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## **The Future of Libertarianism**

*by Justin Raimondo*

*The following is a transcript of a speech given at The Future of Freedom Foundation's June 2008 conference, "Restoring the Republic: Foreign Policy & Civil Liberties" held in Reston, Virginia.*

**Jacob Hornberger:** Justin Raimondo, our next speaker, is editorial director of [Antiwar.com](http://Antiwar.com), which is the premier anti-war website on the Internet. It's the website that we go to every single morning. There is no better website and hasn't been for many years. It has as much information, commentary, insights, blogs, everything-- it's just fantastic. Justin himself writes one of the most informative and entertaining columns on politics, foreign policy,, and civil liberties. It's one of those columns where you don't quite know what you're going to get, which makes it very exciting and stimulating. The column's entitled "Behind the Headlines." I think he writes three times a week, a lengthy commentary on what's going on. He is the author of *An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard* and *Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of the Conservative Movement*, which is an intellectual history of the pre-World War II conservative anti-imperialist tradition. The title of Justin's talk is "The Future of Libertarianism." Justin Raimondo.

**Justin Raimondo:** My topic today, "The Future of Libertarianism," cannot be broached without reference to Libertarianism's long and storied past, and so I hope you'll forgive this extensive prelude before I get to the main topic. Now, from the very beginning, the laissez-faire movement was beset by a thrilling but utterly mistaken idea that progress toward liberty is inevitable, a long, slow, steady process that coincides with the march of modernity. The rise of the movement for personal liberty and economic freedom was coincident with the growth and development of industrial civilization. As the standard of

living rose, so did the advocates of laissez-faire gain intellectual and political traction, yet none of this was inevitable. At any point, the society of status, as Murray Rothbard dubbed it in his seminal essay, “Left and Right: The Prospects for Liberty,” could have returned. The old order, with its absolute monarchs and feudal barons, its downtrodden serfs and strictly hierarchical organization, could have made a comeback. And indeed 200 years later the old order did return to Europe, as Hitler and Stalin tried to drag a continent back to the Dark Ages, and nearly succeeded in doing so.

In a series of revolutions that rocked Europe and much of the world, laissez-faire liberalism overthrew the old order. And yet, as Rothbard pointed out, there was a fatal flaw in the classical liberalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an inner rot, as he put it, that ate away at the ideological core of Libertarianism even as the movement began to achieve some of its goals. That flaw was [first] made manifest in the abandonment of natural rights philosophy and in a strategic timidity; one seemed to follow from the other in reverting to a defense of the status quo. Second, liberalism was lulled to sleep with the seductive lure of evolutionism, the doctrine of social Darwinism, which saw history as an ever-ascending spiral of progress. According to this theory, the triumph of liberty is inevitable because reason, science, and enlightened thinking are on our side. While the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would soon refute this, at the time it seemed almost reasonable. After all, society was progressing, peoples were freeing themselves from the yoke of feudalism and mercantilism, and it appeared, if only for a moment, that the cause of liberty might triumph, however long it took.

This Pollyannaism was swept aside with the advent of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the rise of the totalitarian ideologies, liberalism’s darkest hour. Yet as proof that no error is ever finally refuted, we see its echo today in the abstruse theories of certain Beltway deep thinkers who seem to believe that just because they’re getting richer, so is everybody else, and that rising income means the increase of freedom. But of course, the business cycle is alive and well, thanks to the persistence of fiat money and central banks, as we are beginning to rediscover. Also raising its ugly head is the specter of constant warfare, the favorite pastime of empires, and this, too, threatens our liberties, as well as our lives. If the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise of a worldwide movement toward liberty, the 20<sup>th</sup> saw the progress that had been made repealed, and the clock turned back. In the world of ideas, political absolutism ruled the day, and all around the world the inevitability of socialism was simply assumed.

