

computer and mailing privileges, but they also include more substantial benefits such as hosting events and speakers funded with university funds.

In a letter sent to every member of the Georgetown community, Dean of Student Affairs Jack DeGoia defended the decision, claiming that it balanced both a commitment to free speech and the “moral tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.” He was one of the few, either in or out of the university, who was convinced by this logic. Archbishop of Washington James Cardinal Hickey denounced the decision, many alumni have withdrawn funds, and four canon lawsuits are pending—one each by students, faculty, alumni, and concerned laypersons—in order to dissolve the university’s relationship with the Catholic Church formally, as it has already been done informally.

The dean of student affairs, however, is only the front man for the university’s president, Fr. Leo J.

O’Donovan, S.J., who made the final decision. Fr. O’Donovan has defended his action in terms of preserving “academic freedom” and as a logical outgrowth of the “dynamic tradition of Jesuit education.” He argues that the university is not “recognizing” the pro-abortion group (terminology that was discarded after the debacle with the homosexual-rights group a few years ago) but is merely providing a forum to discuss the “choice” debate, including (as Dean DeGoia put it) “the moral and legal status and rights of the fetus.” Apparently, it is naïve to suppose that a university led by a theologian of a Church that has condemned abortion for two millennia would be clear as to what those rights are.

With this decision, made during the quincentennial of St. Ignatius of Loyola’s birth, as well as the 450th anniversary of the founding of the Jesuits, the elite of the Society have demonstrated how little they care for

the ideas of its founder and how little they respect the Catholic students and parents who pay thousands of dollars to be educated by these “soldiers of Christ.” Georgetown has paid for lectures by Molly Yard and presentations by two men who wish to have the first legally recognized homosexual marriage in the District of Columbia. (Their case, incidentally, is being handled in part by faculty from the Georgetown University law school.)

The circumlocutions and obfuscations of Dean DeGoia and his superior would be humorous if the stakes were not so high. So while the abortion-rights activists exult, and as the press and the pundits hail this decision as a victory, not for free speech or academic freedom, but for NARAL and its allies (who in recent years have targeted Catholic colleges), DeGoia and Fr. O’Donovan appear to be the only ones fooled by their reasoning.

—Jerry Russello

## Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

Just because it looks like a Republic and quacks like a Republic doesn’t mean it’s really a Republic. In ancient Rome, after Julius and Augustus Caesar got through with the civil wars, proscriptions, and purges that spelled death to the remains of the old Roman nobility, the state still looked and quacked like the republic it had been in the days of Cincinnatus and Cato the Elder. There were still consuls and vestal virgins and all the other trappings of the old republican constitution. There were still law courts and elections. There was still the shell of the old pagan religion of the sons of Romulus.

But everyone knew it wasn’t so, that a century of demagogues and dictators had ruptured the republican duck, that the Caesars had finally polished off the reality of republican government and set up their own sweet little autocracy. “Despotism, enthroned at Rome,” wrote historian Ronald Syme in *The Roman Revolution*, “was arrayed in robes torn from the corpse of the Republic.”

So it is today in the United States.

The Constitution still exists and remains a standing topic of Fourth of July oratory. We still have elections and even the vestiges of that aristocratic balance wheel, the electoral college. We still have republican (but even today, not really democratic) representation in the Senate.

But, despite the persistence of these republican forms, the reality is quite different—a mass democracy in which elected officials are more and more irrelevant and corrupt as their powers and duties are usurped by bureaucratic elites that cannot be removed. Despotism, masked in republican costume, is not yet enthroned, but already it whispers sweetly in the ears of those who sit in the consular chairs of the leviathan state.

Why did the American Republic die, and why can’t it be restored? The generation of Americans at the time the Constitution was written was immersed in republican thought and principles, and the Framers consistently tried to establish a republic that could avoid the anarchy, demagoguery, and tyranny to which most previous republics—in Greece, Rome, Renaissance Italy, Holland, and

England—had succumbed. But, if the republic they did establish is in fact moribund, either they made a mistake or else something has happened in the last two hundred years that they never anticipated.

Writing on the different schools of republican political thought that permeated the United States in its infancy, historian Forrest McDonald notes that virtually all of them shared a common set of beliefs. “The vital—that is life-giving—principle of republics was *public virtue*,” a term that rang rather differently from its resonance in modern ears.

