

An Open Letter on Liberty

Howard Morris

“A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives it a superficial appearance of being right, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom.” —Thomas Paine

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

An open letter to advocates of liberty:

This letter is addressed to any person who holds individual human liberty among their highest values. This would include people who consider themselves libertarians, Objectivists, advocates of the free market, and so on. The term “libertarian” will include anyone who agrees that the initiation of force is generally wrong, and who believes that the ability of the government to coerce should, at the least, be minimized. The basic principle of libertarianism, non-aggression, will be used interchangeably with its various forms such as “no initiation of force”, “no coercion”, etc. This includes the term “it is wrong to use unprovoked force against others”, as used in my short introduction to the basic principles of liberty, “Common Sense Politics”.

I write this letter with some humility, considering the contributions made by the many advocates of liberty. If a history is ever written of the liberty movement, surely its early adopters will be seen as the heroes of our era. I hope therefore that my ideas and suggestions do not offend, but at the same time, I trust the fair-minded character of the freedom lover will give them their due in reasoned contemplation.

With sincerity and respect,

—Howard Morris

The purpose of this letter:

to persuade libertarians to refrain from political action.

In our civilized world no person or private group has the right to impose their will on another by force, except perhaps in extreme cases. Libertarians believe this principle should also apply to government. They employ many methods to persuade others of this, most of which use voluntary, non-coercive means. These efforts should be applauded, above all because they put into practice the principle being preached. But I hope to convince you that one method in particular, political involvement, differs from the rest in many important respects, and should not be employed.

We have at this point reached an important level of knowledge and experience. We share a broad and deep understanding of individual rights, the morality of the free market, and its efficacy in satisfying real human needs. Many libertarians point to this understanding and remind us that in a culture that lacks philosophical direction, there is nothing as powerful as “an idea whose time has come”.

But for libertarians the biggest challenge ahead may be their willingness to face the reality that politics by its very nature is incompatible with liberty. Morally, it is utterly at odds with individual rights to life, liberty and property. And as a means of achieving practical goals, it would be difficult to devise a system less effective. We may fairly debate the historical role politics may have played in advancing human liberation, and should give latitude to past thinkers who used the knowledge available to them. But we know more today, and should be unafraid to judge the institution of politics objectively. We should recognize that, to paraphrase Hugo, there is nothing less significant than “an idea whose time is past”.

A summary of libertarian fundamentals.

Allow me to express the non-aggression principle as follows: “It is wrong to use unprovoked force against others”. An overriding reason that libertarians support this idea is because they believe that each individual person owns his life. From that starting point, whether we employ common sense or philosophy, we reason that self-ownership precludes unprovoked force. An act of coercion is assumed to be wrong because it makes people into victims, that is, it undermines their self-ownership by force or fraud. As to practical consequences, coercion almost invariably makes matters worse. But regardless of the intended or real outcome of aggression, it is judged morally wrong because inescapably, it creates victims.

As most libertarians know, when government taxes and regulates it necessarily uses unprovoked force. These activities are fundamentally wrong for the same reason that they are wrong on the small scale: because they create victims. But government force is far worse than petty crime in these respects:

It is done on a massive scale, making it proportionally worse.

Unlike most crimes, which are notable because they have already happened and are now over, government force is a crime in progress. This is because:

Government force is formally institutionalized: behind it is the tradition of politics throughout human history, along with the particular traditions of kings and constitutions.

A summary of the main points of this letter.

1. Morally, one should not participate in politics because it requires the use of force against others.

We respect individual rights and we demonstrate this through our actions. We refrain from criminal activity; we judge the coercive acts of others as wrong; and of course we do not assist others in such acts. Since politics requires coercive force, participating in it supports and sanctions that force, even though that coercion happens to be institutionalized. By refusing to participate in it, we are practicing our principles consistently.

2. In practice, participating in politics simply does not work.

Political efforts to advance liberty rarely accomplish their goals, and their minor achievements pale against ever-increasing statist victories. Politics is unquestionably an inefficient method for promoting liberty. This contrasts with the success of the many non-political methods used, none of which employ force.

3. The percentage of people who participate in politics is shrinking.

Majority rule itself is being “voted down” as participation declines: non-voters actually represent a significant majority in most elections. With each passing year the public views politics as less and less relevant to their lives.

