

IPS PRINCIPLE PERSPECTIVE

A Quarterly Update for Donors & Friends of IPS

2nd Quarter 2010

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FREEDOM MOVEMENT MANIFESTO

There are a myriad of political groups and movements all over the country, but what will it take for a Freedom Movement to have a lasting impact on America's future?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES *of* GOVERNMENT CLASSES

COMING TO CERES AND NEWARK THIS SEPTEMBER!

A recent attendee of Biblical Principles of Government made this comment on the 20-hour class: “This class challenged us to be Biblically transformed by the renewing of the mind. Mike’s stories, anecdotes, and examples bring seemingly complex issues into Biblical focus and clarity. Powerful, bold, and convicting!” Another student exclaimed, “It really changed my life!” Yet another attendee enthused, “Biblical Principles of Government is by far the most worthwhile course I’ve ever taken and should be strongly encouraged by every pastor in this country.”

Can government take any action it pleases? How do we decide what governments can and cannot do? What about terrorism? Is it necessary to give up rights to gain security? What does the Bible say about the roles of family, church, and government? What about the separation of church and state? What causes poverty and how is it best addressed? Is public debt acceptable? These and many other questions are addressed in the 10-week Biblical Principles of Government class, taught by IPS president Mike Winther. If you and your family are interested in broadening your understanding of your Christian worldview and how biblical principles apply to every avenue of life — including government — won’t you consider attending the next Biblical Principles class?

We are pleased to announce that the Biblical Principles class is coming to Newark and to Ceres this fall, beginning in September. For more information, see the informational flier that is enclosed with this newsletter, or call the IPS office. Advanced online registration for both classes is now open at www.principlestudies.org!

CONSERVATIVE BOOKS GALORE! By Michael Winther

Hardly a day goes by in which we don’t see the release of a new book targeted to the “conservative” market. With precious few exceptions, every “conservative” with any name recognition whatsoever has recently written or is writing a book. We have seen “conservative” books from almost every talk show host, most heads of semi-political organizations, many religious leaders, unsuccessful political candidates, and even a few successful candidates.

This tsunami of right-of-center opinion is, at best, a mixed blessing. These new books can be a blessing if they accurately educate readers, or if they motivate citizens to take a greater interest in matters of public policy. On the other hand, these books can be a curse if they mis-educate or de-motivate their readers. Those of us who favor limited government and value our nation’s Constitution need to be cognizant of several things when we look at these popular “conservative” books.

1) Few of these books will withstand the test of time.

Although portions of these books may have some current value, few of them contain unique, thorough, or in-depth analysis of the issues that they address. While we are reading these new books, there are dozens of older, more powerful works that we are neglecting—many of which address the same issues in a superior way.

2) Few of these books will be read by readers with opposing worldviews.

As a good capitalist, I understand that the primary goal of most authors and publishers is to make money from their work. In publishing, the best way to make money seems to be to preach to the choir. I grant that it is permissible to preach to the choir if the choir needs the message. But if the message is merely rehash to the readers, it can be unproductive to the ultimate cause.

3) Most of these books, while containing some good information, also contain important fundamental errors.

As members of the choir, it is easy for us to read the latest work by one of our heroes and leave our discernment behind. After cheering for the author for 11 chapters, there is a real danger that we will be caught unaware by some part of the message that misses the mark. The further we read into a book with which we agree, the less discernment we are inclined to exercise. We need to be especially vigilant in this area.

Remember that most of our contemporary heroes gained their platform because of coverage from media outlets that oppose a limited government worldview. If our philosophical adversaries are choosing or creating our leaders (and they are), we have every reason to be extremely cautious, even skeptical, of what these leaders preach. 

FREEDOM MOVEMENT MANIFESTO

Could We Be Campaigning Our Way to Defeat?

By Michael R. Winther

Note to readers: While the following article is addressed specifically to the Tea Party movement, the principles discussed here are relevant to every organization and movement in support of a cause.



One of the most frequently-asked political questions of our day is, “What will come of the Tea Party movement?” Both the left and the right seem to recognize the potential of this movement, but will this “potential” ultimately result in any substantial impact on America or American politics? The Tea Party movement currently has momentum, but long-term success will require caution and strategy.

Here are four factors that could limit the success and impact of the movement.

1) Insufficient commonality

People tend to affiliate and organize themselves based on commonalities (or like-mindedness). The greater the commonality, the greater the likelihood of success; without adequate commonality, no group will long survive. Generally, this commonality is most important in the areas most closely related to the mission of the group. For example, theological agreement may not be necessary for the success of the rotary club, but it is critical to a church. Political agreement may not be necessary for the garden club, but it is quite important for a Tea Party group.

