

The White Rose



Convention

Sunday, June 10, 1990, 10am to 6pm, Comstock Hotel, Gold Hill Room East & West, Reno, Nevada. Registration fee \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door. Agenda submissions by June 1, 1990.

Forget The Alamo (And The Flag)!

By: Jacob G. Hornberger

The American flag is one of this nation's most treasured symbols of freedom. Therefore, when the United States Supreme Court held that the burning of the flag was an act protected under the First Amendment, many Americans were outraged. Reflecting a passionate devotion to this highly valued symbol of freedom, they called for new laws, and even a Constitutional amendment, to prevent any desecration of the flag.

The irony, however, is that a person's devotion to the American flag actually says very little about the principles of freedom to which the person is dedicated. After all, in the 19th century, the American flag stood for principles which are significantly different from those for which it now stands.

Despite slavery and other infringements of individual freedom, Americans in the 1800s lived in the freest society in history. They could enter into any business or occupation without a license, permit, or other evidence of governmental consent; enter into any mutually beneficial exchange with anyone in the world without permission from the political authorities; accumulate unlimited amounts of wealth without threat of having it taken away through income taxation; dispose of their income in the manner they desire; educate their children in the way they chose; travel anywhere in the world without a passport or visa. This is what it once meant to be free. These are the principles of freedom which were once symbolized by the American flag.

In the 20th century, however, the American flag stands for principles which would have been inimical to the Americans of the last century. Americans now have their income and savings carefully monitored and regulated by governmental officials. People may accumulate only the amount of wealth which their governmental officials permit them. They are forced, through the political process, to share their wealth with others whom governmental officials believe have a greater need for it.

Americans are now unable to enter into many occupations without first having attended government-approved schools and passed government-approved tests. They are not able to enter into economic exchanges with people in other parts of the world without first having obtained the permission of their public officials. Americans are now coerced into sending their children to government-approved schools for what amounts to a 12-year sentence. They are not permitted to visit other countries without a passport, visa, or other evidence of governmental consent. These are some of the principles for which the American flag now stands.

Furthermore, Americans of the last century were not so concerned with the symbols of freedom as they were with the principles of freedom. Still fresh in their minds was the experience of 1776 when, despite its symbols of liberty, their own government had violated the principles of liberty.

However, Americans of the 20th century, unlike their ancestors, seem more concerned with the symbols of freedom than the principles of freedom. Despite the

huge public outcry over the Supreme Court's decision which permitted the desecration of the flag, there were few Americans who called for the principles of freedom for which the flag once stood.

This difference in attitude toward symbols and principles is best reflected in the state of Texas. Prior to the Texas Declaration of Independence in 1836, the Texas colonists had pledged their allegiance to the flag of the Republic of Mexico. Few Texans today realize that at the time the pledge was made, the Mexican government was neither taxing the colonists nor significantly regulating their economic activities.

While there were several factors which underlay the ultimate break with Mexico, among the most immediate causes was the Mexican government's decision to begin taxing the Texas colonists and subjecting them to extensive economic controls. Having lived under a system of freedom and self-government for so long, the Texans decided to revolt rather than submit. In the immortal words of William Barret Travis, leader of the rebellion at the Alamo, "We consider death preferable to disgrace..."

For many years after independence from Mexico was won, Texans of the 19th century seemed unconcerned about preserving the Alamo itself as a symbol of the rebellion. It was as if they knew that the principles for which the Texans had fought and died, rather than the symbols of the revolution were what mattered. In fact, it was not until the 20th century that the Texas State government purchased the Alamo in order to preserve it as a symbol of freedom.

The tragedy is that despite their great devotion to the Alamo as a symbol of liberty, Texans of the 20th century have rejected or abandoned the principles which the Alamo once reflected. The taxes and regulations which were imposed on the Texas people by their own government in 1836 were miniscule compared to the taxes and regulations now imposed on the people of Texas by their own government. The tragedy is heightened by the fact that many Texans today actually support, rather than resist, these increased deprivations of their own liberty.

