

THE FREEMAN

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Published by

The Foundation for Economic Education
Irvington-on-Hudson, NY 10533
Phone: (914) 591-7230; E-mail: freeman@fee.org
www.fee.org

President	Richard M. Ebeling
Editor	Sheldon Richman
Managing Editor	Beth A. Hoffman
Editor Emeritus	Paul L. Poirot
Book Review Editor	George C. Leef

Columnists

Charles Baird	Robert Higgs
Donald J. Boudreaux	Lawrence W. Reed
Stephen Davies	Russell Roberts
Richard M. Ebeling	Thomas Szasz
Burton W. Folsom, Jr.	Walter E. Williams

Contributing Editors

Norman Barry	Dwight R. Lee
Peter J. Boettke	Wendy McElroy
James Bovard	Tibor Machan
Thomas J. DiLorenzo	Andrew P. Morriss
Joseph S. Fulda	James L. Payne
Bettina Bien Greaves	William H. Peterson
John Hospers	Jane S. Shaw
Raymond J. Keating	Richard H. Timberlake
Daniel B. Klein	Lawrence H. White

Foundation for Economic Education
Board of Trustees, 2005–2006

Walter LeCroy, Chairman	
Sally von Behren	Paige K. Moore
Lloyd Buchanan	Wayne Olson
Frederick C. Foote	Tom G. Palmer
Dan Grossman	Roger Ream
Edward M. Kopko	Guillermo M. Yeatts
Kris A. Mauren	



The Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) is a non-political, non-profit educational champion of individual liberty, private property, the free market, and constitutionally limited government.

The Freeman is published monthly, except for combined January–February and July–August issues. To receive a sample copy, or to have *The Freeman* come regularly to your door, call 800-960-4333, or e-mail bhoffman@fee.org.

The Freeman is available on microfilm from University Microfilm International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Copyright © 2006 Foundation for Economic Education. All rights reserved. Reproduction or use, without permission, of editorial or graphic content is prohibited.

Fifty Years Later

I saw my first copy of *The Freeman* sometime in 1967, most likely while I was still a senior in high school in Philadelphia. In those days, the magazine was almost pocket-size. A classmate showed me the issue and suggested I contact the Foundation for Economic Education for more. I had never heard that name before. I sent off a postcard right away and became a regular reader. The rest, as they say, is history.

The Freeman was not my first brush with classical-liberal thinking. I have clear memories of rummaging through the Northeast Regional branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia and finding Albert Jay Nock's *Our Enemy the State*, Herbert Spencer's *Man versus the State*, and Frank Chodorov's *Out of Step*. It was a bracing experience. At the time, I didn't know who these authors were (my Republican parents wouldn't have known about them), but the titles must have appealed to my nature.

I was interested in the American Revolution early on, with its individualistic liberty-versus-power storyline. I eagerly read stories and watched movies and television programs about the era. The bridge between Johnny Tremain and Francis "The Swamp Fox" Marion, on the one hand, and Leonard E. Read, Henry Hazlitt, and Ayn Rand, on the other, was Barry Goldwater. In 1964 my older brother, Marc, a student at Albright College in Reading, Pennsylvania, declared his support for Goldwater's bid for the presidency. We spoke about Goldwater's views, and Marc passed literature along to me. Naturally, I found the appeals to individual liberty, self-responsibility, and small government appealing. After scouring the city, I finally found a copy of *The Conscience of a Conservative* on a bookrack at Joe's Shoe Repair on Oxford Avenue. It was another key moment.

Back then I called myself a "conservative," but that was because I had not yet heard the word "libertarian," and it would be a short while before I'd learn that the original title for the freedom philosophy is "liberal." Needless to say, I was primed for exposure to the freedom movement. (Chodorov, the first editor of the Read-owned *Freeman*, confirmed that he was a kindred spirit when years later I read that he had written in a 1954 letter to *National Review*, "As for me, I will punch anyone

who calls me a conservative in the nose. I am a radical.” E.A. Hayek’s “Why I Am Not a Conservative” also was an eye-opener.)

Holding that first copy of *The Freeman* in my hands was like holding a compass, because it pointed me toward a path I have been treading ever since. It was a path along which I would encounter the writings of Read, Ludwig von Mises, Hazlitt, Paul Poirot, Edmund Opitz, Dean Russell, Clarence Carson, Israel Kirzner, Murray Rothbard, and so many more. Of course, it was through FEE and *The Freeman* that I learned of Frédéric Bastiat. *The Law* remains, in my view, the best introduction to the freedom philosophy. Every time I read it I marvel at how fresh it sounds. If Leonard Read had done nothing but introduce Bastiat to the American people, he would have deserved our unending gratitude.

My early *Freeman* memories include a strong sense of the clarity and logic of the articles. Through solid theory and sound historical illustration, the authors offered a picture of a world that made sense. The emphasis seemed to be on accessibility, the tone always benevolent, tolerant, and constructive. All this had a profound influence on me and many libertarians my age. The importance of that early contact can’t be overstated.

If FEE and *The Freeman* had not existed, most of us would have likely found liberalism some other way. But Leonard Read made it so easy and so inviting. For me, that was his grand achievement.

Here’s to the next 50 years.

This special issue of *The Freeman* celebrates 50 years as the flagship publication of the Foundation for Economic Education. Jude Blanchette kicks things off with his history of *The Freeman*’s important predecessor magazines, which kept liberal ideas alive during the dark days of advancing statism.

That is followed by a FEE Timely Classic in which Paul Poirot, who edited the magazine for 31 years until his 1987 retirement, recounts *The Freeman*’s role in FEE’s strategy of self-development in the cause of

freedom.

The Freeman and its predecessors were part of a nascent movement concerned with promoting free markets, self-responsibility, and constitutional government, and opposing socialism and the welfare state. Leonard Liggio, a historian and activist who became part of that movement shortly after World War II, provides some eyewitness insight into how this magazine came to be.

No one has described *The Freeman*’s mission better than Henry Hazlitt. His words still apply today, and that editorial statement is reproduced here.

In that first issue 50 years ago, FEE’s founder and president Leonard E. Read outlined the freedom philosophy that motivated him and his unique organization, describing it as “Neither Left Nor Right.” That article is reprinted as a FEE Timely Classic.

In *The Freeman*’s second issue the eminent historian William Henry Chamberlin compared the records of capitalism and socialism and drew the obvious conclusion: prosperity requires freedom. His FEE Timely Classic, “If There Were No Capitalism,” is also in these pages.

While the priority of *The Freeman* has always been to accentuate the positive—to elaborate the value of freedom and self-responsibility—another important objective has been to expose the drawbacks of government provision of goods and services. In that vein, James Bovard turns his investigative eye to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

In the columns department: Richard Ebeling looks left and right. Donald Boudreaux explains how capitalism mitigates natural disasters. Robert Higgs describes America’s distinctive form of corporatism. Charles Baird defends the right-to-work principle. And Daniel Griswold, hearing the charge that the trade deficit lowers living standards, replies, “It Just Ain’t So!”

Books on the welfare state, political philosophy before the American Revolution, global warming, and American history kept our reviewers busy the past month.

—Sheldon Richman
srichman@fee.org