



Liberty, Larry Reed and Facebook

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Introduction

Liberty is hardly understood because people do not associate it with individual liberty but with national or (forced) collective liberty. In many instances, the former is sacrificed and compromised in the pursuit of the latter.

Lawrence "Larry" Reed is a friend way back in April 2004 when I attended the Mackinac Leadership Conference, organized by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy (www.mackinac.org), in Midland, Michigan, USA. I was then among the international liberty fellows in that year who were sponsored by the Atlas Economic Research Foundation (www.atlasnetwork.org), then based in Fairfax, Virginia, now based in Washington DC.

Larry then was the President of Mackinac, the only free market think tank in Michigan. He struck me as a no-nonsense intellectual who knew very well the literature of classical liberal intellectuals and current public policy issues. In short, I instantly became a fan of him. About 2 or 3 years ago, Larry was appointed as the President of the much bigger free market think tank in the US, the Foundation for Economic Education (www.fee.org), based in New York.

A better and easier way to follow Larry's writings is through facebook. I like the various quotes from classical and recent or current intellectuals who argue for individual liberty, personal responsibility, and limited government, that Larry post in his facebook status. So I thought of compiling some of those quotes that I particularly liked. These quotes were not arranged by date or topic. I just compile them in a copy-paste fashion whenever I have the time to do so.

Although facebook is also used by the statist and lovers of bigger government, this social networking created by capitalist competition ultimately encourages individual freedom and the freedom of expression.

Enjoy reading!

Selected quotes from Larry Reed's facebook status

"The natural effort of every individual to better his own condition ... is so powerful, that it is alone, and without any assistance, not only capable of carrying on the society to wealth and prosperity, but of surmounting a hundred impertinent obstructions with which the folly of human laws too often encumbers its operations."
-- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776

"A society that will trade a little liberty for a little order will lose both, and deserve neither." -- Thomas Jefferson.

"The history of government management of money has, except for a few short happy periods, been one of incessant fraud and deception" -- Nobel laureate and Austrian economist F. A. Hayek, author of the classic 1944 work, *The Road to Serfdom*."

"Liberty is not a means to a higher political end. It is the highest political end." -- Lord Acton (1834-1902), who also said, "It is easier to find people fit to govern themselves than people to govern others."

Wisdom from the great British libertarian Auberon Herbert (1838-1906): "Politics must be the battle of the principles--the principle of liberty against the principle of force." It's one or the other, take your pick.

"If government half a century ago had provided us with all our dinners and breakfasts, it would be the practice of our orators today to assume the impossibility of our providing for ourselves." -- Auberon Herbert (1838-1906), British "voluntaryist" philosopher and defender of *laissez faire*.

"The worst evils which mankind has ever had to endure were inflicted by bad governments. The state can be and has often been in the course of history the main source of mischief and disaster." -- Ludwig von Mises, greatest economist of the 20th Century.

Wisdom for Obama from 19th century French economist, statesman and philosopher Frederic Bastiat: "The state is the great fiction by which everybody seeks to live at the expense of everybody else."

"The only constructive idea that I can in all conscience advance, then, is that the individual put his trust in himself, not in power; that he seek to better his understanding and lift his values to a higher and still higher level; that he assume responsibility for his behavior and not shift his responsibility to committees, organizations, and above all, to a superpersonal state." -- Frank Chodorov, July 1949.

Liberty is a possession of inestimable value, rendered even more precious by the recollection of servitude" -- Cicero, the Roman orator and statesman who championed limited, republican government when the mob preferred dictatorship and the dole.

"Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves" -- William Pitt (the Younger). Couldn't help but think of that as I listen to charlatans and ne'er-do-wells in Washington explaining why Americans "need" yet another government health care program on top of a hundred trillion dollars in unfunded liabilities.

"The only security men can have for their political liberty consists in keeping their money in their own pockets." -- Lysander Spooner, whose American Letter Mail Company was run out of business in 1851 by Congress because it delivered first class mail cheaper than the government monopoly. Sounds like Obama's "public option" for health care.

"If to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we later defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair. The rest is in the hands of God." -- George Washington

William Ewart Gladstone, greatest of all British PMs whose 200th birthday we'll celebrate later this year once declared, "Here is my first principle of foreign policy: good government at home."

Patriotism is not love of government. This July 4, let's remember its true meaning: See <http://www.mackinac.org/6680>

I will buy an American-made car the day the UAW endorses right-to-work and management musters the integrity and courage to do these two things: return the loot it took from Washington and shut their doors rather than shamelessly suck up to politicians.