A few years ago, I attended a breakfast in Dallas in which a top tax official of the State addressed some of the leading businessmen in the city about the need to increase taxes, despite the fact that the people of Texas were then suffering under severe economic depression. After the address, many of the businessmen not only applauded but also enthusiastically offered to assist the tax official with his efforts. I asked the official whether there had ever been a time in history that a tax increase in the midst of an economic depression had resulted in economic prosperity for the taxpayers. He responded by saying that he was neither a historian nor a philosopher but just a tax collector. Many of the participants soundly endorsed the efforts of the tax collector. A few of us left the meeting shaking our heads.

With respect to the desecration of the flag itself, there are many actions which most of us would consider socially unacceptable. However, social unacceptability should not necessarily be converted into illegality. Many of us would consider the desecration of the cross to be in extremely poor taste, and yet few of us would favor criminalizing this conduct.

A person's flag is his private property. Under

principles of private ownership. he has the fundamental right to do whatever he wants with his own property. His conduct may not be palatable to the rest of us, but that is exactly what freedom is all about - the legal protection of those peaceful acts which the majority find irresponsible or despicable. If people are free to do only those peaceful acts which the majority consider are responsible or likable, then liberty is not protected; it is abandoned.

Finally, the greatest tragedy arises not from those Americans who mistakenly consider the flag as a symbol of freedom in the 20th century but instead from those Americans who consider it a symbol of the omnipotence of a deity. The flag is as sacred to these people as the cross is to Christians. They view government as a great god who provides housing, subsidies, schools, welfare, parks, grants, medical care, and old-age assistance. To disparage such an all-powerful god, who is so good to the people, or to desecrate any of his symbols, is considered by these people to be the ultimate sacrilege, to be punished by the deity through the hell of incarceration and fine.

Devotion to symbols must never come at the expense of devotion to principles. If the principles which underlie symbols are forgotten or rejected, then the symbols become meaningless and sometimes even destructive. Forget the Alamo and the flag! Let's just remember the principles!

Mr. Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation. Reprinted with permission from FREEDOM DAILY, published monthly, P.O. Box 9752, Denver, CO 80209, \$10 per year.

Tax Protest

Under the able leadership of Paula Miller, the Libertarian Party of Nevada had a tax protest on April 16th in front of the IRS building. The spokesman for the event was Mr. Andre Marrou who articulately defended liberty. The event received coverage on the front page of the Las Vegas Sun, the front page of the second section in the Review-Journal (with a picture of Mr. Marrou), the 5:30pm TV-13 (ABC) News, the 6pm News on TV-8 (CBS) and TV-3 (NBC). Ms. Miller asks that the following people be thanked for their help: Chuck Geshlinder (printing), Wayne Rudolf (calls), Gordon Morris (calls), Mike Prescott (calls), and Don Darling (flags). JB



Paula Miller

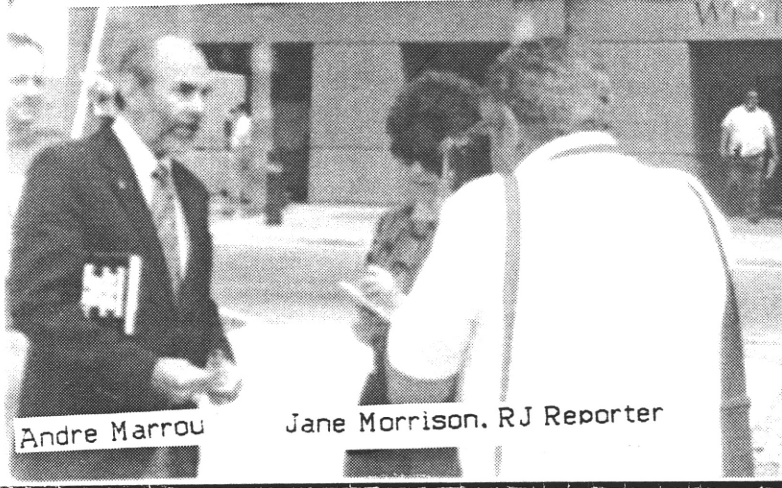


Bob Olsen

Pete O'Eriam

MEETINGS

Reno
Wednesdays, 7:30pm. Round Table Pizza, the corner of Mira Loma and McCarren.
*** Libertarian Party of Nevada Convention. Sunday, June 10th, Comstock Hotel. Gold Hill Room. 10am-6pm.
Las Vegas
Sunday, May 20th, LPCC meeting. Candidates needed. call 734-3733.



Andre Marrou

Jane Morrison. RJ Reporter



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