For many Tea Party groups, the current commonalities within the movement are based on broad generalizations. Most participants will agree that government is too big, spends too much money, and is too intrusive on individual liberties. These are all nice-sounding platitudes with which Tea Party participants are very likely to agree. But despite this general agreement, many participants in the movement have significantly different views about the underlying details.

These details produce hundreds of important questions on which members might disagree or divide. Members should ask questions like: Do I object to big government only because of what it costs my family or do I object to it on moral, ethical, or principle grounds? Do I oppose the amount of income tax or do I oppose the method of taxation itself? Are government welfare programs an entirely unacceptable use of government, or should they just be scaled back? What is the proper use of our nation’s military? Should government regulate financial markets a lot, a little, or not at all? What is the proper role of government in protecting the environment? Do we want term limits for elected officials? Should juries be limited in their ability to award damages in civil trials?

It would be easy to conceive of one hundred potentially divisive issues such as these. If differences of opinion over each of these one hundred issues reduces the ranks of a local Tea Party group by even 1%, the group would soon cease to exist—or it would split into 100 different groups, each too small to survive.

Although 100% commonality is neither possible nor necessary, it is still a very important ingredient to survival. It is impossible to say exactly how much like-mindedness a group needs in order to survive and flourish, but experience demonstrates that an inadequate amount will doom any organization. On the other hand, commonality is only a good thing if those commonly-held beliefs are correct beliefs.

How, then, do you promote healthy commonality and correct beliefs? To this question there are two important keys: attitude and education. First, to foster the most beneficial attitude within the group, every member and all local leadership needs to develop a sincere mindset of being truth seekers. Every discussion, debate, or disagreement needs to be approached as friendly, cooperative efforts to find truth. An effective development of these attitudes will be essential to the success of the movement.

The second key to achieving both commonality and correct beliefs is education. As the members of a group educate themselves, there should be both increasing understanding of truth and increasing commonality. If any group fails to teach and promote truth, then it is good that it shrinks or disbands.

Even if a group (through education, dialogue, and patience) moves toward greater commonality, recruitment and growth will, of necessity, bring differing philosophies into the group. The newcomers will need to gain an understanding of the movement’s truth-seeking mindset and begin their own extended education. It is also helpful if the group learns to major on the majors, but minor on the minors.

2) Incomplete philosophy

The Tea Party movement contains large numbers of people who know that things are wrong in America, but haven’t yet identified all of the solutions. It is easy to oppose a particular leader who blatantly promotes socialism

and big government, but if the reaction is to blindly support the opposing party or political figure, the group will accomplish very little. It is absolutely essential for liberty-minded groups to develop fundamental principles and philosophies by which all candidates and parties will be measured. Candidate A shouldn't be measured by comparing him or her to candidate B. Instead, all candidates should be measured against the same sound, fundamental principles.

I'm not convinced that many liberty-minded groups have developed and identified these core principles. The secret for the movement is not to preserve its ideology, but rather to find it.

3) Centralization of leadership

Many commentators have lamented the absence of central organization or the lack of a charismatic leader in the Tea Party movement, but such centralization of leadership can be loaded with dangers. Such a centralization of "command and control" puts the success or failure (and the ideology) of the movement largely in the hands of this central leadership. One of the greatest strengths of the Tea Party movement is that it is currently an uprising of concerned citizens—truly a grassroots movement, unencumbered by any central bureaucracy. All that would be necessary to redirect the movement would be to influence, control, or subvert that grassroots leadership. One of the often-repeated tenants of the Tea Party movement is that civil government ought to be decentralized. If this is true of civil government, then it may also be true for the Tea Party movement itself.

In application of the concept of centralized leadership, one of the chief problems of our day is that we don't understand the proper role of government. If this is true of Americans in general, it is especially true of our leaders—even those outside the mainstream. It is dangerous to assume that any leader has an infallible philosophy, and it is even more dangerous to assume entirely pure motives on the part of our leaders.

At the risk of sounding unnecessarily cynical, we need to be 100 times more discerning than we are now. Where do our "conservative" limited government leaders come from? How do we hear about these people? The unfortunate reality is that our leaders on the "right" are often created by the media and the institutions of the "left". We should also remember that the leading "conservative" news network of our day is owned by a dedicated liberal. Time and time again, we embrace certain heroes who we support and follow for a time, only to discover a few years later that these heroes have compromised the philosophies and values that first endeared them to us.