4. Almost every person already agrees with and lives by the libertarian’s most fundamental principle, non-aggression, in their private life.

The overwhelming majority of people do not hurt, rob, or threaten others. Those who do are viewed as criminals, and their targets are viewed as victims, irrespective of the criminal’s reasons. This is the simple, moral and practical day-to-day behavior of virtually all human beings, behavior that practices non-aggression to the letter. It may be true that people state in words that they support the notion of government, but they do not conduct their lives using coercion, as government does.

5. By directing their efforts away from politics and towards non-coercive methods, libertarians can evolve into the accepted intellectual representatives of an overwhelming majority.

The previous four points should lead libertarians to an important conclusion. Notice how the moral reason against political participation directly complements the natural and predominant behavior of virtually all people. Libertarians should consider turning away from politics and discouraging participation, embracing the trend that is already well under way. This positions them to direct their efforts exclusively toward positive action. They should strongly emphasize the underlying morality of the public’s non-coercive behavior, promote voluntary solutions to problems, and explore dynamic new methods of communicating ideas. While the world of politics gives libertarians the permanent status of an invisible fringe movement, the world outside of politics offers them the opportunity to become major spokespeople for the majority.

Expounding on the main points.

1. Morally, one should not participate in politics because it requires the use of force against others.

Politics relies on the assumption that peoples' lives are owned not by themselves, but by the government. If this were not an underlying assumption of politics; if instead individual self-ownership was an absolute, then a system of voting that forced its results upon everyone would be unthinkable. But at the heart of politics is the idea that the will of the state supersedes the rights of the individual.

One can see this principle in action by observing the laws of any particular government, at any point in history. Slavery, for example, was at one time given the support and sanction of law, thus allowing whites to have property interests over Africans. Notice the underlying assumption: government has the right to dispense ownership rights in people.

Now observe the same assumption in the abolition of slavery. In this case government would 'no longer allow' people to have property interests over others. Notice how this underlying assumption is reaffirmed: government (still) has the right to dispense ownership rights in people. Whether government ought to have had the right to define the parameters of self-ownership in the first place, was never questioned.

It is no different today. Government can still do as it pleases with whatever portion of a person's life that it can, given the circumstances and politics of the moment.

To put its underlying assumption into practice, government must use force. As every libertarian knows, taxes and regulations are backed up by the threat of force. If we need to be convinced of this, we need not test it by defying the tax laws. All we need do is imagine a day when government announces that people may contribute taxes, or comply with regulations, purely on a voluntary basis. Clearly the vast majority would pay little or nothing to the government. And they would perceive regulations merely as suggestions. In such an environment, in which people were free to govern their own actions, government could not survive. Therefore, in order to exist at all, it must employ force.

If it is clear that the very nature of politics involves unprovoked force against others, then it should be equally clear that participation in politics is participation in a system of force. One is free, of course, to evade this conclusion, or even to justify it, but one is not free to escape its reality. Participation can be claimed to be one of many equally useful methods of spreading libertarian ideas, but it is not equal, because it alone involves force.

The libertarian who participates in politics knows it is a system of force; the non-libertarian participant generally does not. A major difference between libertarians and others is that libertarians focus on the fact that coercive government undermines self-ownership; non-libertarians are generally not even aware of this. It would be unfair to expect the average person to focus on facts they have not even been exposed to, and thus understandable that some would participate in politics for the traditional reason of civic responsibility. But libertarians are more fully aware of the nature of government than the general public (as well as the intellectual

predecessors of libertarians). They should therefore hold themselves to a higher moral standard.

Government is coercive by nature, and participation sanctions that nature. We would never hand a gun to a small child; any rational person would know with certainty how dangerous this would be, for the child and others. We would also know with certainty whom to hold responsible: not the child, of course, but the person who gave it the gun.

We can use this easily visualized, concrete example as a metaphor for politics. Participating in politics is essentially giving some people power over others, implicitly saying, "We trust you to govern our lives, and feel free to use this gun to do it". The gun and the power it represents will necessarily interfere with their judgment.

Just as we should not give guns to children, we should not give sanction to institutionalized force by participating in it, as it hands over power that ought not be handed over. When libertarians practice politics, it distorts the message that there is danger in giving people power over others. It says in effect that libertarians believe they can handle the gun better. A more consistent message would be delivered if they discouraged political participation for the same reasons they discouraged giving a weapon to a child.

