.

Finally, IWC is proud to announce setting a new fund-raising record during the 2006-2007 FY. Aided by the Howe Foundation Challenge, the college was able to raise \$6,354,980.08. The Challenge matches, to the penny, qualified contributions ranging from \$250 to \$1 million.

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What's New at Public Interest Institute?

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a Pre-Law Advisor's workshop hosted by the American Political Science Association. The following month, Dr. Racheter was in St. Louis attending a conference hosted by the Foundation on Economic Education. The emphasis of the conference was economic freedom. Keynote speakers were Dr. Anna Ebeling, Dr. Richard Ebeling, Sheldon Richman, and Geoffrey Lea.

Jon Miltimore is a Research Analyst at Public Interest Institute.

The Daring Possibility of Freedom

Quin Hillyer

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the best answer is the one Tucker Carlson stumbled on: Our theme is freedom; we're on freedom's side; and freedom is the side that is most practical, most moral, and most just.

Quin Hillyer is a senior editor of The American Spectator.

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