“It will be important for movement activists to resist the temptation to compromise their principles in exchange for acceptance by the elite.”

Perhaps we overestimate the value of having centralized leadership in a movement. If we can learn the right concepts and understand good strategy, our actions can be more effective without national, central leadership than they would be with it. In the end, the success or failure of the movement will depend on decentralized, local leadership. By reading and studying good books, any honest, inquiring citizen can have a better understanding of government and economics than any of the "conservative" leaders that may rise to prominence on the national stage.

4) False flattery

How badly does the movement want a seat at the table? If the Tea Party movement experiences any success, politicians and other organizations will pander to it. Many of these politicians and organizations possess credibility and clout that may be envied by political outsiders. It will be important for movement activists to resist the temptation to compromise their principles in exchange for acceptance by the elite.

Having considered these four vulnerabilities of any political movement, we must now recognize that it is essential for a movement to have a clearly-defined set of goals. This section will present 7 goals to consider. These goals are equally applicable to an organization like IPS, and I strongly believe that our own organization must hold to them as well.

1) Focus on education.

Educating ourselves: Too often we don't know what it is that we don't know. Tea Party groups—and other liberty-minded movements—must start with the understanding that the most important concepts of government and economics have not been taught in American schools for over a century. The problems in America and the world are not limited to the changes in philosophy that we have observed in our lifetimes. It is imperative, therefore, that Tea Party members dig deep to test our political, economic, and historical assumptions. Perhaps the most

dangerous peril is that we might assume things that we should not assume. Just because we learned something in school 30 or 40 years ago doesn't necessarily mean that it is correct.

Educating others: The last half-century has produced numerous movements that have attempted to stem the tide of socialism and big government. Some of these include: the 1964 Barry Goldwater campaign, and the movements that it spawned; the mid-1970's Moral Majority movement; the 1980 Reagan Revolution; the explosion of "conservative" talk radio; and now the Tea Party movements.

Although some positive achievements can be attributed to each of these movements, the ultimate result, in each case, was that America continued its shift toward bigger and bigger government. Whether we characterize the result of these movements as failure or just lack of success is only an academic question. In fairness, these movements may have been successful in slowing the growth of government, but we can credit them with very little more than that.

A parallel to a current event might be instructive. On April 20th, the explosion and fire on the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig resulted in an underwater gusher of crude oil that has polluted a sizeable chunk of the Gulf of Mexico. While hundreds of thousands of people work to clean up the effects of the leak, the leak itself has continued unabated for weeks. Anyone familiar with the situation recognizes the importance of stopping the flow of oil at its source. The best use of resources (both money and manpower) is to fix the problem at its source. Only those resources that cannot be effectively used to stop the leak should be directed to cleanup efforts, because all cleanup efforts are doomed to eventual failure if the leak is not plugged.

Our efforts to win elections and affect policy can be compared to the gulf clean-up efforts—important work, to be sure, but ultimately doomed to failure unless the source of the problem is fixed. ****Pull-quote**** Thousands of patriotic Americans labor tirelessly to put good people into elective office, just like those who labor to protect the beaches and marshes from crude oil. These are noble and beneficial efforts, but only if these resources of time and money could not be effectively channeled to the more critical educational effort.

While we labor to win elections, our nation's schools are gushing forth millions of students who have been conditioned to desire bigger government. While we circulate petitions and write letters to our representatives, our media is spewing out thousands of barrels of statist and socialist ideology that is reinforcing what is taught in our schools and subtly adding to the citizen's confusion.

To be effective in the long run, any movement must focus primarily on changing the hearts and minds of millions of Americans. This can only be accomplished through several strategies. First, we must educate large numbers of Americans in the principles of good government and sound economics. Second, we must begin to reduce the size, enrollment, and influence of government-funded schools. This is the primary source of what is polluting the shorelines of our political and social institutions. Third, we must create and support media outlets that don't have a statist agenda. All three of these strategies are essential to any long-term success. Shortcuts around any of these strategies will be doomed to failure.

“...we will have only temporary victories until we replace the educational and media machines that produce socialist thinking...”

2) Create reasonable expectations.

Start with the understanding that this is a long, difficult battle. People become discouraged when the reality falls short of their expectations. If we expect fast results (maybe 2, 4, or 6 years), we are likely to become discouraged when the battle takes longer or the results are initially disappointing. Local Tea Party groups will find it difficult to retain active members if their leaders create overly optimistic expectations.