If government employs coercion, then supporting government by participating in it would be like supporting a petty crime. If a bank robber politely asks you to help him carry a heavy bag of money, you would refuse, though not because you are indifferent to a burdened human. You realize that by assisting him you would be giving sanction to his actions. As an advocate of peaceful cooperation among people, your actions would expose you as inconsistent. But by refusing your help, you make a powerful statement of your judgment against his actions.

2. In practice, participating in politics simply does not work.

It is now almost universally accepted that a person's vote has an insignificant chance of influencing the outcome of an election. It would then logically follow that libertarian efforts in politics would accomplish little to promote liberty. For if the vote of the average Democrat or Republican makes no practical difference, of what value is the vote of those in minority parties?

As a movement of principled ideas, libertarianism is at a permanent disadvantage in politics because their natures are incompatible. Politics is based largely on perceptions and emotions, while libertarianism respects philosophy and reason. Politics regards force as a proper method of implementing policy, while libertarians oppose force. Politics requires people to think as groups with conflicting interests. Libertarians want people to think as individuals. Politics is all-or-nothing: the outcome applies to all people regardless of their individual preferences. Libertarians believe in the supremacy of individual freedom of choice. Politics produces delusion and contradiction: voters feel pride in meeting a social responsibility which in fact achieved nothing, and simultaneously renounce responsibility by voting, since they now expect government to solve their problems. Libertarians believe responsibility for one's actions belong to the individual.

As a result, libertarian participation produces political failure. Their candidates are not elected. They are viewed by the media as a fringe party that has failed decisively across decades of attempts. They are all but unknown to the general public, and in the few cases where they gain its attention, their ideas are presented unfavorably.

Participation not only fails to achieve liberty, but also distorts its meaning. The ideas of liberty, in the world of politics, get placed in the same category as thousands of political agendas, all of which require the force of law to be implemented. Libertarian ideas, rather than providing intellectual and moral sanction for peaceful social actions, are reduced to the realm of mere political opinion. But this is only possible because the ideas are offered in the political arena, a direct consequence of libertarian participation.

Incremental change through politics is impractical (even for non-libertarians). Those who do believe that practical success is possible through politics generally expect to achieve it in incremental steps. But even mainstream goals such as “improving education” are not achieved, because there are thousands of factions within the major and minor parties all with their own approaches to incremental change. It is astoundingly unlikely that libertarians would have more success than others would, and even if they did, nothing would prevent a reversal in future elections.

Fundamentally, it is impractical to expect that a system of institutionalized aggression can be made to work. Many of the details of government, such as separation of power, term limitations, etc., are patches designed to stitch up the natural flaws inherent in a system where men have power over other men. These details have no other purpose (they are noticeably absent and unnecessary in the free market). So changing the details of government will not change its nature: adding or changing laws will not do it; changing the power of particular branches will not do it; “finding the right people” will not do it. The history of politics to this very day bears this out with abundant evidence.

3. The percentage of people who participate in politics is shrinking.

In a relatively free society such as ours, time becomes more valuable because the array of available choices increases. As life gets more complex, people must allocate their limited time to interests and obligations that they treasure more highly, while refraining from those that rate lower. The irrelevant or unpleasant options will naturally fall farther and farther down the scale; the odds they will be selected becoming vanishingly small.

With the increasing variety of positive options, participation in politics is naturally declining. The sheer number of free choices open to people today crowds out irrelevant choices such as practicing politics. Peoples’ actions simply reflect their preferences, and we see this in the trend away from political participation. As society advances, there is every reason to expect the trend to continue.

Politics is ignored in the face of better alternatives precisely because it has nothing to offer. While technology continues to advance the human condition, politics remains a clueless bystander. Politics only manages to gain attention when it appears to have meaning to peoples’ lives. This is evident in the less developed countries when voters turn out in high numbers: they hope the outcome of these elections will significantly improve their lives. But in advanced countries politics is revealed as ineffective because it cannot provide the options that freedom offers.

Over time, politics loses respect in the eyes of average people. In earlier times people respected politics as an institution established to secure their rights. Since it could not reliably deliver that security, respect gave way to the image of politics as more of a sporting contest, with winners, losers, strategies, etc. And even that image is changing as politics now starts to be viewed as a circus sideshow with colorful and comical characters. It is not surprising that participation declines.

