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The Importance of the Marketplace of Ideas, In Both War and Peace

by Richard M. Ebeling

The following is a transcript of a speech given at The Future of Freedom Foundation's June 2007 conference, "Restoring the Republic: Foreign Policy & Civil Liberties" held in Reston, Virginia.

Jacob Hornberger: Okay, we're set to get started. A couple of administrative announcements. On the schedule tonight, there's the cocktail hour for the speakers and the silver and gold sponsors at 9:00, but we're going to move that up to 8:00. So that will be from 8:00 to 9:00 in the same room, 1118, as last night. Also, there's a great concert out here in the pavilion of Reston Town Center on Saturday nights. They have live music. It's a really nice event out there, so that's something you might want to consider attending tonight. I think that's it for the administrative announcements.

Our first speaker today is Richard Ebeling. He is the president of the Foundation for Economic Education, but more important from our perspective, he's formerly the vice president for academic affairs for the Future of Freedom Foundation, where he was writing articles for us from the very inception. In fact, FFF would not be where it is today without Richard Ebeling's participation for some 12 years or so. For many years, he served as the Ludwig von Mises professor of economics at Hillsdale College, where he also served as head of the economics department.

I'll share with you half of the story as to when I met Richard, and then I'll let him tell you the other half of the story. When I was living in Dallas, I approached the head of the economics department there, Sam Bostaph, who's actually attending the conference, and I said, "Sam, I'd like to hire you to tutor me in Austrian economics." So we started with Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and we went chapter by chapter where Sam tutored me in *Wealth of Nations* and then

Ricardo's *Principles* and John Stuart Mill. And we ended up finishing Menger's *Principles of Economics*. And at that point, he says, "Well, as much as I like getting paid for this, I in good conscience have to turn you over to this guy that I just hired here in the economics department, because there is no one that knows more about Austrian economics of your age group than Richard Ebeling, the guy I just hired." So at that point, he turned me over to Richard, and we did a chapter by chapter analysis of *Human Action*. So it was a great thing. I got a really solid foundation in economics and Austrian economics from both Sam and Richard, and we've been friends ever since. The title of Richard's talk is "The Importance of the Marketplace Ideas in Both War and Peace." Richard Ebeling.

Richard Ebeling: Not long ago, Senator Hillary Clinton was driving through Washington, D.C. and she came across one of the bridges going over the Potomac. Her car went out of control, careened through the railing and into the water below.

Richard Ebeling: I like the crowd already. As the car sank into the water, three young boys were on the shore fishing, and seeing this, pulled off their shoes and took off their jackets and dove into the water. They went below the surface, were able to get her out of the car and bring her to shore. As Hillary revived consciousness and oriented herself, she looked at these three young boys and said, "I bet you don't know whose life you just saved. I am Senator Hillary Clinton of the State of New York, and I can't tell you how thankful and grateful I am. In fact, to let you know how thankful and grateful I am, I will see that each and every one of you gets that which you most want. What is the little dream, boys, that you have?"

The first little boy said to her, "Well, Senator Clinton, I've always wanted to go to Disney World." "No problem. When I get back to my office, I will see that my chief of staff arranges that you and your entire family will have a week's vacation in Orlando, all expenses paid, at my expense, to Disney World." She turned to the second little boy, and she said, "Well, what would you like?" And the second boy said, "Senator Clinton, I'd like a new bicycle." "No problem. When I get back to my office, my chief of staff will go on the Internet and see that you are bought the best, the finest, the most excellent ten-speed bicycle on the market at my expense." She turned to the third boy and said, "What would you like?" "Well, Senator Clinton, I actually would like an electric wheelchair." "An electric wheelchair? Why would you want an electric wheelchair? You look fine." "Yes, but when I get home and I tell my father whose life I saved, he's going to break every bone of my body."

Richard Ebeling: I have others, but we're being taped. I had to keep it proper. It is a pleasure to be here, and it's a special pleasure to be participating in a conference being put on by the Future of Freedom Foundation. As Bumper mentioned, we worked and collaborated from the start of FFF. He mentioned that we met in Dallas, Texas, and that's true. Sam Bostaph, who is the head of the economics department at the University of Dallas in Irving, Texas, had recently hired me

to be one of the professors in the department. He had told me that he had been tutoring this lawyer in Dallas named Bumper, Bumper Hornberger, and had gone through Smith and Ricardo and John Stuart Mill and Menger, and he had recommended that Bumper have me tutor him in Mises's *Human Action*.