Not coincidentally, *public*, like *virtue*, derives from Latin roots signifying manhood: “the public” included only independent adult males. Public virtue entailed firmness, courage, endurance, industry, frugal living, strength, and above all, unremitting devotion to the weal of the public’s corporate self, the community of virtuous men. It was at once individualistic and communal: individualistic in that no

member of the public could be dependent upon any other and still be reckoned a member of the public; communal in that every man gave himself totally to the good of the public as a whole. If public virtue declined, the republic declined, and if it declined too far, the republic died.

Americans were divided on the question of exactly how public virtue could be preserved and institutionalized, but Southern republicans in particular tended to insist on its concrete social and economic roots rather than, as New England Puritan republicans did, on its purely moral and religious supports. In the "agrarian republicanism" of the South, writes Professor McDonald, "virtue, independence, liberty, and the ownership of unencumbered real property were inextricably bound together . . . ownership of land beget independence, independence beget virtue, and virtue beget republican liberty."

There was, in short, what historian J.G.A. Pocock calls a "sociology of liberty": liberty was not merely something that could flourish in a vacuum because everyone wanted it; it blossomed only when and if the citizens were socially independent—if they owned their own property, ruled their own families, ran their own farms and businesses, bore their own arms in their own defense, took responsibility for their own failures and mistakes, and earned and enjoyed their own rewards, then and only then could men govern their own selves, as individuals or as a people, as a republic.

The fierce attachment to the ideal of independence in classical republican thought is the reason republicans didn't (and don't) much like what is today called "Big Government" or its brother, "Big Business." Bigness means dependency. In the 18th century, bigness meant the swollen dynastic states of Europe, with their courtiers and pensioners begging their livings from the monarchs and their mistresses. It meant entrenched aristocracies, established churches, protected guilds, privileged monopolies, entailed estates, absentee landlords, enclosed lands that once belonged to independent yeomen, and crazy, crooked, dirty cities

where dispossessed yeomen herded together to form mobs that ran amok whenever their masters failed to feed them on time.

It was not Europe's lack of "opportunity" and social mobility or the mere fact of inequality that disgusted most republicans so much as it was the swallowing of independent men and institutions by the dynastic leviathans of the age. There couldn't be a republic in 18th-century Europe because its rulers as well as its ruled were not independent and had long since been smothered by the corruption, sycophancy, and slavery that dependence breeds.

It can be argued (and it may well be true) that at least some of the Framers were not enchanted by the prospect of old-fashioned republican virtue and its rather muscular vision of social independence, that Hamilton and Madison in particular entertained visions of a more grandiose state that would elevate the nation in wealth and power, and that they essentially redefined republicanism so as to accommodate their ideas and ambitions.

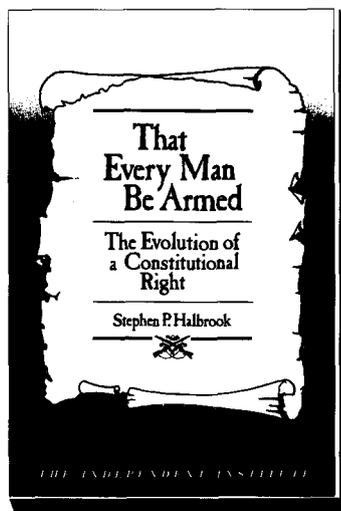
Indeed, it was so argued by the

anti-Federalists and their successors, and for the first seventy years of the young Republic's life, the scale and purposes of the national government were the principal issues of political debate in the controversies over the Tariff, the National Bank, "internal improvements," and slavery. The debate came to an end in the Civil War, when the advocates of a national state dedicated to filling the pockets of the citizens triumphed in the tread of the legions of the gentle Abraham.

Be that as it may, by the end of the 19th century, the American Republic remained intact, as did the social independence and public virtue on which it rested. Prior to World War I, writes Robert Nisbet, the main contact most Americans had with the federal government was at the post office, and until the bonds of industrial and technological conglomeration were forged, Americans—or at least the middle-class core of American civilization—retained the social, economic, cultural, and political independence that made a republic possible.