In the U.S., the Great Depression brought about the utter collapse of the old Spencerian illusion that liberty would triumph simply on account of some mechanism inherent in the nature of things. Two World Wars shattered the fragile shell of constitutional government in America and opened the door to a demise of our old Republic. The 100-day revolution of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his brain trust and the Second World War effectively repealed the American Revolution and set in motion a process of

statification that is today reaching its climax. The remnants of classical liberalism went virtually underground at this point. The tides of public and intellectual opinion were running so heavily against them that their ideas were not even considered. The old-time liberals, such as John T. Flynn, were simply out of the running and were denounced as hopeless reactionaries along with H.L. Mencken and Albert J. Knock, to take two prominent examples. Park Avenue Bolsheviks, such as James Burnham, were confidently proclaiming the demise of capitalism and the rise of the so-called managerial class of bureaucrats and steely-eyed men in spectacles who would soon put society to rights. Socialism, Leninism, fascism, and all sorts of idiosyncratic social movements and sects sprang up like mushrooms after a heavy rain as the Great Depression wreaked havoc with people's lives.

A raid against these overwhelming currents, a valiant band of counterrevolutionaries, fought a heroic rearguard action. A disparate lot, they were united only in their common reaction against that man in the White House, as they disdainfully referred to FDR. They opposed the state worship and centralism that was dominant in academia, the world of letters and politics, albeit from a wide variety of political and cultural stances. They were populist progressives, such as Senator Burton K. Wheeler, who resisted the president's court-packing scheme and turned against the New Deal, as well as Midwestern Republican isolationists, so called, who resisted the drive to war. From H.L. Mencken, that celebrated man of letters who was considered a radical in the 1920s and denounced as a reactionary a decade later, to Henry Regnery, a Midwestern businessman who had founded the first conservative publishing house in America, the America Firsters spanned the cultural and political spectrum. These were the men and women of the Old Right, such long-forgotten figures as Flynn, Garet Garrett, Colonel Robert Rutherford McCormick, publisher of the heroic *Chicago Tribune*, Isabel Patterson, Rose Wilder Lane, and such organizations as the American Liberty League, the Committee for Constitutional Government, and, most importantly, the America First Committee (AFC), the biggest anti-war organization in American history.

Now, I say most importantly because the AFC united virtually the entire Old Right in a mass movement that gained the overwhelming sympathy of the American people, 72 percent of whom opposed entering the war on the eve of Pearl Harbor. Forged in the flames of a world at war, the loosely aligned politicians, resident intellectuals, and publicists who made up this movement began to cohere in a fairly consistent set of ideas: the idea that war breeds tyranny and subverts republican forms of government, the idea that America's role in the world is chiefly exemplary, and that we were fighting National Socialism overseas only to witness its triumph on the home front. And central to it all, an acute consciousness of America's tragic destiny as an imperial power doomed like all the others to degenerate into a parody of itself.

Garet Garrett, the journalist and sometime novelist and financial writer, typified this elegiac sensibility in his writings, particularly the trilogy of essays on the New Deal published as *The People's Pottage*. In "Rise of Empire," the third essay, he gives voice to the Old Right's anger, as well as their analysis of what went wrong with America. "Between government in the republican meaning, that is, constitutional representative limited government on the one hand, an empire on the other hand, there is mortal enmity. Either one must forbid the other or one will destroy the other, that we know. Yet never has the choice been put to a vote of the people."

The storm of abuse that streamed out of the White House aimed at the America Firsters was truly phenomenal. If you think George W. Bush and his fellow Red State fascists were the first to tar their anti-war opponents as enemy agents and potential terrorists, then check the history books. The campaign conducted by the White House and the Far Left against the AFC, with the invaluable assistance of British covert agents, rivals in scope and sheer viciousness the smear campaign against the anti-war movement in our own day. With a membership of some 800,000 paid members, an embrace of prominent individuals spanning the political spectrum, the America First Committee staged massive rallies, lobbied and worked tirelessly to keep us from falling into the European vortex.

As the war hysteria grew in the wake of Pearl Harbor, the pro-war forces, triumphant at last, demanded that prominent America Firsters be charged with sedition. Led by the Communist Party and its fellow travelers, this campaign nearly succeeded in indicting the entire leadership of the AFC, as well as members of Congress who had opposed the headlong rush to war. As it was, a motley collection of some 30 or so individuals, including the brilliant half-black intellectual, Lawrence Dennis, were rounded up and charged with plotting a Nazi revolution in the U.S. in what the prosecution characterized as "a conspiracy of ideas." Forced underground in the wake of Pearl Harbor, the Old Right persisted in the voluminous private correspondence of that tireless letter writer, Rose Wilder Lane, in scattered circles of like-minded individualists and a few organizations and one man propaganda outfits, Libertarianism persisted like a subterranean river, periodically bursting up to the surface and disrupting the socialist interventionist consensus.

