

Book Reviews

Liberty Defined: 50 Essential Issues That Affect Our Freedom, by Ron Paul, hardback, 328 pp, \$24.99, ISBN 978-1-4555-0145-8, New York, NY, Grand Central Publishing, 2011.

"When the goal of political action is no longer the defense of liberty, no word other than demagoguery can describe the despicable nature of politics."

"Foreign aid can best be described as taking money from the poor in a rich country and giving it to the rich in a poor country."

"The real obscenity is the size of government and its intrusion into every aspect of our...lives."

—Rep. Ron Paul

According to 11-term Rep. Ron Paul (R-14-Texas), physician, libertarian, presidential candidate, and No. 1 *New York Times* best-selling author, people have a confused concept of what freedom is all about.

He has written this series of essays on topics that tend to confuse people, in order to inspire serious, independent thinking about them. He dedicates the book to the great intellectuals of freedom: Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich A. Hayek, Leonard E. Read, Murray N. Rothbard, and Hans F. Sennholz.

In Washington today we see graft, power grabs, senseless regulation, runaway spending, bailouts for Wall Street and the banks, a foreign policy of military expansionism, and a government completely out of control. The middle class is being destroyed, the poor suffer, and the justly rich are being looted, while the unjustly rich are getting richer, and government power is ever increasing.

As Paul points out, our current understanding of liberty follows from the (true) liberal tradition, dating from the late Middle Ages, that was devoted to freeing society from the shackles of the state. He explains that liberty allows us to exercise our individual rights in any manner that does not interfere with the exercise of the

rights of others. It permits people to work out their problems for themselves. He says it is the best antidote to prevent tyranny, which has been the eternal foe of mankind.

He believes that the fairest and most productive society is based on the simple moral imperative that everyone's life is his own, and the fruits of his labor should be his as well. He asserts that this is best achieved by following the principles of the Austrian school of economics, which champions private property, free markets, and sound money.

Austrian economics identifies the importance of the individual as the primary economic unit and shows that economic value does not exist as an inherent part of goods or services, but instead results from the human mind alone. Economic value is always changing according to our individual needs and circumstances.

Paul exposes the Keynesian Revolution of the 1930s, the economic theory of John Maynard Keynes, which he says turned truth on its head. True capital can only come from production and savings. But Keynesianism claims that saving is a drag on the economy, rather than the necessary precursor to investment, and that credit expansion solves all of our economic problems. Keynesianism has supported government intervention in the economy and has become widely accepted as the world's official economic theory.

According to Paul, government promises and panaceas are worthless. Since government never produces anything, it has nothing to give, other than that which it steals from others. So it must use theft and violence to carry out its policies. For example, taxation is always carried out by force and the threat of force.

Paul explains that whenever government wages war on anything, such as poverty, drugs, or terrorism, it is likely to make the problem worse. The worse the

problem becomes, the more excuse there is for increased government power. As he says, "It's all about power and control over others."

As Paul notes, government systems have a nearly perfect record of failure. The following are a few of the failures he discusses:

In the 20th century 26 million people have been killed by their own governments, and 44 million have been killed in wars.

Even though our Constitution provides no authority for military adventures beyond the defense of our country, our republican form of government has transitioned into the most aggressive, extended, and expansionist empire in the history of the world, with troops in 135 countries and with more than 900 military bases. Paul says our neo-conservatives dedicate themselves to "spreading America's goodness" with bombs and bullets.

The Federal Reserve Bank, which was established in 1913, is the source of our economic booms and busts. He points out that the "Fed" is allowed to make secret agreements with foreign governments and foreign banks.

There is no evidence that the federal government's involvement in education over the past 60 years, with its indoctrination of young people, has improved the quality of education. President George W. Bush's "No Child Left Behind" program passes everybody. It is a plan indicator, similar to those used in the former Soviet Union. No single child is left behind—instead they all are left behind in groups. For example, the District of Columbia school system, under the jurisdiction of Congress, is one of the most expensive, most violent, and most crime- and drug-ridden in the country. Yet it always complains to Congress that it needs more money. The only solution Paul sees is to eliminate federal controls.

On other subjects, Paul states that:

- Terrorism is a tactic of criminals, not an act of war. The war on terror is merely a metaphor to induce fear and intimidate people into giving up their liberties. It is more likely an American will die from being hit by lightning than from a terrorist attack.
- All torture is illegal, and it doesn't work. Yet even though our Constitution, our laws, international laws, and common morality all forbid it, and civilized societies for hundreds of years have rejected its use, up to two-thirds of Americans today support the use of torture by government.
- Medicare and Medicaid are already bankrupt.
- Obama's "healthcare" reforms, similar to those pushed by the Republicans over several decades, have enabled the takeover of medical care by the corporations. Today corporations, unions, and governments stand between patients and their doctors.