4. Almost every person already agrees with and lives by the libertarian's most fundamental principle, non-aggression, in their private life.

Peaceful cooperation is normal behavior for the vast majority of people. This is not a result of government laws, but of our experiences in social interactions. Since our earliest years we observed that peaceful behavior produced the best results, and violence the worst. We need not refer to any law book to remind ourselves of this.

People universally view coercion as wrong. You and everyone you know think this way. Even a thief feels imposed upon if the money he stole is in turn stolen from him. Everyone understands that aggression makes a person into a victim. Thus they conduct their day-to-day lives without using force against others. It is important for libertarians to appreciate the fact that they do not have to persuade others to agree with something they already believe.

5. By directing their efforts away from politics and towards non-coercive methods, libertarians can evolve into the accepted intellectual representatives of an overwhelming majority.

Consider a common aspect about virtually every social movement in history: there is something wrong with what people are doing. Every movement has asked people to change their behavior. Every election, every proposal, every public service announcement, in one way or another has always said that people are not good enough the way they are, and should think or act differently.

No significant movement to date has explicitly declared that the common man is fine exactly the way he is. None have said that in his private life, by dealing with others without coercion and in peace, the average person lives a life of basic morality. Further, that this behavior itself is the very reason for our security and prosperity. None have made themselves the intellectual advocates of the idea that people are right.

Libertarianism should be the movement that fills this niche. By focusing on both the morality and practicality of normal human behavior, libertarianism can clearly distinguish itself from other movements. Politics undermines this goal by giving the public the impression that libertarianism is like all other movements. It says people are wrong-headed and should change their thinking. But by shunning politics, the movement can position itself as the defender of normal peaceful behavior. It can show how voluntary action is incompatible with government. It can stress the ineffectiveness of political action. It can point to the dwindling levels of political participation, and contrast this with the growing level of positive choices we have. And it can continually emphasize the cause of our standard of living: nothing less than the peaceful behavior of the average person, dealing with others as they do every single day, on a voluntary basis.

Conclusion

The eventual success of liberty will come from a dynamic libertarian movement. By definition this means a variety of methods, as well as innovations yet to be conceived. But if it was not clear in decades past, surely it must be clear by now: politics is the least accommodating means of achieving a dynamic goal. It squashes individuality, asking participants to think alike. It leads to endless debates over the one right way. Its fear of alienating voters kills the spirit of innovation.

Perhaps the best evidence for non-participation is found in the libertarian experience itself. The ongoing success of libertarians in the non-political arena presents us with a dramatic contrast to their political results. The predominant view of the younger generations is the libertarian ideal of both economic and personal freedom. Liberty minded thinkers today influence social discussion at all levels. This influence does extend to politics, but this arises out of the climate of culture for which libertarians can proudly claim credit, and not from their direct political participation.

Rather than joining the crowds of history in the failed project of politics, libertarians can build a fresh movement upon voluntary methods that reflect their individual preferences. In doing so they would live by the morality they preach. Further, they would each be free to explore new methods of communication and new strategies. If the energies and expenses that the libertarian currently directs to politics were redirected, then the successes already enjoyed in the non-political world are sure to increase.

“A new broom sweeps clean.”

—William Lloyd Garrison

Objections

I will spend the remainder of this letter attempting to address some possible objections to the points I have made.

“Libertarians cannot succeed by openly expressing their radical ideas; they must compromise.”

There are certain things not subject to compromise. We would not compromise on returning to slavery if someone suggested it. During the period of abolition, halfway measures were constantly debated, but only full abolition proved to be moral and practical.

So if we believe that people own their lives, and also believe that libertarian ideas work in practice, then both morality and practicality should be served by working for liberty outside of politics.

“Slavery and politics are not the same thing.”

In the most fundamental sense the issues are the same because they question the unchallenged assumption that man does not truly own himself. Either man has the natural right of self-ownership or he does not. If he does, then government may not rightfully decree whether he may be owned by others or not, and government may not interfere with his life by force. If man does not own his own life, then presumably others own it through government. If this is so, then both slavery and taxation are morally equivalent.