Now, the swansong of the Old Right was the defeat of Robert A. Taft at the hands of Dwight David Eisenhower for the Republican nomination and the decimation of the ranks of the Old Right in Congress, as well as in the media and the culture at large. Such stalwarts as John Flynn, who continued his radio program well into the late 1940s and churned out books at a record rate, kept up the fight. In the dark days of post-war America, when the socialist interventionist consensus was virtually unanimous, a young Murray Rothbard regularly tuned in to Flynn's broadcast. The *Chicago Tribune* was also an inspiration-- these were his only sources of ideological inspiration and contact until

he stumbled on the Foundation for Economic Education, then the primary Libertarian educational organization. A student of the famed Ludwig von Mises, whose economic theories are the foundation of today's Austrian School of Economics, Rothbard is the bridge between the Old Right of the 1940s and the Libertarian movement as it exists today.

Now, I've told Murray's story in my book *An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard*, in which I perhaps overemphasize his role as a political activist at the expense of his monumental achievements as a scholar. I took this tack, I can see now, because Rothbard's life and career are really a narrative account of the decline and rebirth of the organized Libertarian movement, a history spanning the period from the 1940s to the 1990s. Briefly associated with the Buckley circle, and even more briefly with the Ayn Rand cult, Rothbard's triumphs and travails mirror the ups and downs of a movement that could not have been more beleaguered and yet persisted against all odds to make a real impact on American political culture.

Many commentators, mostly unfriendly, have remarked on Rothbard's apparent fickleness, his turns from left to right and back again, aligned with the conservatives and then the New Left and then the conservatives again, with several tactical twists and turns in between. However, this apparent inconsistency was no inconsistency at all, as the political-- since he maintained correctly, I believe, that Libertarianism as a political philosophy transcends the traditional Left/Right paradigm that so limits the parameters of the political imagination in this Red State/Blue State world. Rothbard wrote for *National Review*, where he was restricted to the economics beat, but in private there was conflict. In an exchange of letters with William Buckley, Rothbard dissented from the cold warrior fanaticism that animated the Buckleyite Right. He was eventually convinced that the *National Review* crowd pined for a Third World War in which they wouldn't hesitate to use nuclear weapons, in which case we were all cooked.

Rothbard had thoroughly absorbed the so-called isolationism of Flynn and the old America Firsters and had developed early on a Libertarian perspective on the foreign policy question that was a logical extension of the non-coercion principle. Just as state violence against its own citizens was to be limited as much as possible, so it is desirable from a Libertarian perspective to limit, isolate, and restrict states from engaging in a coercion beyond their own borders. War, in the words of Randolph Bourne, is the health of the State, and the limited government and free-market economics that are supposed to be the cardinal principles of American conservatism have been time and again betrayed on account of their worship of the war god to whom they owe their primary loyalty.

Rothbard's break with the conservative movement and his sojourn into the New Left occurred at a crucial juncture in American history, the tumultuous 1960s, when war and repression of protest

movements were the key issues of the day, a day not unlike our own, at least in certain respects. The Vietnam War was the focus of the national debate, and the rising youth revolution coincided with this development, giving Libertarians an opportunity to bring the message of freedom to a wider audience than ever before. The war provided an opening for Rothbard and his growing circle to make an appeal to the Left, and their journal, *Left and Right*, introduced the classics of the Old Right, such as the essays of Garet Garrett, to a whole generation of SDSers-- Students for a Democratic Society, that is-- the main youth protest movement, with chapters on hundreds of campuses.

The effort had an effect on the more intelligent SDS leaders, such as Carl Oglesby, the group's first elected leader, who later quoted Garet Garrett and favorably cited the Old Right's anti-imperialism in his book, *Containment and Change*. By that time, however, he had been purged from the group he had been instrumental in founding for the horrible crime of right-wing deviationism. SDS and the anti-war movement had by then gone into their ultra-left phase and went out in a blaze of botched bombings and self-destructive melodrama.