Each of the following scenarios can weaken the movement unless we have a proper perspective and effective strategies:

- Our candidates lose and we get discouraged
- Our candidates win and betray us and we get discouraged
- Our candidates win and betray us and we don't know it
- Our candidates win but along the way we become a little more socialist in our thinking

In every election cycle, the Republicans go to battle against the "liberal Democrats". For a century now, the outcome has been relatively consistent: government grows, liberty declines, and both major political parties move gently closer to socialism. Even if we maintain our purity of ideology and our candidates win and vote properly, we

will have only temporary victories until we replace the educational and media machines that produce socialist thinking throughout the country.

3) Don't measure success by electoral victories.

Election Day victories are certainly welcome, but the real goal is much bigger than winning elections. In fact, the real goal is bigger, even, than winning every single election on Election Day. The real goal is a population that fully understands the proper role of government and is willing to support this goal regardless of the personal consequences. We want a population that has such a complete, consistent, and thorough understanding of government, economics, and history that they cannot be deceived by compromised ideas or by compromising people. We desire a discerning electorate that will always cast their ballots in favor in liberty and righteousness, even if there is no organized Tea Party effort. Winning elections is thinking too small.

4) Be truth seekers.

Don't assume that anyone has arrived at the destination of truth. We should all be on a journey seeking truth, but should never assume that we have totally arrived. The assumption that any of us has arrived creates a complacency in which we stop learning and studying. This assumption may also contribute to unnecessary strife within the group. We should always welcome gentle and relaxed dialogue on the important issues of the day.

5) Have goals.

Tea Party groups (and other liberty-minded groups) must avoid the practice sometimes referred to as "meet, eat, and retreat". Every productive group needs a multitude of projects by which progress and success can be measured. For every project, there should be short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term goals—for the group as a whole and for its individual members.

6) Create a proper mix of education and action.

Education without action is a waste of the precious resource of knowledge, but action without education is a dangerous waste of effort. For the Tea Party movement—and other movements and organizations like it—to succeed, it must instill in its members a love of both learning and action. We live in an age and a time when reading (much less studying) is a lost discipline, and few people can say that they have a true love of learning. The successful movement must cultivate this love of learning. Some of us are so anxious to do something, anything, that we go off half-cocked, rendering most of our efforts nothing more than a misfire. Conversely, some people love to read and study, but are hesitant to take any action.

As an aside, we need to make sure that we don't define "action" too narrowly. Effective action includes far more

“Education without action is a waste of the precious resource of knowledge, but action without education is a dangerous waste of effort.”

than attending a rally or walking precincts for our favorite candidate. Effective action also includes things like inviting someone to hear a good speaker, contributing funds to worthy groups, writing letters to the editor, giving someone a good book, or leading a study group.

7) Have fun.

Promoting liberty and fighting statism is serious work. But if we leave this work exclusively to those dedicated few who will labor for liberty with no reward whatsoever, the workforce will be small. Certainly it would be nice if right-thinking Americans would get (and stay) involved solely because of the importance of the work. The truth of the matter, though, is that we are all pleasure seekers who prefer fun to work. Since liberty-minded groups should be attempting to expand their ranks beyond the dedicated few, it is important to make the work as enjoyable as possible.

In order to refine strategies for making activities enjoyable, group leaders might benefit by studying the meetings and activities of successful service clubs. Find active, growing, and successful groups and see what they do to maintain interest.

Conclusion

No effective freedom movement can long exist without being challenged or attacked by its opponents—especially opponents who are well-financed and entrenched in the system. Although the Tea Party movement has experienced some direct attack by the media, a much greater threat comes in the form of subtle and seductive attempts to weaken, subvert, or misdirect the efforts of well-meaning patriots. Leaders of local Tea Party groups need to be especially vigilant to keep the movement on track.

The Tea Party movement must also be aware that dozens of other well-meaning movements have come and gone without reversing the growth of government in America. The common thread in the failure of each of these groups and movements has been their inability to develop a consistent, comprehensive, and principled understanding

of government and economics—and then to successfully educate others to share in this understanding.

The historical graveyard of liberty movements is full of organizations that put action ahead of education, that put pragmatism ahead of principle, and that put the personality of leaders ahead of prudence. We are all anxious to change the philosophy of the Capital, the Whitehouse, and the Supreme Court, but these institutions will always be a reflection, more or less, of our citizenry. Any effort to

change government that skips the education of American citizens will ultimately fail.