Many people who see all of this become cynics. But not Paul. He believes we can correct our problems by winning hearts and minds through education. He says we must form a new approach that does not rely on central management, and must discard the illusion that government can bring on utopia.

As he says, liberty built civilization in the first place, and it can rebuild civilization. It will happen—either in our time or in the future. Our job is to prepare the way.

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The Ruling Class: How They Corrupted America and What We Can Do About It, by Angelo M. Codevilla, softcover, 160 pp, ISBN-13: 978-0825305580, \$12.95, New York, N.Y., Beaufort Books, 2010.

Let's get the flaws of *The Ruling Class* out of the way. There are only two: one, the foreword was written by Rush Limbaugh, and two, it is an *American Spectator* book. These are flaws because they give the false impression that the author is a skill for the

Republican Party and that the book is a conservative attack on liberals.

A professor emeritus at Boston University, the author actually makes a bipartisan and justifiable attack on the elites of both political parties and on other members of what he calls the ruling class. Oozing smugness and arrogance, the members see themselves as being intellectually and morally superior to common folk. Thus, like Plato's guardian class, they believe that they have the right and responsibility to use government power to remake society in their image.

Not counting the appendix and bibliography, the book is a short 87 pages, all of which are worth reading multiple times. That makes it nine pages longer than another masterpiece of the same genre, *The Law*, by Frederic Bastiat (1801-1850).

Bastiat made his classic case for a just society in reaction to the growing socialism of his native France. Codevilla makes his case in reaction to the statism, arrogance, crony capitalism, and self-dealing of the ruling class, which consists of academics, big businesses, big banks, unions, public-sector employees, and the establishment media. Although the conventional wisdom is that some of these groups are ideological enemies of the other groups, they are actually united in using government to further their own advantages in power, influence, status, and money, with the blessing and encouragement of one or both of the political parties. When soft inducements don't work, they are not adverse to resorting to extortion, ad hominem attacks, and legal and regulatory harassment.

You won't find either *The Law* or *The Ruling Class* on the required reading list of public K-12 schools and universities, which are part of the ruling class. That is reason enough to read both books.

The Law was a prophetic book. It foretold what would happen if governments engaged in legal plunder under the guise of fairness and justice, in accord with Rousseau's social contract and the other collectivist philosophies popular in Bastiat's day. Today the results can be seen in the unsustainable social-welfare states in Europe and America and in Harvard law

professor and ideological partner of President Obama, Elizabeth Warren, who is running for the U.S. Senate against Scott Brown. Her recent tirade about social justice, citing Rousseau's social contract, was widely circulated on the internet.

The Ruling Class is also a prophetic book. Written before the \$500 million political payoff to Solyndra hit the windmill and splattered green subsidy shrapnel all over the Administration, here is what the book says about green energy subsidies:

[B]y taxing the use of carbon fuels and subsidizing "alternative energy," our Ruling Class created arguably the world's biggest opportunity for making money out of things that few, if any, would buy absent its intervention. The prospect of legislation that would put a price on carbon emissions and allot certain amounts to certain companies set off a feeding frenzy among large companies to show support for a "green agenda," because such allotments would be worth some \$1.2 trillion in the first ten years. All of those dollars would come from higher energy prices imposed on consumers. That is why companies hired some 2,500 lobbyists in 2009 to deepen their involvement in "climate change." At the very least, such involvement benefits them by making them into privileged collectors of carbon taxes. The revenue would finance "green" contracts and subcontracts, jobs and consultancies galore, paying millions of Americans to produce otherwise unsalable goods, and living in privileged lifestyles at the expense of their less well connected neighbors.

Readers who want step-by-step solutions will be disappointed in the book, for it discusses solutions in general terms and not specific how-to steps. It assumes that readers have deductive reasoning and common sense and can figure out what they can do on their own. In other words, the author is not an elitist who presumes to know the best course of action for each reader.

At the risk of being an elitist myself, I'll suggest the first two steps: Read the book and then buy 10 copies as Christmas presents.

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Constitutional Chaos, by Andrew P. Napolitano, softcover, 234 pp, \$14.99, ISBN 978-0-7852-6083-7, Nashville, Tenn., Thomas Nelson, 2006.

This book details many examples of constitutional infringement by the judiciary, and this brief book review can glance at only a few.