Well at first I was very reluctant to do this. I had just come on to this new job in the economics department. I had been assigned classes by Sam, some of which I had not taught before, and there would be the time required of me to do my thorough and proper lesson plan preparation. But then Bumper came by and talked with me, and he told me the fee he'd be willing to pay to tutor him. So I couldn't resist this, as a supplement to the salary Sam had offered me, and so I decided to take on the job. Now at first, I was very diligent. We were going to go through *Human Action* chapter by chapter. I carefully, before our weekly meetings, would read through the chapter again. I would make a little outline for myself so I could go through the points for us to discuss.

But I soon realized after a couple of sessions that I didn't have to do any of this, because while the sessions for the first 10 or 15 minutes would focus on Mises's ideas, the discussion would soon, and the conversation would soon, get deflected into Bumper just wanting to ask me general libertarian questions: "Where do you stand on this, and why do you hold these beliefs? Are you sure you don't leak on here? Are you sure you're consistent there?" Even more, when we would finish these sessions, he would say, "Let's go to lunch," and he paid. Now this went on for a couple of years. And then he suddenly comes in and announces that he's leaving Dallas, that he's been offered the job as director of programs and seminars at the Foundation for Economic Education. I was heartbroken. I was getting good pay for no work and a free lunch.

Richard Ebeling: But soon after his move to FEE, in that role as director of seminars, he in fact started inviting me to be among the summer lecturers. That continued for another two years. And when Bumper decided to leave FEE and found FFF, he called me up one day and he said what he had in mind. He said, "How about being the vice president for academic affairs, and begin this new foundation with this publication, *Freedom Daily*?" Now early on, we decided that we were going to take the most principled, consistent, and uncompromising position we could on every issue that we decided to handle. But we soon realized that in doing this, we would be pushing away these people and those people, precisely because of our unwillingness to waffle or compromise, or sort of be inconsistent. We realized that very soon, it might very well be that only Bumper and I were the readers of *Freedom Daily*. I looked at him and said, "And I'll work hard to get rid of you too."

But I enjoyed, and highly value still, my collaboration with Bumper. We worked there from the beginning of 1990, January of 1990 was the first issue of *Freedom Daily*, through the last issue I contributed in *Freedom Daily*, which was the September 2003 issue of *Freedom Daily*, just a few

months after I had taken the job as the president of the Foundation for Economic Education. I consider that the work that he does at FFF and we do at FEE to be complementary efforts in the vineyard of liberty.

In 1951, the founder and first president of the Foundation for Economic Education, Leonard E. Read, published a pamphlet called *Conscience on the Battlefield*. It imagines a young American soldier dying on a battlefield during the Korean War, who enters into a final exchange of ideas with his own conscience in the moments just before his last breath. His conscience challenges him to explain what has brought him to this ending of his life. Why is he in Korea? Who is his enemy? By what rationale has he killed others so far away from home? Can he really expect to avoid responsibility for his actions by claiming that he was ordered there by his government, and merely did what those in command told him to do? In this dying man's dialog with his conscience, he finally comes to see the nature of moral responsibility, the fallacy in trying to make over other parts of the world in his own government's image, and the irrationality of using collectivist and statist methods to oppose collectivism in other parts of the globe. As the last flicker of life leaves his body, this dying soldier says to himself, "Why did I not think of these ideas and their meaning? Why did I not think?"

When Leonard Read wrote *Conscience on the Battlefield* in early 1951, Americans were not yet war-weary over the conflict in Korea. U.S. forces had only just been pushed back to the 38th parallel by Chinese communist armies, after what had seemed like the successful liberation of North Korea, just a few months earlier under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur. Leonard Read and the Foundation for Economic Education came in for significant criticism from many of its supporters for publishing this pamphlet. The criticism and loss of financial support only increased after FEE published another pamphlet, also in 1951, this one entitled *In Search of Peace* by another foundation staff member, F.A. Harper, who went on years later to found the Institute for Humane Studies. Harper challenged the premises of an interventionist foreign policy and explained why foreign interventionism threatens the liberty and the prosperity of the country that sets out to make the world over through political and military force.

Even in the face of the loss of donor dollars, Leonard Read and the other staff members at FEE were not willing to compromise their consciences or their principles in making the case for freedom and the warning of the dangers from American involvement in foreign wars. FEE weathered this storm, and as Brian Doherty has emphasized in his recent book, *Radicals for Capitalism*, for the 25 years after the end of the Second World War, FEE stood virtually alone as one of the beacons of liberty to educate and inspire a new generation of classical liberals and libertarians who then became thinkers and advocates, including Bumper and myself.