Also at this point, the movement that gathered regularly in Rothbard's living room had grown too large to fit into that small space, and so the first Libertarian activist conferences were being held and the Libertarian press was developing apace. Aside from Rothbard's own Libertarian forum, there was *Reason* magazine, which started out as a stapled 12-page fanzine, which I got the first issue of, and has since morphed into-- well, we'll get to that. This was supplemented by a plethora of local and national newsletters and amateur magazines with titles such as *Commentary on Liberty*, *The American Libertarian*, *The New Standard*, and *Invictus*, to name the first that come to mind.

The Libertarian movement, which had always existed as a subset of conservatism and then was thrust into bed with the Far Left, had grown to the point where it could finally maintain an independent organizational existence. It was only a matter of time until a Libertarian Party (LP) was founded, and that occurred in 1972, I believe. The story of how that came about is well known, perhaps, to many of you, and I won't reiterate the trials, travails, and triumphs of that storied sect since I can hardly do the subject justice in the time allotted to me. I just want to point out, however, that the LP has been the battlefield on which the whole question of how to function as an organized political movement has been fought, and as such, its history provides us with a rich source of material for our speculations as to the future of Libertarianism, be it dark or bright.

At first, the LP did not earn Rothbard's support. He thought it was far too early to found such a party and foresaw, correctly, limited electoral success for the venture. In any case, he was soon drawn into it ineluctably, it seems, and became a leading voice for consistency of principle, working hard to keep the

party on a strictly anti-interventionist stance in the vital realm of foreign policy, in spite of the more conservative Libertarians, who never understood and still don't the key link between peace and liberty, and conversely between stateism and war.

So the party grew, the movement grew, and by the late 1970s Rothbard and his associates took it to the next level with the help of a generous benefactor whose largesse made possible a great leap forward in the pace and quality of Libertarian activism. Let us go back to the year 1978 and look at what happened to the organized Libertarian movement. Suddenly there sprang up the Cato Institute, along with an array of satellite organizations, including a student group and the Libertarian Party itself, which became a cog in what we used to call the Koch Machine. This mighty ideological center was made possible by the largesse of Charles G. Koch, an heir to the Koch family fortune and Koch Industries, one of the largest privately owned companies in the U.S.; I believe it's the largest. The father, Fred C. Koch, had made his money in oil, engineering, and cattle, and, I think, owned the State of Kansas, and passed on his fortune to his sons, at least two of whom, Charles and David, shared his Libertarian beliefs.

Now, from the outside looking in, all was well. Magazine and newspaper articles hailed Libertarianism as the next big thing, and profiles of the Institute and its spinoff groups published in the mainstream media glowed with admiration for their organization and enthusiasm, if not praise for their ideas. In the mid-1970s, when Charles Koch contacted Rothbard about what he could do to advance the movement's goals, the late, great Libertarian theorist wrote a long memo that projected the creation of a mighty apparatus of Libertarian cadre, organizing in virtually every arena of American political and intellectual life. Koch had the money, Rothbard had the vision. At the core of it all was Rothbard's conception of the Cato Institute, which, by the way, he came up with the name for, as a think tank devoted to a development, spread, and popularization of the Austrian school of economics, free market solutions to social problems on the home front, a devotion to the preservation and expansion of civil liberties, and a consistent opposition to U.S. imperialism.

Now, this last theme was particularly important as far as Rothbard was concerned. It was the linchpin of his political stance as basically an Old Rightist, that is, a survivor of a time when the Right side of the political spectrum in the United States was decidedly anti-interventionist and it was the Left that was calling for the jailing of anti-war protestors for sedition. Rothbard saw war as a progenitor of the collectivist revolution in America in opposition to America's foreign policy of global intervention, [and this] was for him necessarily the main focus of Libertarians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One of Rothbard's many and major contributions to the growth and development of the organized Libertarian movement in America was that he carried the anti-interventionist tradition of the 1930s and 1940s into the contemporary political scene, waving the old banner of the America First committee and laying the

intellectual groundwork for the emergence of the Ron Paul phenomenon more than a decade after his death.

Now, growing up alongside the Koch-funded Cato Institute, like mushrooms in the shade of a giant tree, a whole network of special interest groups and periodicals sprouted. There was a student group and a movement magazine, *Libertarian Review*, which was published in addition to the outreach magazine, *Inquiry*, which was aimed at high-tone liberals and Libertarian fellow travelers in the media. These satellite organizations were all housed across the street from the glass and steel tower of the Cato Institute in an unassuming warehouse. The Libertarian Party also had an office in this complex, and it was this particular component of the vast and mighty Koch Machine that eventually caused all the trouble.