It is essential to remember that elections are little more than the report card on our educational efforts. If we don't stop the leak of socialism at its source, there is no way that our political efforts can keep the beaches clean. Unless the bulk of our time and money goes to education in sound principles, we are just campaigning our way to defeat. 

THEY CAME FIRST for the Communists,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a
Communist.

THEN THEY CAME for the Jews,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.

THEN THEY CAME for the trade unionists,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade
unionist.

THEN THEY CAME for the Catholics,
and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.

THEN THEY CAME for me,
and by that time no one was left to speak up.

Pastor Martin Niemöller, from a speech delivered in 1946.

RATCHET EFFECT

By Mary Theroux

FIRST Truman went to war against Korea without
Congress, and I didn't speak up because the
communists had to be stopped.

THEN Clinton passed the Antiterrorism and
Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996,
and I didn't speak up because innocent people
don't need habeas corpus.

THEN Bush passed the USA PATRIOT Act,
and I didn't speak up because terrorists don't
deserve trials.

THEN Obama ridiculed the Supreme Court,
and I didn't speak up because I don't like
corporations.

THEN Obama classified the Constitution as
messy rules standing in the way of important
ends, and by that time no one could remember
what a root principle is.

With apologies to Pastor Niemöller

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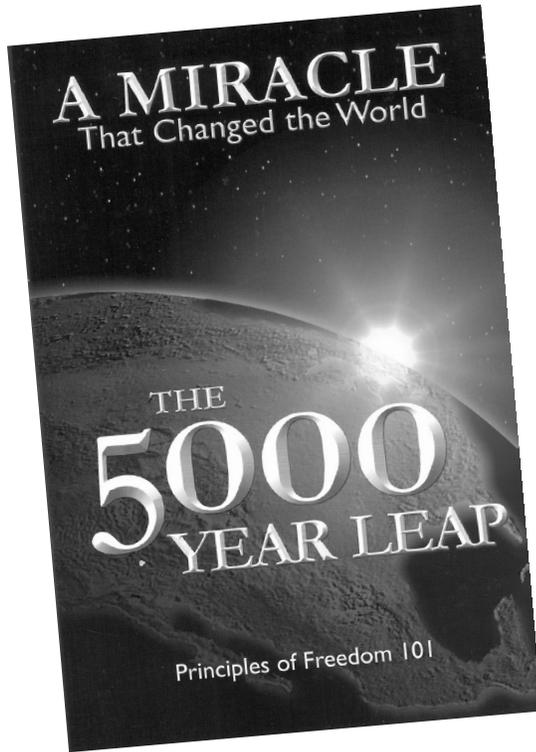
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Editor: Jenna Holliday

BOOK REVIEW: *The 5,000 Year Leap* BY W. CLEON SKOUSEN

By Jenna R. Holliday



John Adams called the Constitution of the United States “the greatest single effort of national deliberation that the world has ever seen.” George Washington said that the adoption of the Constitution “will demonstrate as visibly the finger of Providence as any possible event in the course of human affairs can ever designate it.” Historians of the past and present agree that something truly extraordinary happened during the four sweltering months of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. Never before in the history of human governments had a group of men come together to reason, discuss, and ultimately form a system of government for a new nation. The outcome of the Convention was unlike anything the world had ever seen—and the document that emerged gave shape to a newborn nation that was destined to become the greatest “noble experiment” the world had ever seen.

But what was it about the ideas of the Founding Fathers that brought about such a unique, comprehensive, and brilliant Constitution? The delegates to the Convention came from vastly different backgrounds, with varying levels of education, and yet the unanimity of their

ideas, at the core, was remarkable. Clearly, there were underlying principles that influenced their thought and aided in the process of creating the Constitution. But what exactly were those principles? And, perhaps more importantly, is modern America still adhering to such principles, or have they fallen by the wayside?

These are the questions Cleon Skousen raises in his book *The 5,000-Year Leap*. In the preface, Skousen recalls how he always had a “nagging curiosity as to why someone had not taken the time and trouble to catalogue the ingredients of the Founding Fathers’ phenomenal success formula so it would be less complex and easier to digest.” After years of searching for a book that would successfully analyze the elements of the Founding Fathers’ genius, Skousen finally decided he would have to write the book himself, and thus began a “most gratifying visit with many of the Founders through their letters, biographies, and speeches.”