The fact is that whenever war comes, one of the first results is the attempt to close off all further debates and criticism of foreign policy. It is usually said that criticisms and doubts may have

been all very well and good before the conflict started. But once the battle has been joined, all must show solidarity now that our boys are in harm's way. Every "real" American must stand behind the government and our fighting men in the field. Nothing must be done to undermine their morale and the goal of victory, so that they may be brought home in the shortest time with the fewest casualties. My country, right or wrong, now that the nation is at war and facing unknown perils. Let me suggest, however, that at just such times, doubts and criticisms of American foreign policy are most needed.

Richard Ebeling: War invariably brings a lexicon and an imagery of a world divided between two parts: good and evil, right and wrong, them and us. Brutalities and cruelties committed by our side are swept under the rug or rationalized as unfortunate tragedies and inevitabilities of war. And every action by "the enemy" is demonized as justification for anything that we have to do to bring the war to a victorious end. War does bring in its wake terrible barbarities and cruelties. And precisely because it does so, the eye and voice of criticism must be turned on it, and not only when the battle may have been won, and the conflict has passed into history.

It is during the course of the war that its designers and implementers must be held accountable for their actions, while there is time to minimize, if not prevent, some of the death and destruction that goes euphemistically under the sanitized phrase "collateral damage." It is also precisely during war that the citizenry must remind the government that its function is to protect the lives, liberty, and property of the people. Government must be prevented from using the cover of war and national emergency to expand its own powers of intrusion and control over the people whose freedom it is meant to guard. Ultimately, the greatest long-run threat to the freedom of any people is its own government, which possesses the legitimized right to use force and the threat of force against them in its own territory.

If history has taught anything, it is that once freedoms have been lost by a people, regaining those lost freedoms from their own government is no easy task. The first duty therefore is to prevent those freedoms from being taken away. Thus, when war comes, no one who values freedom at home and wishes to minimize harm done to the innocent abroad should allow himself to stand mute when the flag is waved in front of him. Indeed, all who cherish what the flag was originally meant to represent must take the individual responsibility to remind their fellow citizens and their government that it is the protection of liberty and the respect for human life that must be the guide in all that the political authority presumes to do. To speak out in such a manner is the highest form of patriotism in a free society...

Richard Ebeling: ...because it is motivated by the desire to see that even in the heat of battle and the trauma of war, we expect our own government and ourselves to act in ways consistent with the principles of liberty on which this country was originally founded.

So what are we to tell our fellow Americans? Well, let me speak for myself. As an advocate of individual freedom, I consider all forms of government interference in people's lives, other than those minimally essential for the protection of life, liberty, and property, to be morally wrong, politically harmful, and economically counterproductive.

As part of that political philosophy, I believe that the government of the United States should no more intervene in the internal affairs of other countries than in the personal, peaceful, and voluntary affairs of its own citizens at home. Many of our fellow Americans follow courses of action in their own lives that I consider stupid, immoral, and harmful. But I also feel strongly that it would be morally wrong and pragmatically counterproductive to force my fellow countrymen to follow the courses of action that I consider to be wiser and richer for them.

Either every man must be protected and respected as a free agent in his own affairs, or we run the risk of degenerating into a society of coercing meddlers, each with his own banner of right living, each trying to use the political power of the state to make his fellow citizens bend to our own respective visions of a good, proper, and virtuous life. Society becomes a war of all against all, as individuals sharing similar conceptions of the good living form coalitions for strength and the struggle for votes, influence, and control of the state's authority to use force. But men being what they are, even when they begin as pure-at-heart true believers only wishing to use the state for the good of others, as they conceive that good, soon they are taken over by the dark side of the Force.

It is 30 years since the beginning of *Star Wars*. The wielding of power over others becomes an aphrodisiac, a high stronger than any narcotic. And besides having political power, it also has its use for material gain, both for oneself and for those with whom one is in coalition for power. Few have been able to resist these temptations over the ages. Even when the first generation of such coercing meddlers coming to power remained fairly uncorrupted by the opportunities for gain, their heirs in acquiring the reins of political authority have tended to have fewer inhibitions in resisting these temptations.

Furthermore, coercion can never ultimately be a means for making men good or virtuous. Force can control men's behavior, it can prohibit them from doing certain things and command them to do others under the threat of the use of various psychological and physical punishments, but this does not make these actions moral or virtuous. An act is moral or virtuous only by virtue of being the free choice of a human being who in principle could have done the opposite. Morality and virtue are in the minds and the hearts of men, not in the control of their external conduct.

Imposed conformity is not morality. It is the denial of morality. By narrowing or abrogating the field in which a man and his actions may make up his own mind as to what is the right thing to do, the state removes the necessity to more conscientiously think and decide about what he

should do as a self-responsible human being. By denying him the freedom to choose in various corners of his life, the state frees the individual from being more responsible, fully, for his actions. When men are freed from responsibility for their actions, the conditions are created for the growth of a climate of amorality. "It's not my responsibility. I paid my taxes. I'm not accountable. I just obeyed orders."