The split between Rothbard and the Institute he had inspired and essentially founded was occasioned by the presidential campaign of 1980, which Rothbard was most unhappy with. In an incident which has become legendary in LP circles, the party's candidate, Edward Clark, an oil company lawyer, went on national television to explain to interviewer Ted Koppel that Libertarianism was basically just "low-tax liberalism." Now, this outraged Rothbard for any number of very good reasons, not the least of which was its strategic wrongheadedness. The Cato Institute's strategy was to target the elites, especially in the media but also in the two major political parties and in government circles.

Rothbard, on the other hand, took a diametrically opposite view. He envisioned a populist revolt against the elites who profit from the maintenance and growth of state power. Libertarians, he believed, must make their appeal to ordinary people, instead of aspiring to a position at court in the hope, the vain hope, of whispering advice into the king's ear. "It is necessary," he said, "to appeal to the great masses of Americans so that Libertarianism will become a living and vital political movement and not just an intellectual parlor game." When Clark, under the tutelage of the Cato high command, refused to come out for the abolition of the income tax on the grounds that this constituted an unacceptable radicalism, Rothbard essentially broke with Cato, although the formal divorce didn't come until a bit later at the Libertarian Party's 1983 national convention. Rothbard attacked the Clark campaign in a series of articles that mocked the campaign's timidity and its rather pathetic appeal to the narrow interests of low-tax liberals of a certain age and class.

Rothbard's erstwhile followers in the Cato group made their appeal to influential sympathizers, who must be kept blissfully ignorant of the more controversial aspects of Libertarian theory. This strategy was symbolized by their move to Washington, D.C., where they built themselves yet another glass and steel tower, only much bigger this time, and set up shop as resident Libertarians in the corridors of power. Rothbard, on the other hand, pursued the path of populism. He insisted that Libertarian political action

must be directed at the majority of the American people and not tailored to suit the cultural prejudices and ideological idiosyncrasies of *New York Times*-reading white wine and brie liberals.

Rothbard and Cato went their separate ways, and so did the two wings of our movement, one gravitating in the direction of Washington, D.C., and the other concentrated in the hinterlands, especially in the West, where a wave of right wing populism was beginning to rise up in opposition to a redneck liberalism. The Beltway faction of our movement adapted itself to its surroundings with chameleon-like instincts, while Rothbard and his supporters organized in the countryside, so to speak, planning a guerrilla insurgency and cultivating conservatives who were beginning to resent the incursion of the neocons, invaders from the Left, and the effective takeover of the official conservative movement by former leftist and right wing social Democrats.

The Rothbard/Cato split has sundered the Libertarian movement to this day, and that was certainly underscored by the response of the Beltway Libertarians to the unprecedented success of the Ron Paul campaign. As the good doctor began to garner a fair share of media attention and his poll numbers began to rise, the Beltway crowd sneered that he was too old-fashioned, too culturally conservative, and not likely to make any headway. Well, when he did make headway and was addressing crowds of many thousands at rallies across the country and the record campaign contributions began to get the campaign noticed, the Beltway crowd, most notably the editors and writers at *Reason* magazine, a Koch-funded enterprise that styles itself the leading Libertarian magazine, began to back off and offer their reluctant, although still condescending, support, but not for long. The Koch Machine was merely revving up its motors for a smear campaign of unparalleled viciousness.

Just as the Paul campaign was beginning to break through the wall of silence and liberal media bias, the *New Republic* magazine came out with a piece by one Jamie Kirchick that accused the Paul campaign and Ron himself of appealing to thinly disguised racism, so called. In particular, the target of Kirchick's scrutiny was a series of Ron Paul newsletters written during the early 1990s that violated the canons of political correctness as much for the style in which they were written as for their contents. The *Reason* magazine crowd immediately took up the cry of racism and devoted endless, and I do mean endless, articles and blog entries to the ensuing controversy as the Beltway Libertarian crowd gleefully prepared for a righteous purge.