The book that ultimately materialized begins with a sketch of the historical backdrop of America’s founding and some of the political principles that made their way into the system of government the Founders devised. After laying this historical foundation, Skousen then presents 28 fundamental principles that became the backbone of the American Constitution. These principles are as follows:

1. The Genius of Natural Law
2. A Virtuous and Moral People
3. Virtuous and Moral Leaders
4. The Role of Religion
5. The Role of the Creator
6. All Men Are Created Equal
7. Equal Rights, Not Equal Things
8. Man’s Unalienable Rights
9. The Role of Revealed Law
10. Sovereignty of the People
11. Who Can Alter the Government?
12. Advantages of a Republic
13. Protection Against Human Frailty
14. Property Rights Essential to Liberty
15. Free-market Economics
16. The Separation of Powers
17. Checks and Balances
18. Importance of a Written Constitution
19. Limiting the Powers of Government

20. Majority Rule, Minority Rights
21. Strong Local Self-government
22. Government by Law, Not by Men
23. Importance of an Educated Electorate
24. Peace Through Strength
25. Avoid Entangling Alliances
26. Protecting the Role of the Family
27. Avoiding the Burden of Debt
28. The Founders' Sense of Manifest Destiny

The 5,000-Year Leap is overflowing with fascinating information, presented in a manner that is both highly readable and enjoyable. Perhaps one of most striking aspects of the book—something that will be familiar to readers who have read *The Making of America*, Skousen's terrific book on the American Constitution—is the fact that Skousen draws extensive portions of his material directly from the Founding Fathers' own words. As he develops each foundational principle, he incorporates direct quotations from the Founders to explain these ideas in the context of America's founding. Skousen is not just formulating his personal opinion on the concepts that undergirded the Constitution; he demonstrates through source materials that this was also the mindset of America's Founders.

While much of *The 5,000-Year Leap's* content is stellar and relevant, there is one section that, from an ideological perspective, should be taken with a rather large proverbial grain of salt. Skousen's twenty-third principle states, "A free society cannot survive as a republic without a broad program of general education." Throughout this chapter, one of Skousen's main points is that education in early America was radically different from both European styles and also from modern American styles. Of course, this point is absolutely true, and a comparison between the educational standards at America's founding and our current standards is striking. But red flags should be raised by Skousen's use of words such as "program" (singular, as in a central mandate), "universal", and "required". Skousen's position in reference to this principle raises troubling questions regarding the concepts of government-sponsored and compulsory education—topics which are too broad to be covered in this brief review, but which I hope to address in a future essay.

Part of the reason for the striking difference between European and early American educational systems has to do with the influence of the Puritan philosophy of education on the early American colonies:

For American educational history, the Puritan ideal of community, above all, encouraged the advancement of learning and cultivation of intellect. If one concedes some key Puritan precepts, he can agree that at no later time have intellect and general commitment to a reasoning way of life been so highly prized by Americans. Even without that concession to faith, modern secular historians agree that Puritan devotion to a singularly educated way of life left its impression upon American thought and institutions. The location and the depth of that imprint have yet to be fully revealed.¹

It was, therefore, much more the influence of Puritan ideals rather than any early "experiments" with public education that caused early American society to be so thoroughly educated. Considering the relative lack of formal education in the early American colonies, it is quite remarkable that even American laymen were so well-read. This is Skousen's material point, and he wants to emphasize how important education is to the future of a republican government.

However, Skousen does not recognize the danger of public, government-sponsored education. Some of the Founding Fathers held education in such reverence—reverence that, in and of itself, was not a negative thing—that they were willing to allow that the government should provide public education to the populace. Skousen quotes these Founders without recognizing the fundamental flaw in their thinking; he even presents the concept of public education in a positive light. For those who recognize the dangers of public education, this is a serious misstep on Skousen's part.

Keeping this caveat in mind, however, *The 5,000-Year Leap* is engaging, enlightening, and inspiring. In a very readable 310 pages, Skousen presents the crux of America's foundational principles, those fundamental concepts that shaped the men who then shaped the Constitution, which then shaped a new nation. Skousen's research is clearly extensive, and yet his material escapes the dry, formal style to which many historians succumb. The principles Skousen presents are principles that America must hear, understand, and implement if we are to save our Republic. Re-educating American citizens in these foundational principles is the only way to steer our nation off a collision course with socialism and governmental tyranny. *The 5,000-Year Leap* is a timely book, full of truths that America desperately needs. 