The Founding Fathers certainly foresaw the escalation of the legislative and executive branches, with attendant curtailing of basic individual and states' rights. So, it designed a braking system, the judicial branch, which would protect those basic rights. When judges, who are duly sworn to uphold the U.S. Constitution, fail to maintain that oath, chaos ensues.

This book is aptly subtitled "What Happens When the Government Breaks Its Own Laws." The author, Andrew P. Napolitano, is a former federal judge and currently Fox News Channel's senior judicial analyst. Read the entire book, but not at bedtime, lest you invite nightmares.

Napolitano begins by discussing Natural Law, which holds that certain basic rights cannot be legislated (taken away) by the majority, since "Thomas Jefferson argues that our rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness come not from government, but from our Creator."

According to federal criminal code, the U.S. government claims it is a crime to lie to federal agents. Napolitano wonders why it is a crime for private citizens to lie to FBI agents and police, when we are continually lied to by government agents? Furthermore, he asks, does the Constitution "give the federal government this kind of power?" The judge is sharply critical of Martha Stewart's conviction of "lying to investigators," "obstruction of justice," and "conspiracy."

As a judge, Napolitano always upheld the Constitution rather than yielding to lying, over-reaching officers. He recounts

an incident in which police claimed to have stopped a vehicle with a "broken tail light," and that such was noted from three-tenths of a mile away! Furthermore, the police claimed that when frisking the subject without a warrant, the officer just happened to feel a "brick" in the man's pocket. Judge Napolitano, incredulous that a bag of cocaine could feel like a brick that the officer feared could be "used as a weapon," asked to see the brick. When he squeezed this "brick" in open court, it broke, spewing cocaine powder everywhere! The officer had obviously lied, and the case was dismissed.

If it is despicable for the police and FBI agents to lie, how does one explain moral turpitude traced all the way up to Boston prosecutors, the Massachusetts governor, and J. Edgar Hoover? In 1965, the FBI knew that "Jimmy the Bear" Flemmi had been ordered to hit Edward "Teddy" Deegan two days before the actual murder. However, because of Flemmi's value as an informant, he was not prosecuted, in spite of the fact that the FBI knew he was the murderer and that he was likely to commit more murders! Years later, Joseph Salvati was framed by the FBI agents and successfully prosecuted for Deegan's murder. Even J. Edgar Hoover knew Salvati was not guilty of this murder. Salvati spent 30 years in jail owing to fabricated testimony that government agents all the way up to J. Edgar Hoover knew was false.

What about government agents who literally steal from the public? Napolitano describes a young man's arrest for transporting women across New York's George Washington Bridge for illicit purposes. The police used this as an excuse for confiscating his car, which was then given to the chief county prosecutor for his personal use! Judge Napolitano ordered the car returned to its owner. A decade later, this prosecutor introduced Napolitano to his wife, who blurted out, "Is this the judge who took your car away?"

Napolitano describes the all-too-common government buying of testimony, noting that the federal statute provides that "whoever...gives, offers, or promises anything of value to any person, for... testimony under oath...shall be fined... imprisoned for (up to) two years, or both."

Since the practice of offering leniency to criminals in exchange for their testimony constitutes bribery, and creates the probability of perjured testimony, there are countless county, state, and federal prosecutors who should be incarcerated and fined for violation of the federal statute.

Napolitano is particularly distressed over the assault on constitutional freedoms following the attacks of September 2001. He wryly notes:

If the government can get documents about you and evidence against you from your financial institution under the guise of national security, i.e., without a showing of probable cause, but use it in a criminal case against you, then the Constitution's protections—its guarantees—have been eviscerated. Without fidelity to the Constitution, there is no privacy, and without privacy there is nothing to prevent the government from breaking down doors in the night—under the guise of national security—and taking whatever or whomever it wants.

Several habeas corpus violations are detailed in this book, some of which, fortunately, the Supreme Court reversed.

Napolitano notes that when a citizen commits a crime, retribution is exacted. "But when government commits a crime, and the offending government actors are not prosecuted, it becomes a precedent; no slate is wiped clean.... The precedent is contagious because unpunished crime is contagious; it breeds contempt for law and invites some to become a law unto themselves."

"What Can We Do?" is the title of Chapter 13. Napolitano offers three suggestions: 1) Legislatures should enact legislation requiring every government employee to "comply with all the laws." 2) Sue the bastards (Napolitano's terminology). 3) Defend the Constitution.

This book should be required reading for each U.S. citizen as well as for each foreigner entertaining a visit to the U.S.

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