In the free society, the only appropriate means for trying to change other people's conduct is through reason, persuasion, and example. The coerced man often harbors resentment and anger in his heart, both against the coercer and himself, because he did not have the courage to resist being made to do what he did not want. The free man, when he changes the things he does, due to the persuasion or example of others, feels gratitude and joy for having been shown a better purpose in life, or how to more successfully pursue his ends. When other men freely choose to change their behavior, due to our arguments or example, it is more likely therefore to represent an actual change of heart and mind. And that is how the world is ultimately changed, one person, one mind, one heart at a time, for good or evil.

Now men and governments in other countries have done, and continue to do, many evil things. They have killed, brutalized, tortured, and destroyed. In the 20th century, it was done on a scale that goes beyond our minds' ability to fully comprehend. They have shocked our conscience and made us doubt the existence of any humanity in the human being.

In a world of such conduct by others in other lands, it has been natural that many in America have wanted to do something, to come to the aid of those victimized by evil, and to stop evil from doing it any more. But similar to the pattern too often at home, people disturbed by the immoral acts of others abroad have turned to the state to right the wrongs occurring in foreign lands. They've wanted their government to intervene in the affairs of people in other countries, to oppose bad governments and evil men, and in their place foster good government and support better men. Rarely has this been successful in achieving the end desired. And even when the result in the short run has seemed better than what had been there before, the intervention often has had longer-run consequences, usually unintended consequences that have made new outcomes often similar to the ones the intervention was meant to cure.

But even when people oppressed by a tyrant have been liberated from their torment, the people freed frequently turn against their liberators. It begins to play on their pride that they were not able to free themselves. Also the liberating government is often not satisfied with merely eliminating the evil government. To justify the sacrifice by its own people in lives and money, to free those who have been living under foreign oppression, the liberating government wants to establish a new order of good government and honest politics in the foreign land.

But alas, good government and honest politics often have different meanings for the people in that foreign country. Customs, traditions, and other societal practices call for political institutions and methods of authority frequently quite different from what the liberating government's advisors view as the good or the better. Irritated and angry at the appearance of being told by the liberators how to live their lives and run their affairs in their own country, the people in that foreign land soon start wishing that the meddling Yankee, or the Limey Brit, or the French Frog, or the Russian Bear, would just go home.

And too often, the emotional reaction of being dictated to by the foreign power, who only yesterday was hailed as the great liberator, plays into the hands of the demagogue and the would-be new tyrant, to ride to power on the wave of antforeign sentiment. The military forces and civilian advisors of the liberating government soon find themselves the new targeted enemy of the very people whom they wanted to free from the evils and injustices of the past.

At home, the interventionist government often finds itself, sooner or later, governing a house divided, over the justification for the intervention and its consequences. Sometimes there is no consensus from the start that the foreign intervention is justified. People in the society, to the extent that they take interest in international events, take different sides concerning who is in the right and who has been wronged in that foreign country, who is the oppressor and who needs to be free. If the foreign intervention is undertaken, then from the start, there will be many in the country who oppose and resent their wealth being taxed and the lives of their loved ones in the military being put into harms' way to fight for the wrong side as they see it.

If the foreign intervention has broad support among many in the society, then dissent, it's true, may be muted at first. But if the intervention is not short and clearly successful, then second thoughts begin to emerge among a growing number of people. Was the intervention the right thing to do from the start? Are we becoming the enemy of the very people we wished to befriend? Are we making the situation in that country worse than it was before? Is it worth the sacrifice in men and money, ours and theirs, to continue the intervention? Even if the foreign intervention seems to have been successful, with the goals appearing to have been achieved quickly with minimal sacrifice of lives and money, and with our boys already on the way home, the intervening government often leaves behind a situation in that foreign country that soon becomes not much different from what actually had existed before.

Why? Because merely overthrowing the existing political order and imposing a new political order does not change the ideas, beliefs, customs, and traditions of the people in that nation. Such impositions may temporarily affect the external behavior of those people, but it does not transform what guides their sense of right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust. These are matters of their hearts and minds, and these cannot be coerced into change. The only alternative

is for the intervening government to stay on in that foreign country as a permanent coercing meddler. And that usually only leads to more problems, not solutions.

Then what is to be done in the face of evil in other lands? Well let me suggest that first we need to remind our fellow citizens that there was a time when at least a part of mankind was on a path leading to both peace and prosperity: that 100-year epoch from the fall of Napoleon in 1815 to the coming of the First World War in 1914. The distinguishing characteristic of 19th century Europe and North America was that, however inconsistently and imperfectly it may have been practiced, that 100-year period between 1815 and 1914 was rightly said to have been the product of the classical liberal spirit.