The anti-slavery movement saw the strategy of non-participation used only at the beginning. Eventually most abolitionists participated in politics, though it is debatable whether their particular votes had an influence upon the ultimate abolition of slavery. What is certain is that emancipation happened in the political realm, and as such, only freedom from others-ownership was achieved and not freedom from government coercion. Laws supporting segregation, laws against minority gun ownership, minimum wage laws, and so on, hampered the progress and freedom of minorities. The obvious conclusion is that government solved the slavery problem as it solves most problems: poorly and incompletely.

If the general libertarian movement can turn away from politics and focus on voluntary methods, it is possible that the simple moral premise behind libertarianism, self-ownership, will work its way through the culture, just as full emancipation did during abolition. Years before actual emancipation, there was a sense throughout our culture that the freedom of the slaves would be inevitable. As this happened, slavery started to be understood as unjust and slaveholders acquired an increasingly negative image. This was bad advertising for the institution, and led to its downfall. The culture had largely accepted that whites should not own blacks; the political system, only after an extended time, followed. The same can happen for the ideas of liberty.

“If slavery is comparable to politics, then ‘changing the system from within’ should be acceptable because some people purchased slaves just to give them their freedom.”

This brings out an important difference between slavery and politics. The ‘rules of slavery’, so to speak, made it possible for a slave to be removed from the system itself. The distasteful option of purchasing a human being in order to restore his freedom

was, nevertheless, an option. One would be foolish not to take advantage of such a rule. But the general institution of government offers no such option. No person can 'emancipate' himself from government coercion, not even by moving somewhere else. And there would never be a 'vote to eliminate government's ability to use force' because this would contradict the nature of government. It is true that particular measures can curtail government force, but the system could just as easily restore that power.

"Libertarians must accept the compromise of politics because non-aggression fails in lifeboat situations."

No social system yet conceived of handles lifeboat situations very well, so liberty cannot be condemned simply because it fails to answer lifeboat scenarios to everyone's satisfaction. Rather than spend too much time on extreme and unrealistic scenarios, libertarians should focus on how well liberty handles normal life situations.

Non-aggression is not supposed to be a magic bullet. Instead it provides an excellent starting point for analyzing social interactions, and moreover is already practiced by most people. This latter point should be the emphasis of libertarian discussion, and not how non-aggression struggles in a lifeboat. Further, they should bring home the point that in every (non-lifeboat) action of government, non-aggression is violated.

"Non-participation appears to advocate anarchy."

This letter discourages political participation on moral and practical grounds. The libertarian think tanks and literature provide a wealth of material answering the questions about how traditional government functions can be provided voluntarily. Anarchy, on the other hand, is lawlessness and license, and this is not a goal of the libertarian movement (or of any serious movement).

"Not participating is like living outside of society."

The idea of non-participation in politics should not be equated with the ideas of those who advocate living outside the framework of society, legally or physically. It is directed strictly towards active political participation. Nothing is achieved by defying the law or behaving coercively. And little is accomplished by such extremes as avoiding roads and the post office, or leaving society altogether (though people should be free to do so if they wish). Instead this letter encourages positive actions to advance the ideas of individual liberty, outside of the political arena, but well within current society.

"It is unrealistic to expect all libertarians to turn away from politics."

I agree, and do not expect this. This letter simply attempts to give libertarians more to think about. But also, observe that the public is already trending away from politics, as are many libertarians.

"Complex social problems are not solved by simple answers like advocating non-participation."

This is true, and it is not intended as an answer to particular problems. Libertarian thinkers have met the challenges of addressing complex issues countless times. If anything, non-participation frees up their time and resources to do even more.

But I would also counter that if an issue is complex, then one would hope to clarify its complexities in a forum that is most conducive to uncovering facts and reaching truth objectively. Certainly politics has proved to be the worst method of resolving complex issues: it appeals to emotions, while at the same time loses principles in a morass of distracting technicalities.

Moreover, I would not dismiss simple principles as ineffective. The movement to abolish slavery grew most rapidly only when the simple ideas of human morality replaced the so-called practical arguments (both for and against).

“No single strategy can work.”

I agree. But this does not mean all strategies are equal. Some are more effective and others less so. The libertarian experiment in politics has proven itself utterly ineffective. I therefore point to the practical conclusion that it is a strategy that needs to be replaced with better ones. But non-participation is not a strategy; it is merely rejecting the strategy of politics, leaving one free to pursue or innovate others.

“What is supposed to happen when only 5% vote?”

