

America's Worst Enemy

by George F. Smith

I know a woman in her mid-80s who's doing quite well for herself. She maintains a house and large yard, cooks for her grandkids, and enjoys her bridge club. Yet, given the way our culture works, it's not unthinkable that Big Brother might someday send her a .38 for her birthday and invite her to check out.

As shocking as it sounds, this is the kind of outrage to expect when people surrender responsibility for their lives to others. Self-styled experts, such as the duty-to-die group, which includes former Colorado governor Richard Lamm, promote their views as good for "society." In their case, they believe if people have reached a certain age they've lived long enough, whether they're healthy or not.¹ Since many of these experts draw government paychecks, should it be surprising when some of their pronouncements get enacted into law?

Let's say the devil with them and take our lives back. It starts with an understanding of that weighty word, responsibility.

As psychologist Nathaniel Branden puts it, responsibility "requires that you consciously become the cause of the results that you want. [It is refusing] to behave like a victim or to wait for someone to save you from life's problems."²

If one result we want is political freedom, how do we consciously create it? By under-

standing what it is and promoting it in our personal and professional lives.

Our founders made exacting efforts to institute a government limited to our common defense, one that lacked the power to be nanny, bully, or thief. Unfortunately, they also said the state should promote the general welfare, which has sanctioned a meddlers free-for-all. But as *The Federalist Papers* attempted to make clear, this was not their intention. If we look at history we can see why: this country was created by spectacular acts of individual initiative. An obvious example is the signing of the Declaration of Independence. But it spread beyond a handful of elites in Independence Hall.

On July 9, 1776, the Declaration was read publicly in New York City, the first such reading outside Philadelphia. It was a document of outrageous treason to the ruling British government. Responsible citizens, no matter how just their grievances, did not take up arms against the king.

Some of the audience thought differently. After the public reading, they marched to nearby Bowling Green Park, where stood a lead statue of the king surrounded by a large iron fence. In a frenzy, they ripped down the fence, lassoed the statue, and tore it off its marble pedestal. Adding appropriate punctuation, they smashed the icon to bits and melted the lead into 42,000 musket balls they later used to fire upon the king's soldiers.³

By engaging in political treason against the most feared nation on earth, the colonists

George Smith (gfs543@bellsouth.net) is a freelance writer.

were signing their own death warrants, literally, for the right to take full responsibility for their lives.

As Representative Ron Paul, economist Walter Williams, and others have pointed out, the colonists put up with a lot less from a despotic king than we do from our elected officials.

It's tempting to believe we no longer fight for our freedom because the notion of "we're all in this together" has snuffed out personal responsibility. It hasn't, but its decline is being fostered by widespread semantic corruption, in which "freedom" has taken on the Orwellian features of slavery. The new freedom is "inclusive," we're told—as if the original freedom were not—and this requires strong state rule and unlimited funding to ensure everyone is equally free.

Fortunately, specious reasoning like this hasn't infected everyone. Two months before the Event That Changed Everything, citizens in Nashville, Tennessee, became incensed when they found out politicians were trying to institute a state income tax in an 11th-hour session of the legislature. Known reverently as the Tennessee Tea Party, over 1,000 people stormed the capitol, pounding on doors and hurling rocks at windows, one of which landed in Governor Don Sundquist's office. The protesters rallied outside for several hours until the senate backed down and passed a budget with no new taxes.⁴

Tragically, the sounds we heard after the 9-11 attacks were more pleading than protesting. "Save us," Americans cried to the government that failed to protect them.

Tightening Government's Grip

Politicians listened once again, but this time they passed "security" measures that in fact do little more than tighten government's grip on our lives. For instance, we're supposed to be relieved to know our intelligence services can now read terrorist e-mails legally—leaving "terrorist" to be defined as they see fit—when they already know that major terrorist organizations rely on steganogra-



King George III's statue being torn down in New York City after a reading of the Declaration of Independence, July 9, 1776

phy (hiding files within a file) to communicate messages. According to computer forensic experts, it's virtually impossible to even detect steganographic files, let alone discern their contents. So whose e-mail will Big Brother be reading?⁵

Thankfully, in the post-cataclysmic rush to subdue freedom there have been significant acts of grassroots rebellion. One of the most brilliant came on September 15, 2001, the first day the government allowed airlines to resume service. As United Flight 564 pulled away from its gate in Denver en route to Washington, D.C., the pilot told his passengers their lives were in their own hands now—the government could not protect them.

"If someone or several people stand up and say they are hijacking this plane," he told them, "I want you all to stand up together. Then take whatever you have available to you and throw it at them. Throw it at their faces and heads so they will have to raise their hands to protect themselves.

"We will not allow them to take over this plane. I find it interesting that the U.S. Constitution begins with the words 'We, the people.' That's who we are, the people, and we will not be defeated."⁶

Can you imagine the outcry to such an announcement before 9-11? The pilot would have likely been furloughed for stress, if not fired, and many of the passengers would have filed complaints.

On this day they broke into sustained applause, as did travelers on other flights who heard similar announcements. The passengers became instant patriots—in the sense of sharing with our founders their willingness to take responsibility for their fate.

People will eventually learn that in allowing the government to run their lives, it's ruining them instead. It won't happen overnight, but they will start demanding to have control back. They will insist that government rid itself of anything that interferes with its proper function of securing our right to live free.

They will see that their abnegation has become America's worst enemy by making government an unaccountable brute that threatens their very existence. On that day, self-responsibility, which has manifest survival value, will no longer be an obsolete ideal to be legislated into extinction. □

1. See Stuart Anderson, "The World According to Dick Lamm," August 22, 1996; www.cato.org/dailys/7-28-96.html.
2. Nathaniel Branden, "It's Your Life So Make the Most of It," www.nathanielbranden.net/ess/ess09.html.
3. See <http://tlc.discovery.com/tlcpages/newyork/1776.html>.
4. Leon Alligood, Rob Johnson, and Duren Cheek, "Crowd Hurls Rocks, Rhetoric to Protest Tax," *The Tennessean*, July 13, 2001; <http://tennessean.com/local/archives/01/04/06531563.shtml>.
5. Robert Vamosi, "How the NSA Is Monitoring You—And Why It's Wasting Its Time," ZDNet, June 27, 2001; www.zdnet.com/anchordesk/stories/story/0,10738,2780166,00.html.
6. David Remnick, "Many Voices," *The New Yorker*, October 15, 2001; www.newyorker.com/THE_TALK_OF_THE_TOWN/CONTENT/2011015ta_talk_comment.



Save 30%

THE GOD OF THE MACHINE

by Isabel Paterson

with a new introduction by Stephen Cox

Published in 1943, this is an original theory of history and a bold defense of individualism as the source of moral and political progress. Paterson's case for the inevitable failure of collectivism reads today like prophecy.

IN5779 (paperback) 308p.

\$24.95

LF PRICE ONLY \$17.50

(please add \$2 shipping & handling for each item)

Order toll-free & save:

1-800-326-0996, Dept. IOL

LAISSEZ FAIRE BOOKS

938 Howard Street, #202 • San Francisco, CA 94103

Orders out to you in 24 hours — Satisfaction guaranteed

World's largest source of books on liberty • Check our website: www.laissezfairebooks.com