The guiding principle that directed much of public policy in practically all the countries of what used to be called at that time "the civilized world" was the depoliticizing of social life. With the triumph of free trade over mercantilism in the early and middle decades of the 19th century, and with the elimination of many of the domestic regulations, monopoly privileges, and restraints on enterprise, the state was drastically removed from the affairs of everyday life. In its place rose civil society, the blossoming of the private sector, and an extension of a network of intermediary institutions, of voluntary association, and market relationships.

The cosmopolitan ideal that inspired many of the thinkers in the 18th century became more or less of an almost reality in the 19th century. Men, money, and material goods, as well as the products of intellectual discovery and enquiry, increasingly traveled freely from one corner of the globe to another, with few political impediments standing in the way. Knowledge about the arts and the sciences became internationalized for an expanding circle of the general public and for an expanding circle of people of those interests around the world.

Governments of the civilized world did form international associations and reach various governmental agreements with each other, but for the most part, and separate from various changing political and military alliances, their associations and agreements were designed to facilitate the functioning of private intercourse among their citizens and subjects. They included international river commissions, railway and transportation agreements, telegraph and postal unions, health rules and guidelines, procedures for uniform weights and measures, and respect for patents and copyrights.

Governments occasionally still tried to influence the construction of these international standards and procedures to benefit some domestic interest and limit the commercial penetration of some foreign competitor, but to a great extent, the thinking behind them was to establish general rules of the game, to assist in the further globalization of private commercial and cultural exchange.

Now whether even these matters concerning standards and measures and procedures could have been left also to the voluntary private association agreement of the citizenry is of course a separate historical issue. Governments also attempted to agree upon rules for arbitration of disputes among themselves, on civilized rules for combat and land and sea, and for the humane treatment of noncombatants and neutrals if wars should break out. These were meant to establish restraints on the destructiveness of modern warfare and to limit the damage to human life and private property. If wars were still to be fought, then at least the negative consequences for civil society should be confined as much as possible.

In this classical liberal epoch before 1914, international order was created that facilitated a globalization of trade, commerce, and investment that fostered a cosmopolitan climate in which national borders, to a great extent-- though of course, never completely-- no longer inhibited the free movement of either men or ideas, in which wars were considered wild things that were to be tamed, confined, and prevented from excessively harming human life.

The fundamental force behind all of this was the idea of individual liberty and the sanctity of private property as an inseparable extension of that freedom of the individual. Governments were endowed with legitimacy and authority to preserve and protect the individual and his property from violence and plunder. Their function was meant to be negative and defensive. International order and a high degree of international peace were maintainable, because to a greater or lesser degree, the governments of that civilized world of that time shared the belief that war among their nations should be either adjudicated into nonexistence, or fought by these rules of the game. No special organization for international peace and security was needed, since the leading nations of the world all tended to share the same rules of the game.

Now I appreciate that I am making a very broad generalization about this era of the 19th century, and that numerous particulars concerning each of these countries could easily be used to argue against my sweeping conclusions. I am very conscious that my dear friend Harry Teasley is sitting there, and as a Southerner, he would be thinking at this moment that Richard is ignoring the greatest violation of these classical liberal principles in North America, the aggression of the Union against the rightful right of secession of the Southern states. Correct.

And I believe there is sitting here my also dear friend and valued scholarly colleague Ralph Raico, one of the leading classical liberal historians, who would rightly remind me that, "Yes, maybe the civilized countries did this among themselves more or less, but that is not how they treated their colonial subjects in Asia and Africa." And he would be absolutely correct.

Yet I believe that when looking over an historical period, it is sometimes possible to see an idea or a belief that can be said to have captured the spirit of the other times, and that can be seen to have influenced the course of events in various ways, however inconsistently and incompletely.

And in this sense, the classical liberal idea helped to restrain governments and set free the individual. And it served as the underlying conception that determined the rules of the game, that international relationships that were required in an era of free men, private enterprise, and civil society. International peace and order in this sense were inseparable from the classic liberal ideas of private voluntary association, peaceful competition, and a globalized system of division of labor.

In the last decades of the 19th century, another idea began to challenge and finally superseded this classical liberal ideal. That idea was political and economic collectivism. In the late 19th and into the 20th century, it took various forms: Marxian socialism, fascism, Nazism, welfare statism, social democracy, neomercantilism, protectionism, and imperialism. But regardless of its permutations, its conceptions of man, society, and government opposed those of classic liberalism. Individual liberties, civil society, and market relationships were made subordinate to political ends, and in the end extreme forms of political and economical collectivism were suppressed completely. Man and society were repoliticized.