¹ From *Theories of Education in Early America* edited by Wilson Smith, 1973. Bobbs-Merrill

WHAT TO DO WITH WHAT YOU'RE LEARNING

By Art Carden

So you've been learning about basic economics and the foundational principles of a free society. You've read *Atlas Shrugged*; *Man, Economy, and State*; *Capitalism and Freedom*; *The Road to Serfdom*, or any of the other standards of the classical liberal tradition. Maybe you've been reading C.S. Lewis or Francis Schaeffer. Maybe you've participated in a summer program sponsored by Mises, IHS, FEE, Cato, Independent, Acton, or any of a number of other organizations dedicated to economic research and education. You're excited, and you're firmly grounded in your understanding of the classical liberal tradition. You wonder: what now? Here are a few suggestions that will help you make a difference and contribute to the discussion while developing your writing ability.

I see a couple of easy ways to contribute to the Great Conversation. First, look for ways to write letters to editors of magazines, newspapers, and other publications. The July issue of *Scientific American*, for example, has several articles that could be responded to in a 200-250 word letter to the editor. The same could be said of any issue of any magazine or newspaper. Some professional journals also publish letters to the editor. If they get published, blog them. If they don't—and many won't—blog them anyway. You can pick up some tips by looking at Don Boudreaux's letters to the editor. Professor Boudreaux is a prolific letter-writer, and he blogs most of them at *Cafe Hayek*.

Here's a quick example. I revised this on a plane from Dallas to Albuquerque, and just to prove my point I picked up a copy of the in-flight magazine and looked for anything that could be addressed from an economic perspective. I found an article about a shark dive in the Farallon Islands near San Francisco. I wrote the following in about five minutes, and I emailed it to the editor (editor@americanwaymag.com) at my next opportunity:

Dear Editor,

Amy Sorlie's 8/1/2009 article on shark diving in the Farallon Islands piqued my interest because I'm a lifelong shark enthusiast and an economist with an interest in conservation. Perhaps counter-intuitively, the key to conservation is not government-mandated protection, but the establishment of clear private property rights over sharks and shark habitats. Since sharks are commonly owned, no one profits directly from their survival and, therefore, no one has an incentive to conserve them. Indeed, in some places it is actually illegal to own and farm sharks. This is exactly the opposite of what we should be doing.

Even though we kill and eat far, far more shrimp, salmon, and catfish than sharks, no one is really worried about shrimp, salmon, and catfish going extinct anytime soon. That is in large part because they can be privately owned and farmed. If we really want to conserve sharks, we should take a similar approach.

Kindest regards,

Art Carden

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Why letters to editors? They aren't "scholarly," but they're a great way to practice packing a tight, easily accessible argument into a small space. Letters to the editor also get read. I write letters for several reasons. First, they help me satisfy my attraction to the intellectual equivalent of bright, shiny objects. Second, they help me satisfy my urge to (try to) save the world. Third, they help me practice writing and thinking clearly. When you're writing a 250 word letter on a specific issue for an audience of novices and laypeople, you don't have a lot of room for subtlety and nuance, but you also don't have room for sloppiness.

A second way to contribute is to write op-eds for your campus newspaper or for another local publication (an independent weekly, perhaps). Your local daily newspaper and other outlets might be hard to get your work into, but campus publications are usually well-read and looking for good content. Don't be afraid to write for free, particularly if you're just starting out.

What should you write about? I assume you have a lot of notes from your studies. It might take some work, but you can certainly use these as a very rich source of material for articles and letters. If you are interested in academia, write with an eye toward a future as a researcher: look for ways to hone and sharpen your arguments, and look for opportunities to get involved in research projects. College and University professors are usually looking for help, and if you have opportunities to do your own independent research, there are outlets for these projects, too.

A third way to contribute and practice is to review books. If you are a graduate student, you might want to volunteer to review for professional journals, organizations, or websites (not too many, and nothing that isn't directly related to your research agenda). Other outlets like newspapers and magazines sometimes feature book reviews, as well. You probably won't start out by reviewing books for the *New York Review of Books* or the *Most Important Economics Journal*, but it's a fair bet that there is someone out there who is looking to publish well-done book reviews. You have to engage with the books' arguments in a way that is suitable for publication, and you can be reasonably certain that the authors will read the published reviews.

If you don't really fancy yourself much of a writer or speaker, a fourth way to contribute would be to start and edit a publication or website. If you're not ready to produce your own content, there are tons of sites (*mises.org*, *independent.org*, and many, many others) that have a lot of content you can link to or reproduce for a price of \$0.00. Look at *Lewrockwell.com* and *Strike-the-root.com* for examples.