Today this is not the case. Twentieth-century technology and organization—

## YOUR RIGHT TO SELF-DEFENSE



Available at better bookstores or order by mail and receive the complete catalog:

The Independent Institute, Dept. AAO, 134 Ninety-Eighth Avenue, Oakland, CA 94603

The power of firearms has created controversy throughout western civilization over the citizen's right to own weapons. ***That Every Man Be Armed*** is the most complete book on the philosophy, history, and legal precedent that the right to possess arms is as fundamental as is freedom of speech.

*"The need for careful, impartial information makes Stephen Halbrook's book especially welcome. . . . Comprehensive and well-written."*  
—GEORGE WASHINGTON LAW REVIEW

*"That Every Man Be Armed is the first scholarly treatise that is both comprehensive and in-depth."*  
—JOURNAL OF CRIMINAL LAW AND CRIMINOLOGY

*"The encyclopedic book on the Second Amendment, it is must reading for all those interested in the right to possess firearms."*  
—DON KATES, JR., Esq.  
Author, *Restricting Firearms*

Index • 288 pages, Paperback, Item #1160  
\$14.95 plus postage (\$2.00 per book; CA residents add Sales Tax)

**ORDER TOLL FREE 1-800-927-8733**  
Credit card orders only. 24 hours a day.

in Big Government, Big Business, and Big Culture—have increased the span of organizational control far beyond the compact scale on which republican independence is possible and much farther than even the dynastic states of the *ancien régime* could comprehend. The American middle class today is dependent on corporations, unions, universities, and the national state itself for its income, and it is income—not an ethic or culture such as the 19th-century bourgeois middle class possessed—that defines the contemporary middle class.

The megastate and its tentacles touch and twist at every joint of our lives, and their operations are directed by permanent and largely invisible bureaucratic and managerial elites, not primarily by officeholders or independent property owners. Those who hold office spend much of their time trying to shovel federal fodder into their constituents' troughs. Mass media and mass cultural organizations in education and religion bind virtually all Americans into the same vast audience, poked and prodded by the same images, ideas, information, and misinformation to emit the same mental and emotional responses.

At the end of the 20th century, Americans have been absorbed within and become dependent on massive organizations and technologies that are far too large, too complex, and too distant for most of us to control or even to influence. Under that kind of dependency, the social and moral discipline that makes personal and republican self-government possible withers away.

Hence, the rise of mass organizations and the elites that run them and our own dependence on them have paralleled the explosion in social

breakdown—crime, suicide, drug use, sexual excess and deviation, the brutalization of women and children, the collapse of families and communities, the pursuit of hedonism and immediate gratification, the glorification of the sick, the weak, and the weird. Mass society breeds dependency; dependency breeds corruption; and corruption breeds slavery. When independence and public virtue decline too far, the republic dies, even though despots may robe themselves in its garments.

Once the sociology of liberty is destroyed, it cannot be restored. Once the institutions and habits of independent discipline have withered, they do not naturally blossom again. Most Americans today are content with the megastate, the cult of consumption that a bureaucratized economy encourages, and the titillations, fantasies, and diversions of the mass media. The only discontent most of us have with the megastate is when we have to pay for somebody else to get more from it—in welfare, services, subsidies, tax breaks—than we get.

Democratic politics in the leviathan state is never about dismantling or reducing leviathan but always about forcing somebody else to pay for what we want from it. A mass democracy of interest groups, lobbies, ideological movements, and opinion clusters replaces the “unremitting devotion to the weal of the public’s corporate self” that animated classical republicans, and the engorgement of leviathan is accelerated by the twin engines of a bureaucratic elite intent on enlarging its own power and the mass voting blocs it feeds, just as 18th-century demagogues fed their mobs. Unlike a republic, mass democracy doesn’t restrain power; democracy unleashes power.

Except for a few right-wing egg-

heads, no one seriously contemplates restoring the republic; no one seriously wants to because no one has any material interest in it. Hence, the republic will not be restored.

Those few who remain attached to republicanism thus find themselves in the position of republican theorists like the Roman historian Tacitus and Niccolò Machiavelli, both of whom had seen their republics gurgling down the drainpipes of history. Both of them understood that republican liberty is not something you get by just wishing for it or believing in it, that in the absence of the public virtue on which republicanism is grounded, you cannot have liberty.