It was the new idea of collectivism that set the world on the course that led to the First World War. Leading up to the war were the drive for monopolized markets, domestic regulation of trade and commerce, militarization of international relationships, the ascendancy of great power politics, to which individual interests were to be made subservient, individual obedience to the interests of the state, and welfare statism with its nationalization of income and redistribution of wealth. The First World War dramatically reinforced these tendencies in a way that permanently brought an end to that classical liberal era. It also ended the particular conditions that were conducive to international peace.

In the collectivist era of the 20th century, everything became an affair of state, because nothing was outside of political consideration. Trade and commerce were no longer matters of private individuals searching for mutually advantageous gains from trade. Instead they became issues of national prosperity, national employment, national industrial development, and national standards of living. Ownership and control of resources and raw materials in various parts of the world became matters of national security, as they had been under the older mercantilism, before classical liberalism had freed and privatized the economic and international affairs of life. Every aspect of life, every human relationship, every form of commerce, enterprise, and exchange was politicized once again. Once more, they were made affairs of state rather than matters of private agreement and competition for improvement in the human condition.

What motivated this shift from classical liberalism to the collectivist era? Two forces came into play in the 20th century: first, the power of special interests, and second, the appeal of the social engineer. The principle of the equality of individual rights for all before the law was replaced with the ideal of group privileges and entitlements for some at the expense of others at home and

abroad. And Adam Smith's conception of a system of natural liberty, under which every individual was free to peacefully follow his own interests with the cumulative results of men's interactions generating a spontaneous order of human relationships, was replaced with the hubris of the planner, who considered himself wise and knowledgeable enough to reorder society according to his higher vision of the proper, fair, and just relationships that should prevail among men.

The fetish of the social engineer did not pass away with Nazism in World War II or with the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. It is the essence of the welfare state and has been the implicit agenda behind America's military interventionism around the world, both during and since the end of the Cold War. Whether such foreign intervention is undertaken unilaterally by the United States or jointly by several countries under the banner of NATO, or even in the name of the entire world with authorization from the UN, the attempt to bring peace and order in the present era will invariably fail to achieve all that is hoped for it.

The fundamental reason for this continuing failure is that such peace and order can be established on a permanent basis only in a world in which classical liberal ideas are once more predominant. But let me suggest that merely trying to go back to that golden age of classical liberalism before 1914 is no longer enough. In the 21st century, a more radical classical liberal ideal is needed.

What then is to be done, as I was first suggesting, in the face of evil in other lands, if not the state or international organizations and associations? Well, for the advocate of freedom, the answer is the depoliticization, the privatization of foreign intervention. In our private life, we have many friends, neighbors, and family members whom we care about and desire to help. We desire to help them in getting through times of trouble and hardship, and we want to help them in trying to find better principles to guide their lives so that many of the problems that have been caused by their past choices do not happen again.

Sometimes these tasks are more than we ourselves can try to solve, so we form voluntary associations, organizations, and clubs to pool our efforts with those who share the same desire to help, and see value in the same peaceful methods for attaining those ends. Others go it alone in their endeavors to assist their fellow men, and still others form different associations because, though they may believe in ends similar to our own, they think there are better means to achieve it than the ones we've tried to try. And others in the society choose not to participate at all in these types of tasks, because they place a higher value on other things, in terms of an expenditure of their time, money, and efforts.

No one is compelled to care or to help, nor is anyone forced to accept one way of doing things as the only method. Such voluntary associations and institutions are among the essential

foundations of civil society. They are the free society's private solutions to what are now called "social problems." The depoliticization and privatization of foreign intervention means an approach analogous to the private institutions of voluntary association for the handling of domestic social problems. Those who see distress and hardship among peoples in other lands, who desire to assist them, should not be restricted in forming associations and charities to pool their resources to supply such help. But neither should others, who do not share that same concern, or who consider there to be other answers to solve these foreign problems, be compelled to assist if they choose not to.

If oppression reigns in a foreign land, if a peaceful people in another country are threatened or aggressed against by another state, any citizen in a free society should have the liberty to volunteer his help. This can include financial contributions or personal service. He can offer to fight alongside the freedom fighters, resisting their own government's tyranny, or he can offer his service in the military of that foreign country to help repel the aggressor nation. He can choose to do so for free or for pay. He can form associations and societies to pool his own resources with those of others, to buy military equipment, medical supplies, or emergency food and clothing. He can try to persuade others in his own country to see the rightness in the cause, and join him in fighting the good fight to win freedom for others in those other lands. But what would be inconsistent for any person's crusade in the cause of freedom in other countries would be to abrogate the freedom of his own fellow citizens in the pursuit of that cause.