Writing in the online edition of *Reason* magazine, David Weigel and Julian Sanchez, the latter of the Cato Institute, proclaimed that the whole episode was rooted in a strategy enunciated by Rothbard and Lew Rockwell, founder and president of Ludwig von Mises Institute, designed to appeal to those dreaded right wing populists. And I quote, "During the period when the most incendiary items appeared, roughly

1989 to 1994, Rockwell and the prominent Libertarian theorist, Murray Rothbard, championed an open strategy of exploiting racial and class resentment to build a coalition with populist paleo-conservatives, producing a flurry of articles and manifestos, whose racially charged talking points and vocabulary mirrored the controversial Paul newsletters recently unearthed by the *New Republic*.”

The most detailed description of a strategy came in an essay Rothbard wrote for the January 1992 *Rothbard/Rockwell Report*, titled “Right Wing Populism: A Strategy for the Paleo Movement.” Lamenting that mainstream intellectuals and opinion leaders were too invested in the status quo to be brought around to a Libertarian view, Rothbard pointed to David Duke and Joseph McCarthy as models for an outreach to the rednecks, which would fashion a broad Libertarian paleoconservative coalition by targeting the disaffected and working middle classes. These groups could be mobilized to oppose an expansive state, Rothbard posited, by exposing-- and I’m quoting Rothbard-- “an unholy alliance of corporate liberal big business and media elites who through big government have privilege and caused to rise up a parasitic underclass who among them all are looting and impressing the bulk of the middle and working classes in America.”

Now *Reason*, of course, in its new incarnation as the official organ of the Libertarian movement’s aging hipsters and would-be cool kids, vehemently opposes reaching out to middle and working class Americans. That is far too square for the black leather jacket-wearing Nick Gillespie and his successor, Matt Welch. Right-wing populism: as far as the *Reason* crowd is concerned, one might as well tout the appeal of right-wing botulism. Libertarianism, as understood by the editors of *Reason*, is all about legalizing methamphetamine, having endless hook-ups, and giving megacorporations tax breaks so *Reason* can keep scarfing up those big corporate contributors. The decidedly square Dr. Paul was and is anathema to team *Reason*.

Now, what would the Smear Bund do without David Duke? No smear campaign is complete without dragging him into it. No matter what the subject, the Iraq War, the recent book by John J. Mearsheimer and Steven Walt on the Israel lobby, if you take the politically incorrect position, according to the neocons, then you are marching shoulder to shoulder with the former Klansman. And sure enough, the Kirchick piece takes the Paul newsletter to task for supposedly “having kind words” for Duke. Yet, if you go and read what the newsletter actually says about Duke, it is clear that the author was merely saying Duke’s success is due to his opposition to affirmative action and the welfare state. Indeed, Mr. Kirchick cites a passage without citing it in full, of course, in which Duke is taken to task for his lack of a “consistent package of freedom.”

Yet the willfully ignorant Radley Balko, another Cato type, avers, “I simply can’t imagine seeing any piece of paper go out under my name that included sympathetic words for David Duke. That a newsletter with Paul’s name did just that, demands an explanation from Paul.” Well, the explanation, which would be apparent if Balko had actually cited what was written, is that these weren’t sympathetic words for Duke per se, or for his political ambitions, but for the issues, legitimate issues that he raised and exploited in his Louisiana campaign for, I believe it was, governor. After all, Libertarians, such as Paul and myself and I guess all of you, reject affirmative action, racial set-asides and anti-discrimination ordinances, and all other forms of state-enforced special treatment for so-called minorities precisely because we oppose racism or any form of collectivism. This railing against populism, that is, against any appeal to ordinary Americans, is part and parcel of the Beltway’s perversion of Libertarianism, which relegates its pet Libertarian ideologues to the role of court jesters whose intellectual preoccupations-- drug legalization and celebration of cultural Libertinism-- are considered amusing and mostly harmless.

Now, in considering the future of Libertarianism, one has to imagine at least two futures: one for the kept intellectuals of the Beltway set, and the other for the populist grassroots movement that roiled the American hinterlands with its radical opposition to imperialist wars and fiat money. The former will persist as long as its subsidies persist. But the so-called Orange Line mafia has really discredited itself with its vicious hostility directed at Dr. Paul, which has been on display since long before the newsletter controversy broke out. On the other hand, the Ron Paul wing of the movement has all the energy, the vitality, and the staying power of a movement that really does have a future.