A word of caution is in order, especially if you're blogging. Remember that the Internet is forever, Google knows everything, and if you're self-publishing you don't have a gatekeeper that can keep your less civilized thoughts from seeing the proverbial light of day. Practice the virtues of temperance, prudence, patience, and kindness. Just as sending email while angry is a bad idea, blogging while angry is a bad idea. Long screeds about how Eminent Scholar is a whore of The Establishment is a pretty good signal that you should probably be ignored, and anonymous cheap shots in blog comments are childish and unprofessional. Don't let a couple of rants or clever-but-inappropriate barbs disqualify you from the Great Conversation.

But relax. Above all, read critically, write critically, and have fun. Know where you're starting, work to get better, and realize that improvement is a long and sometimes painful process. I'm still unsatisfied with the work I'm doing right now, but it's leaps and bounds better than what I was doing in graduate school. A place at the table is worth the time and effort to secure. Good luck! 

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INSTITUTE *for* PRINCIPLE STUDIES

INTRODUCING “UNDERSTANDING THE CONSTITUTION”

Within the past 60 days, IPS president Mike Winther began teaching a new 6-hour class focusing on a proper understanding of the American Constitution. This exciting, two-evening class introduces some of the important principles of good government that formed the foundation of the thinking at the Constitutional Convention. Mike also covers constitutional questions about who should be the ultimate interpreter of the Constitution, the proper view of states' rights, and many other current issues.

After a successful debut of the class in Winton last month, we are pleased to announce that the class will be held in Modesto in September. For more details, call the IPS office or visit the Events page at www.principlestudies.org.

INDEPENDENCE DAY CAMPAIGN 2010

A Plea on Behalf of Liberty

Happily for America, happily we trust for the whole human race, [the founders of the nation] pursued a new and more noble course. They accomplished a revolution which has no parallel in the annals of human society. They reared the fabrics of governments which have no model on the face of the globe. They formed the design of a great confederacy, which it is incumbent on their successors to improve and perpetuate.

JAMES MADISON

The writings of America's founders are full of glowing statements such as this one from Madison regarding the events surrounding the birth of the new nation. Men and women throughout America knew that something truly extraordinary had taken place, and they were captivated by zeal to "improve and perpetuate" the principles of liberty and freedom that had served as the foundation of their country.

Modern American society, however, has largely lost its zeal and enthusiasm for the principles of freedom that were at one time held so dear in America. Most Americans have very little understanding of these principles, let alone a sense of their crucial importance to America's survival. It is voids like this that the Institute for Principle Studies seeks to fill through outreach and education. In order to continue pursuing these vital educational projects, however, IPS needs to raise funds that will make our ministry possible in the months and years to come. It is crucially important that IPS has a financially successful summer in order to capitalize on the myriad of opportunities that are continually presented to our doors.

Many of our readers know that IPS conducts an annual fundraising drive during the month of July, which we call the Independence Day Campaign, in recognition of our fondness for America's founders. This one-month fundraising drive is often our most significant source of revenue for IPS, and the continued success of this campaign is essential if IPS is going to successfully follow in our forefathers' footsteps.

Millions of Christians understand the dangers of our nation's present course, but for a variety of reasons,

they are doing virtually nothing about it. If we learn anything from Scripture, it is that God blesses a nation when the Lord's people pursue righteousness. But when God's people fail to fight evil, He brings judgment upon the nation. As followers of Christ, we must fight evil with every fiber of our being. If a significant portion of the church would be more faithful in doing this, it is reasonable to suspect that God would bless our efforts—this is, after all, the message and pattern of Scripture.

Remember that virtually all great accomplishments throughout history have been birthed during extremely difficult times. These are certainly difficult times in which we are now living, but our goals are noble, and we think that God could choose to once again do great things in the midst of difficult moral and economic times like these.

Many of our readers already support IPS with monthly or quarterly donations. These are the bedrock of our support. But it is the Independence Day Campaign that closes the gap on our financial needs and provides the resources for important expansions during the coming year. Our goal for this year is to raise \$50,000 during the month of July. We are asking all of our supporters, regular givers or otherwise, to consider a sacrificial summer gift to IPS.

Please prayerfully consider your level of participation in the 2010 Independence Day Campaign. We have so many opportunities before us, and your financial support will enable us to capitalize on these opportunities to reach more and more of America with the biblical principles of liberty and freedom. Won't you consider joining us in this fight? 