It is easy to say that all that is asked for is a small violation of the liberty of fellow citizens in the good cause of the freedom of so many others. But is this any different from the appeal often heard that it is only a small violation of people's liberty that is being asked for, to feed the hungry, to house the homeless, to assist the poor, to help the handicapped, to..., to..., to...? Once the principle of liberty is breached, no matter how deserving the cause may sound, all other abridgments soon become matters of pragmatic judgment.

Well, it seemed reasonable and meritorious to abridge other people's liberties for this cause. Then surely to extend that abridgment just a little longer, or a little more, for this other cause, cannot be objected to, can it? If we sacrificed some people's liberty to intervene in country X for a good cause, then surely, to do it again or more forcefully for the noble endeavor of helping those other unfortunate people in country Y cannot be objected to, can it? Where does it stop? On whose judgment shall it be dependent in making the decision to do it or not?

The fundamental duty of the state is the protection of life, liberty, and property of the citizenry within its own territorial jurisdiction. If the state goes beyond this, it can only do so by taking the wealth, income, and resources of some to improve the circumstances of others, that is, by means of coercive meddling. Either we have the protection of equal individual rights for all before the law, or we have unequal privileges for some at the expense of others. This is the choice

concerning the role of the state, whether in domestic or foreign affairs. There is no third alternative.

So how shall we bring this change in direction in America? There are no quick fixes. Just as there are no quick fixes in changing the attitudes and beliefs of people in Iraq, there are no more quick fixes to change the thinking and attitudes among our fellow Americans. Which gets me back to Leonard Read and the principal methods available for friends of freedom to try to change the world.

Leonard Read founded FEE at a time when there were very few advocates of liberty: 1946. And he viewed the advocates of liberty to be a remnant, a very small group among an ocean of fellow citizens and millions more around the world. "If the world was to be changed," Read said, "the change begins by changing people's beliefs and attitudes. And if we are to change people's beliefs and attitudes, we must first make them think in different ways, to understand in different ways, to value in different ways. And if we are to change other people," Read asked, "over whom does each of us have the most direct influence?" And Leonard Read replied that each of us has the most direct influence over that person we are closest to, ourselves.

The task of changing the world, including changing America, therefore is a process of what Read called self-improvement and self-education. Each of us must take it upon our shoulders, on our responsibility, to become as informed and as knowledgeable and as articulate as we can about the principles and the applications and the meaning of freedom, both in domestic and foreign affairs, and the dangers of the opposite of those ideals and applications of liberty. And if we do so, we will over time be able to attract others to see the worth of what we have to say.

Now maybe some of you who are a little older in the room may have attended a FEE seminar. I know I did in June of 1974, and I don't know if he's sitting here, but Lew Rockwell attended the same FEE seminar in June of 1974 as I did. Now I don't know what Lew remembers of that seminar, but I remember one lecture, and it was a lecture delivered by Leonard Read. In the classroom at FEE where students are still taught every summer, Leonard Read that summer had the lights turned out in the room. He was holding an electric candle in his hand. In the darkness, he began to turn the dimmer on. At first there was just this little speck of light. And he said, "Notice how all of our eyes are drawn to this wee bit of light." Then he began to turn the dimmer brighter. And as the electric candle became brighter, he said, "Notice how, as it becomes brighter, more and more of us are drawn to focus on the light, and as it becomes brighter, it enables us to see in its illumination more of the features around it, and at the same time, how the darkness is pushed further and further away."

Read said that is what each of us can become: lights, candles of liberty. And the brighter we shine with our knowledge, our articulation, our understanding, the more each of us will be able

to attract others naturally to want to hear what we have to say about liberty and its applications. And as others are drawn and made to think about what these ideas represent and why they have value, we will have sparked them to become lights. And the lights and the candles of liberty in society will grow. And slowly but surely, the darkness of collectivism will be pushed to the corners, and the brightness of freedom will finally prevail.

We live in dark times. In my opinion, the current administration that has been in place for now, what, seven years, has been one of the worst in 20th century American history.

Richard Ebeling: It has led us down an extremely dangerous and disastrous foreign policy path. It has caused the waste and the destruction of untold lives, not just of Americans, who are obviously the ones Americans tend to pay attention to, but hundreds and indeed tens of thousands of innocent civilians in other parts of the world. It has arrogated to itself the social engineers' mentality of attempting to make the world over in their elitist conception of what "democracy" and "freedom" are supposed to be as they conceive it. And in the name of freedom and democracy, they have then turned around and generated the biggest increase in domestic government in the United States since Lyndon Johnson's Great Society.