Foreign policy, the question of whether we’re going to be an Empire or remain a Republic, is the overriding issue of our day, and anyone who abstains in this realm really ceases to be relevant. I find it odd, therefore, that the leading Libertarian print magazine, *Reason*, took no editorial stance on the invasion of Iraq, but merely opened it up for debate. That’s funny: to these people such issues as drug legalization and gay marriage, God help us, are never debatable. The correct Libertarian position is simply assumed. Yet when it comes to the question of mass murder, well, that’s just a matter of opinion.

The error made by the Cato crowd, especially after their fateful move to Washington, is similar to that made by those French Libertarian theorists, including the economist Fenelon, of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, who hoped to persuade the French ruling class to give up its power over the economic life of a nation and inaugurate an era of peace and freedom. Their strategy was to tutor the Duke of Burgundy, second in line to succeed to the French throne, and ally themselves with the Burgundians at the French court. When the king’s first heir died, their hopes rose. These were dashed, however, as the Duke himself and his entire family fell sick with the same illness, which likewise proved fatal, dealing a death blow to their plans to make France a laissez-faire paradise.

Writing of the tragic end of the Burgundians, in his *History of Economic Thought*, Rothbard was clearly addressing himself, at least in part, to his factional opponents in the Libertarian movement, namely the Cato group, which had chosen the path of influencing the elites rather than making a populist appeal to ordinary Americans against the power elite. And I quote, from the *History of Economic Thought*: “The tragic end of the Burgundy circle illuminates a crucial strategic flaw in the plans not only of the Burgundy circle but also the physiocrats, Turgot and the other laissez-faire thinkers of the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, for their hopes and their strategic vision were invariably to work within the matrix of the monarchy and its virtually absolute rule. The idea, in short, was to get into court, influence the corridors of power, and induce the king to adopt Libertarian ideas and impose a laissez-faire revolution.”

The Burgundy circle learned it couldn't be done, but when it comes to Libertarians, no strategic error is so egregious that it isn't repeated at least once in a generation, if not more, and always with the same results. The Beltway Libertarians are, for the most part, pursuing the Burgundian course, and they will have no better results than Fenelon and Turgot. On the other hand, the Paulistas, the radicalized, fully energized, and decidedly non-Beltway activists who were and are inspired by Ron Paul's untrammelled vision of liberty, have had some success. Surely the Paul campaign has done more to popularize Libertarianism than the combined efforts of the Koch-funded organizations have over the past two decades. It's no accident that the Paul campaign springs from the radical Rothbardian wing of the movement. Populism, an appeal to the great majority of the American people on behalf of liberty, is no vice, and if that is extremism, then let the denizens of the Beltway make the most of it. Thank you.

Q: Hi, thanks for joining us. You have a great website. I just wanted to give you that compliment. Do you see any hope for rehabilitation, if you will, of the Beltway, Burgundian, *Reason*, Cato crowd, and if so, how do you think that might come about?

**Justin Raimondo:** Well, I hear we're setting up re-education camps in Auburn, Alabama, and if they want to apply, sure, maybe a few years would make Ed Crane a normal human being. I don't know.

Q: Hi, thank you for your talk. I'm Sally Hayes from Gainesville, Florida. I'm a very good friend of Robert Poole, who founded *Reason* magazine. I'm Canadian and I've always been a bit sad that there is constant friction among various parts of the Libertarians, regardless of whether it's *Reason* or the party. But Ron Paul ran for the Libertarians; now, did he run with the Beltway, as you call them, or who was it that was in charge of the Libertarian Party when Ron Paul was the candidate? You didn't mention anything about that; I just wondered why.

**Justin Raimondo:** When he ran as the LP candidate in--

Q: Yes, yes. Was it the Beltway bunch he ran with, or—

**Justin Raimondo:** No, no, it was the good guys.

Q: Oh, I see, it was the good guys, okay.

**Justin Raimondo:** But now that you mention Bob Poole, people like Nick Gillespie and Matt Welch make me nostalgic for Bob Poole. Bob Poole and I, you know, had many disagreements over the years, mainly on foreign policy and just on questions of style. I mean, Bob is such a normal guy. He's very nice and I'm-- you know, on the other hand, quite the opposite. But the old style, you know, right wing of our movement, the more gradualist types like Bob Poole, were always polite; they never viciously attacked us all that much, even though we did attack them. I mean, Bob Poole-- I say, bring back Bob Poole.