"Run for your life from any man who tells you that money is evil. That sentence is the leper's bell of an approaching looter." -- Ayn Rand. Those who worship the state are always telling the rest of us that money is evil even as they stake ever bigger claims on yours and mine.

"Socialism is stupidism." -- the late Stefan Kisielewski, great Polish journalist and freedom fighter. For this three-word sentence, he was arrested in the 1980s by the communist regime.

"Let everyone regulate his conduct by the golden rule of doing to others as in similar circumstances we would have them do to us, and the path of duty will be clear before him." -- William Wilberforce, Parliamentarian and anti-slavery crusader.

"I believe that the finest qualities of man can flourish only in free air—that progress made under the shadow of the policeman's club is false progress, and of no permanent value." -- journalist and champion of liberty, H. L. Mencken.

"Any set of social and economic arrangements which is not founded on the acceptance of individual responsibility will do nothing but harm." -- Margaret Thatcher

"Live in such a way that you would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip." -- Will Rogers, who also said "There's no trick to being a humorist when you have the whole government working for you."

"Every man dies. Not every man really lives." -- William Wallace, Scottish patriot ("Braveheart") who did not wait for others to muster courage on liberty's behalf. Executed by Edward I on August 23, 1305, his example inspired Scots to prevail against the English by 1320.

"To preserve the independence of the people, we must not let our rulers load us with perpetual debt. We must make our election between economy and liberty, or profusion and servitude." -- Thomas Jefferson, 1816.

"Socialism is stupidism." -- the late Stefan Kisielewski, great Polish journalist and freedom fighter. For this three-word sentence, he was arrested in the 1980s by the communist regime.

"Usually activists have neither practical experience nor economic literacy, so they go around blithely creating huge costs for those who have to work for a living and those who employ them" -- economist Thomas Sowell.

"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely" -- Lord Acton.

"Every movement that seeks to enslave a country, every dictatorship or potential dictatorship, needs some minority group as a scapegoat which it can blame for the nation's troubles and use as a justification of its own demands for dictatorial powers. In Soviet Russia, the scapegoat was the bourgeoisie; in Nazi Germany, it was the Jewish people; in America, it is the businessmen: — Ayn Rand

"It is hard to imagine a more stupid or more dangerous way of making decisions than by putting those decisions in the hands of people who pay no price for being wrong" -- Thomas Sowell.

"If you put the federal government in charge of the Sahara Desert, in five years there'd be a shortage of sand" -- Milton Friedman.

"Liberty is not collective, it is personal. All liberty is individual liberty" -- Calvin Coolidge.

"If you have ever seen a four-year-old trying to lord it over a two-year-old, then you know what the basic problem of human nature is—and why government keeps growing larger and ever more intrusive" -- Thomas Sowell.

"Equality, rightly understood as our founding fathers understood it, leads to liberty and to the emancipation of creative differences; wrongly understood, as it has been so tragically in our time, it leads first to conformity and then to despotism" -- Barry Goldwater.

"If you have been voting for politicians who promise to give you goodies at someone else's expense, then you have no right to complain when they take your money and give it to someone else, including themselves" – Thomas Sowell (1992).

"The greatest day in your life and mine is when we take total responsibility for our attitudes. That's the day we truly grow up" -- author and pastor John Maxwell.

"If we're ignorant of the historical sacrifices that made our liberties possible, we will be less likely to make the sacrifices again so that those liberties are preserved for future generations. And, if we're ignorant, we won't even know when government infringes on our liberties. Moreover, we'll happily cast our v...otes for those who'd destroy our liberties" -- economist Walter Williams.

"People who have time on their hands will inevitably waste the time of people who have work to do" -- Thomas Sowell.

"Life, liberty, and property do not exist because men have made laws. On the contrary, it was the fact that they existed beforehand that caused men to make laws in the first place" – Frederic Bastiat, author of one of the best books on government ever written, "The Law."

"Nip the shoots of arbitrary power in the bud, is the only maxim which can ever preserve the liberties of any people" -- "Novanglus," a.k.a. John Adams, 1774-75, as cited by Brion McClanahan in his excellent new book, "The Politically Correct Guide to the Founding Fathers."

"There can be no truly moral choice unless that choice is made in freedom; similarly, there can be no really firmly grounded and consistent defense of freedom unless that defense is rooted in moral principle" -- the late Austrian economist Murray Rothbard.