These are dark times in the United States. Civil liberties have been weakened. Habeas corpus has been threatened. Citizens' rights have been abridged. Normal senses under the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of security in our person, our property, and our papers have been abrogated. And now, having had an administration set these precedents, we're faced with those powers and legitimacies being passed to the next President, who may very well be Hillary Clinton. Any Republican who won would be just as bad, but Hillary Clinton? Just imagine her appointing the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

Richard Ebeling: So what is to be done? There are no quick fixes. The burden falls upon each and every one of us in this room: peacefully, reasonably, persuasively, individually consistent with our ideals of liberty, to be those lights of liberty. We have the right, and they're the wrong. We have the logical and historical demonstration that freedom works, and tyranny and collectivism don't. If we're willing to take on this task—the courage, the dedication, the integrity, the determination, the unswerving commitment, the long-run vision of that free society we all want, and which can be ours, and which we can help create for our children and grandchildren in the 21st century—we will prevail. Thank you very much.

Richard Ebeling: Got some time for questions, I guess, about five minutes of questions. Okay.

Question: Speaker Ebeling, at the beginning of your speech, you used a secret word several times. Yesterday's lead-off speaker, Speaker Bovard, used that secret word, and throughout the

day, several of the other speakers used that secret word. I have trouble concentrating on your speech because I want an explanation of that word. What is a Bumpy, or a Bumper?

Richard Ebeling: A Bumper!

Question: What is a Bumper? I need to know. At the continental breakfast, I asked Speaker Higgs and he claimed ignorance. If he claims ignorance about something, that causes me to think conspiracy.

Richard Ebeling: All I can say is that I don't know, but if I told you, my life has been threatened.

Question: I asked Mr. Hornberger, and he referred vaguely to the CIA. Speaker Bovard, he suggested something about Mr. Hornberger's time with the Village People.

Q: Is there an answer to that, or an explanation to that word?

Richard Ebeling: I do not know, nor have I ever known the meaning of Bumper.

Richard Ebeling: Bumper? It's your chance.

Question: Good morning, Richard.

Richard Ebeling: Good morning.

Q: It was 40 years ago that I was at a FEE seminar at Silverado in California, and it was up to here in politics and largely have been since. But I raised the question in the seminar about why we didn't get political right away in FEE and every other place. Leonard took me by the ear and said, "I'm going to buy you a breakfast young man, and I'm going to tell you what we really think." He almost said word for word, Richard, what you've been telling us this morning, and I can't reiterate it more strongly, the deep-felt conviction that this man had, and the total dedication to our cause. Now, question: How are we doing in these 40 years as far as extending freedom and its Austrian philosophy, Austrian economics throughout the country?

Richard Ebeling: Well, let me put in this context. Once I was going through the papers of Friedrich Hayek, the famous Austrian economist, at the Hoover Institution out at Stanford

University. And among Hayek's papers was a correspondence that he had with Ludwig von Mises. Mises at that time was still in Geneva, Switzerland. It was like early 1940. Hayek was teaching then at the London School of Economics. Mises forlornly writes Hayek a letter, that it's a great tragedy that there are only six real classical liberals in the world. Now I assume Mises viewed himself as well, and I assume he considered the person he was writing to, Hayek, as one. Who the hell were these other four? Certainly, if we use Mises's benchmark, six, there has been a great improvement.

Richard Ebeling: When Read set up FEE in 1946, it was in fact the first free market-oriented educational organization in the United States, in the world. The presumption was that collectivism, often marching socialism, were waves of an inevitable future. Those were lonely voices. As much as it seems that there are so many of them against us, versus us today, the fact is, there are all the people in this room. There are the people I meet at FEE seminars, and FEE on-the-road seminars around the country, young people that I meet when we do FEE seminars now with students in foreign countries, including former Soviet bloc countries. There is also Bumper's success, I know particularly with your Web site, which is a great Web site, the growth in our own Web site, the technology that enables us to reach so many, not only in our country, but around the world.

The fact is that, while we do not see the political arena changing, slowly but surely, compared to 40 years ago or 60 years ago, the climate of opinion has the potential to change, because of the greater number of us. Read always used to say, "It is not a numbers game. It's not a matter of winning over all the masses." It's a matter of finding enough people, a minority of dedicated, caring, and self-educated individuals, who will help change the climate and the spirit of the times. If there are enough of us, slowly but surely, we will grow in numbers, and finally we will change society. The worst thing to do is to become despondent. The worst thing to do is to lose confidence, and the worst thing to do is to lose belief that we're right and our need to point at that area on the horizon that represents the good society we want, in all that we do, do our best to keep moving in that direction. Thank you very much.