Q: Well, he's just been retired for a few years, but he's certainly not out of the picture. And when you made the comment about more contributions being made by Ron Paul, whom I've known for many years too, I can't help but remember that Bob Poole coined the phrase "privatization" and has worked endless hours, and even now is working on getting the roadways done so that the trucks can travel in the center. So, there's just been, you know, with Reason Foundation and *Reason* magazine, many of us as Libertarians hope that there will be this bonding and getting together eventually. Thank you.

**Justin Raimondo:** I'm for it.

Q: I just had a question, and see if you could comment on this, of how we-- those of us who are not participants in think tank organizations but are here on our own regard as private individuals-- might be able to participate and educate the public and change their mindset with the decades of indoctrination and brainwashing that's taken place over stateism and collectivism, and how we can advance this.

**Justin Raimondo:** Well, I've actually been thinking about that a lot lately, and I think that what we really have to do is follow the Ron Paul model. I mean, Ron Paul talked about war and fiat money. He attacked the warmongers and the banks. I think this is key, because who is profiting from all this war? I mean, people's homes are being foreclosed all over this country, so why is that? I think that you need simple but angular slogans and that you need to really go after the bad guys. And you have to understand that, as Murray said, in politics-- Murray Rothbard-- that there's the good guys and the bad guys. And it's really good to focus on the evil of the bad guys. And that you have to go after these guys hammer and tongs, so that what you do is you take our philosophy and you apply it to what is happening today and then go after them.

Q: Hi, Justin. Thanks for reminding us of some of the roots of the divisions in the Libertarian movement. But one question I had is, you characterized the Paulistas as really Rothbardian Libertarians, I think, and I'm not quite certain we can say that because there's a big difference between the decentralized contributions of the Paulistas on the web who aren't controlled by the central apparatus of his campaign and his commercials, which in San Diego were completely bereft of his anti-war message and thus could attract nothing but the flag waving that went behind. So, I'm wondering, how do you characterize them as Rothbardians? Because I interviewed about 15 of them in San Diego just to listen to them, and I didn't sense any rootedness in their-- or philosophy underneath it. It was more a catch-can of issues.

**Justin Raimondo:** Right. Well look, ideas have consequences even though you don't know where those ideas came from. And Ron Paul is personally a Rothbardian. I mean, he was talking about, get rid of the Federal Reserve. He was attacking imperialism. He was going through the whole thing, and so even though these people didn't know where these ideas came from, they were Rothbardians anyway. So, that's the appeal. Next.

Q: Hello, it appears that most or all of us are Ron Paul supporters, and I'm just wondering what you think Murray Rothbard would think of the Barr/Root ticket.

**Justin Raimondo:** The Barr part, I think he'd be happy about; the Root part, I think he would not be that happy about, but I'm just guessing. Murray would I think approve of Barr, if only on account of the possibility that John McCain would be denied the White House on account of the votes. And Murray always tried to have this merger of, you know, the paleocons and the Libertarians, and I think that this is like Richard Viguerie showing up at our convention-- that is, a good development as long as Richard Viguerie is not in charge and we are.

Q: Thank you very much for the speech, by the way. At the end of the speech you mentioned that it was no surprise that the kind of Libertarian renaissance that we're having right now is coming from the Rothbardian-- the radical wing of Libertarianism. In many conversations with other Libertarians, there seems to be a constant battle between those who would tell us that we have to give up radicalism because it's impractical. and hence we have to be practical, we have to be pragmatic. And it seems to me that this is a canard. It seems to be the exact opposite. It's radicalism that gets things done. Can you comment on that?

**Justin Raimondo:** Well, as the Randians put it, it's a case of terminal mind/body dichotomy-- the practical is the radical. It's not prac-- I mean, look at all these pragmatists who work in Washington D.C.-- it's not practical from their point of view because they want to influence the elites but we want to reach

ordinary Americans, and the only way you can do that is with a strong message that will get noticed and not me-too-ism. So it all depends on what you want to accomplish. Radicalism works, as long as it's reasonable radicalism, and I think Ron Paul exemplifies that. He's a model for all of us to follow, and all I can say is, thank God for Ron. See you later.