"There is no greater crime than to stand between a man and his development; to take any law or institution and put it around him like a collar, and fasten it there, so that as he grows and enlarges, he presses against it till he suffocates and dies" -- Henry Ward Beecher, clergyman and abolitionist.

"Free trade is God's diplomacy. There is no other certain way of uniting people in the bonds of peace" – Richard Cobden, a leader of the Anti-Corn Law League which secured (after 20 years of agitation) in 1846 the repeal of the infamous Corn Laws in Britain.

"What is history but the story of how politicians have squandered the blood and treasure of the human race?" -- Thomas Sowell.

"There are three kinds of people in the world: a small minority that makes things happen, a somewhat larger group that watches things happen, and then the great majority of people who never know what happened" – unknown author. Which group are you in?

"Government 'help' to business is just as disastrous as government persecution. The only way a government can be of service to national prosperity is by keeping its hands off" -- Ayn Rand.

"There is not a single instance in history in which civil liberty was lost, and religious liberty preserved entire. If therefore we yield up our temporal property, we at the same time deliver the conscience into bondage" -- John Witherspoon, "The Dominion of Providence Over the Passions of Men," 1776.

"If, from the more wretched parts of the old world, we look at those which are in an advanced stage of improvement, we still find the greedy hand of government thrusting itself into every corner and crevice of industry. It watches prosperity as its prey and permits none to escape without tribute" -- Thomas Paine, "Rights of Man," 1791.

A politician's words reveal less about what he thinks about his subject than what he thinks about his audience" -- George Will.

"The most fundamental fact about the ideas of the political left is that they do not work. Therefore we should not be surprised to find the left concentrated in institutions where ideas do not have to work in order to survive" (aka government universities) -- Thomas Sowell.

"I'd rather entrust the government of the United States to the first 400 people listed in the Boston telephone directory than to the faculty of Harvard University" -- William F. Buckley, Jr.

It is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of citizens. The freeman of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise, and entangled the question in precedents. They saw all the consequences in the principle, and they avoided the consequences by denying the principle" -- James Madison.

"Perhaps the fact that we have seen millions voting themselves into complete dependence on a tyrant has made our generation understand that to choose one's government is not necessarily to secure freedom" -- F. A. Hayek.

"There are only two means by which men can deal with one another: guns or logic. Force or persuasion. Those who know that they cannot win by means of logic, have always resorted to guns" — Ayn Rand, who also said, "A gun is not an argument."

Upon the sacredness of property civilization itself depends: the right of the laborer to his hundred dollars in the savings bank, and equally the legal right of the millionaire to his millions" -- Andrew Carnegie.

"He that would make his own liberty secure must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty, he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself" -- Thomas Paine, "Dissertation on First Principles of Government," December 23, 1791.

"Just as man can't exist without his body, so no rights can exist without the right to translate one's rights into reality, to think, to work and keep the results, which means: the right of property" -- Ayn Rand.

"The dichotomy between personal liberties and property rights is a false one. Property does not have rights. People have rights" -- Potter Stewart, a "centrist" on the U. S. Supreme Court (but a good quote nonetheless).

"When buying and selling are controlled by legislation, the first things to be bought and sold are legislators" -- P.J. O'Rourke.

The welfare of the people in particular has always been the alibi of tyrants, and it provides the further advantage of giving the servants of tyranny a good conscience" -- Albert Camus.

"If it were not for the government, we should have nothing to laugh at in France" -- Sébastien-Roch Nicolas De Chamfort (French playwright, 1741-1794).

"One way to make sure crime doesn't pay would be to let the government run it" -- Ronald Reagan.

"The primary function of the government is, and here I am quoting directly from the U.S. Constitution, 'to spew out paper'" -- Dave Barry.

"Once we roared like lions for liberty; now we bleat like sheep for security! The solution for America's problem is not in terms of big government, but it is in big men over whom nobody stands in control but God" -- Norman Vincent Peale.

"Most people who read 'The Communist Manifesto' probably have no idea that it was written by a couple of young men who had never worked a day in their lives, and who nevertheless spoke boldly in the name of 'the workers.' Similar offspring of inherited wealth have repeatedly provided the leadership of radical movements, with similar pretenses of speaking for 'the people'" -- Thomas Sowell.

"Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies" -- Groucho Marx.

"We must make the building of a free society once more an intellectual adventure, a deed of courage Unless we can make the philosophic foundations of a free society once more a living intellectual issue, and its implementation a task which challenges the ingenuity and imagination of our liveliest minds, the ...prospects for freedom are indeed dark" -- F. A. Hayek, author of "The Road to Serfdom."