There will not be a fixed point at which someone will have to come up with a strategy for the entire libertarian movement. Precisely because this is a movement of individual freedom, people decide for themselves what actions to take, every step of the way. And all this happens slowly and imperceptibly over time. No one can predict the nature of that transition, except to say that it will not be planned.

“People have decided they want government.”

Answering this requires making the distinction between the public’s perception of government’s purpose, and the libertarian definition of government itself. The public generally sees government as an institution in charge of protection; libertarians define government as an institution of force. So when we say that people want government, we are saying that people want protection, not that they want institutionalized force.

Also, the general public did not “come to a decision” about government in the sense of weighing factors and considering options. While they are often well informed on particular issues, they are far less so in the nature of government. In this area their ideas are absorbed from parents, teachers and the media, and they rarely reflect on these general impressions. So at no time could there have been an explicit decision about coercive government.

“Compliance with laws and regulations implies support of government.”

Acquiescence to the institutionalized force of government should not be interpreted as support. Compliance can not reflect one’s sanction one way or the other. Expedience dictates that a person should comply when threatened with force, and since the action is not free, one can draw no conclusions about how they would have otherwise behaved. No doubt slave plantations were quiet and peaceful most of the time. But should abolitionists have implied from this an endorsement of slavery on the part of the slaves?

“Politics can work if the government were run like a business.”

This argument fails at a very fundamental level. Government is supposed to derive the sanction of its authority from the consent of the governed. Yet in practice it cannot get consent from every person, and continually. But the market achieves exactly this: by definition, it functions exclusively and continually by the consent of its customers, in other words, perfect voluntary participation. So long as government operates by unprovoked force, it cannot simultaneously operate like a business.

“Politics must be employed to spread ideas.”

A close look at major social movements reveals that politics did not initiate social changes, but only reflected the ideas that had already worked their way into the culture. In truth politics has often been the slowest institution to respond to new ideas that have gained favor.

Of course, this does not deny that politics is a significant factor in the culture. Precisely because government has the power of institutionalized force, its actions will have a strong influence, including influence over ideas. But it rarely innovates new ideas; instead it gives preferential treatment to particular ideas already out there.

An excellent example of this is found in the socialist agenda of the early 20th century. Socialist ideas had spread considerably during that time. Simultaneously a socialist party formed in America to run candidates and advocate positions. In general it failed politically, with very few victories. But over the following decades, the laws enacted by government became more and more socialist in nature. This was not due to the small slice of socialist voters. It was clearly a result of the ideas that had by then permeated the culture.

“Government must be the only provider of defense and justice.”

I would refer the reader to the extensive literature that suggests that private competing security companies are viable. That such companies would go to war with each other seems unlikely, if for no other reason than because people tend to avoid trouble at all costs. This would be especially true for companies wanting to have a reputation for maintaining peaceful security.

By declaring that national defense, police, and courts cannot be provided privately, we are assuming we know the limits of the free market, and this we cannot know. But what we do know is that monopolies respond to customers' needs poorly. Not surprisingly we are unhappy with our national defense, police and courts. One wonders if the market could do much worse.

“Government does not violate the non-aggression principle, because it arises from social contract.”

A contract requires agreement among the parties involved, and clearly no one has been presented a free choice between being governed or not. If the social contract is instead an abstract that arises out of people's behavior, then I would only suggest we speculate about people's behavior were the government to ask for voluntary contributions instead of imposing taxes.

“We have our freedoms because of government and the rule of law.”

This is misleading because politics is only one piece of the social structure that contributes to our standard of living. Both government and voluntary activities play a part in our level of freedom and security. Government’s contribution is handled poorly because it is at the mercy of the flaws inherent in a system of institutionalized coercion. The market, on the other hand, tends to satisfy the expectation of security and stability.

The rule of law, as it is commonly understood, requires a government be responsible, responsive and non-arbitrary. Yet here it consistently fails at this basic task, and is instead irresponsible, unresponsive and arbitrary. Yet humans not only survive, but also accomplish astounding intellectual and technological achievements, despite the burden of coercive government. The social stability that makes it possible to overcome this institutional obstacle cannot be rooted in politics; it can only be a powerful but spontaneous “rule of law” arising out of the nature of man, in his tendency to interact on a voluntary basis.

“We see what our fathers did not see; we know what they did not know.”

—William Lloyd Garrison