Tacitus had the good fortune to live in an age when the incumbent Caesars were not stark-raving lunatics but relatively benevolent despots, so he didn’t need to worry too much about the more unpleasant aspects of gilded slavery. Machiavelli, who was imprisoned and tortured by the gangsters who took over Florence after the fall of its republic, perhaps worried more, and he had a more immediate grasp of what happens when a republic is corrupt and dying.

At that point, he wrote, “it becomes necessary to resort to extraordinary measures, such as violence and arms, and above all things to make one’s self the absolute master of the state, so as to be able to dispose of it at will.” Machiavelli understood that this kind of authoritarian rule was not a real solution or a restoration of liberty but simply the natural consequence of corruption; “for men whose turbulence could not be controlled by the simple force of law can be controlled in a measure only by an almost regal power.”

The consolidation of political, economic, and cultural power on just such a regal scale has in fact largely occurred in the United States already. The question that the dying Republic yields, therefore, is not whether the Republic will be restored but rather how those Middle Americans who were the nucleus of the American Republic, who retain the vestiges of public virtue and who now find themselves the victims of the new imperium, can displace the elite that now prevails. The issue, in other words, is: who, in the wrecked vessel of the American Republic, is to be master? 

*Advertise In...*

## Chronicles

Place your advertisement within the pages of one of America's leading cultural and intellectual publications. Our dedicated readership, uncompromising editorial content, and award-winning graphics provide an unequalled advertising opportunity.

For your free information packet, please contact  
Leann Dobbs or Cathy Corson at 815/964-5054.

## Class Notes: *Rocky Mountain Ramble*

by Tom Disch

The poor, if they are self-possessed, may share  
These views, provided the self they possess  
Is reasonably becoming. Read Hemingway  
To see how it's done. He was the paid companion  
*Par excellence*. In his democracy of skiers  
And good shots, where a simple guide may be  
Manlier than many millionaires, arête  
Is the password. Wit is not called for here,  
And those who live by it, in an atmosphere  
Of crystal, silver and swift repartée, would here  
Be out of place. Here language is "honed down"  
To the basic palaver of a Greystoke,  
Whom even apes may apprehend and must obey.  
No wonder Papa's books are assigned to all classes.  
Practice such protocols and *you* may learn  
To be a ski instructor too, exalted to a like degree,  
Sharing the platonic form of Millionaire.  
But be aware there is a price to pay, not just  
Wit's richer vocabulary and its license to be snide  
About *jeunesse dorée*, but the obligation to risk  
One's life on a regular basis, to taste the self-  
Apotheosizing *vin extraordinaire* of mortal danger.  
Drunk on such brew, laurels seem spontaneously  
To wreath the one's brow. What did Dryden say? None  
But the brave, none but the brave, deserve the fair.  
And what better proof of bravery than to have returned  
Alive from the perilous jeep-ride or the theater of war?  
O to have skied the Plunge and have the fact  
Be known to one's beholders! It is a wine  
Past all compare. Drinking it, one *must* believe  
In the divine right of kings. We are then kings  
Ourselves, and heirs of empires.

So much for the brave: what of the fair?  
What of August's meadows at the top  
Of the trail? What of these butterflies? What of  
These many-aspended galleries of timeless art,  
The true Conceptualism of the rampant eye  
Snapping Monet after Monet in the stillness  
Of these higher altitudes, above the crags  
Where eagles dare — though, really, where's the daring  
Of it for an eagle? They must feel quite at home  
Up here. See how they ride the breezes languorous  
As Cleopatra on her barge. Rarely is there need  
To rapture prey, and the hours would pass away  
Almost wholly in contemplation, were it not  
For the flies and the sudden discovery amid  
These pastoral vistas of a mining camp,  
Abandoned, slowly turning into scree.  
Here men enjoyed the mountain air who were  
Neither kings nor Hemingways. Do they weep  
There where they've gone to their reward  
To see their tenements so forgotten and forlorn?  
Would any modern Goldsmith mourn  
Their loss? Goldsmith! — the very word  
Is like a bell to toll me back to my hotel  
In the valley far below, to all the comforts  
And confusions, the names and dates, the daily news  
And unpaid dues, and terms of sufferance,  
Thence to the city we have named our home,  
Inapprehensible Reality.

AUGUST 1991/11