

desirable, to conservatives ended up being stripped out and legislators ratcheted up spending. Instead of fighting to keep the bills closer to their original goals, the Bush administration accepted Congress' handiwork, declared victory, and held a signing ceremony.

Will Social Security reform be different? Although some conservatives object in principle to any forced savings or investment, many others are energized by what they see as a more ambitious free-market reform proposal than Bush's education and Medicare gambits ever were. What, if anything, could go wrong?

Tyler Cowen, a professor of economics at George Mason University who posts on the Marginal Revolution blog, worries that the combination of transition costs imposed by the personal accounts plus the expense of maintaining a "secondary safety net" in case "anyone's account goes bust" will end up leading to a higher tax burden in the long run. He argues that it would be preferable to institute means-testing, transforming Social Security into "a welfare program for the needy elderly" and allowing private savings and investment to remain a voluntary choice.

Berna Brannon, a Social Security analyst for the Cato Institute, argues that the transition costs really just make explicit unfunded obligations the federal government has already incurred. It is, she maintains, better to pay for some of them now in order to reduce costs over the long term, and she is more optimistic about the transition costs, which she argues are often misunderstood. "The financial markets will likely perceive us to be responsibly owning the problem instead of passing it on to the next generation," Brannon says.

Also worth watching are the details that have been left to Congress. There is still the question of what steps will be taken to restrain future benefit spending beyond individual investment. At the

State of the Union, Bush mentioned cutting benefits on a means-tested basis for affluent retirees, instituting price indexing so cost-of-living adjustments would be tied to inflation rather than wage growth, and raising the retirement age, cleverly quoting a prominent Democrat suggesting each one. But he did not endorse any of them, suggesting he wants Capitol Hill to bite first.

The size of the personal accounts is also still in contention. Many House conservatives want younger workers to be able to invest more than just four percentage points of their payroll taxes. Congressman Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) has introduced a bill that allows younger workers to divert an average of 6.4 percentage points; Congressman Sam Johnson's (R-Texas) bill would codify Cato's proposal of 6.2 percentage points.

The argument is that larger accounts will allow workers to accumulate bigger nest eggs, reduce their dependency on traditional Social Security benefits by a greater amount, and make it politically more risky for a future Congress ever to try to reduce the accounts. "We're still

hopeful that the account sizes will be bigger," says Brannon. "There is still a lot of wiggle room."

Others have reforms in mind that conservatives will find less to their liking. Key Democrats hope to prop up Social Security by increasing the progressivity of the payroll tax. The idea received bipartisan cover when Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) earlier this year suggested raising the income to which Social Security taxes apply, currently capped at \$90,000. To avoid a filibuster, Republicans may need to secure five Democratic votes for Social Security restructuring. Will free-market reforms again be jettisoned so that Bush can sign a bill?

Social Security reformers nevertheless remain optimistic. "If we end up with personal accounts, with real ownership, and no increase in the payroll tax, any bill will be a step in the right direction," says Brannon. "Individual accounts are essential."

Such benchmarks are also essential to ensure that conservatives don't once again vote for ownership only to get warmed-over welfarism. ■

## How to Destroy a Nation

We're already well underway.

By **Richard D. Lamm**

I HAVE A SECRET PLAN to destroy America. If you believe, as many do, that America is too smug, too white-bread, too self-satisfied, too rich, let's destroy America. It is not that hard to do. History shows that nations are more fragile than their citizens think: no nation in history has survived the ravages of time. Historian Arnold Toynbee observed that all great civilizations rise and fall and that "an autopsy of history would show

that all great nations commit suicide." Here is my plan:

1. We must first make America a bilingual/bicultural country. History shows that no nation can survive the tension, conflict, and antagonism of two competing languages and cultures. It is a blessing for an individual to be bilingual; it is a curse for a society. One scholar, Seymour Martin Lipset, put it this way:

The histories of bilingual and bicultural societies that do not assimilate are histories of turmoil, tension, and tragedy. Canada, Belgium, Malaysia, and Lebanon—all face crises of national existence in which minorities press for autonomy, if not independence. Pakistan and Cyprus have divided. Nigeria suppressed an ethnic rebellion. France faces difficulties with its Basques, Bretons, and Corsicans.

Some think that Switzerland is an example of a bilingual country that works. Don't disabuse them of this idea. Don't for a minute point out to them that the Swiss divided their country into distinct linguistic areas, German, French, Italian, and Romansch. Let them ignore Emmanuel Kant's warning that "language is the great divider" of human history.

**2.** I would invent multiculturalism and encourage immigrants to maintain their own cultures. I would make it an article of belief that all cultures are equal, that there are no cultural differences that are important. I would declare it an article of faith that the black and Hispanic dropout rate is only due to prejudice and discrimination by the majority. Every other explanation is out-of-bounds.

**3.** We can make the United States a "Hispanic Quebec" without much effort. The key is to celebrate diversity rather than unity. As Benjamin Schwarz said in *The Atlantic* recently:

...[T]he apparent success of our own multiethnic and multicultural experiment might have been achieved not by tolerance but by hegemony. Without the dominance that once dictated ethnocentrically, and what it meant to be an American, we are left with only tolerance and pluralism to hold us together.

I would encourage all immigrants to keep their own languages and cultures and I would replace the melting-pot metaphor with a salad-bowl metaphor. It is important to ensure that we have various cultural sub-groups living in America reinforcing their differences, rather than Americans emphasizing their similarities.

**4.** Having done all this, I would make our fastest growing demographic group the least educated—I would add a second underclass, unassimilated, undereducated, and antagonistic to the majority population. I would allow our immigration patterns to take 50 percent of our immigrant stream from Spanish-speaking countries, and I would have this new second underclass have a 50 percent dropout rate from school. Furthermore, I would radicalize them with dreams of "Aztlán" and re-conquering the American Southwest.

**5.** I would then get foundations and big business to give these efforts lots of money. I would invest in ethnic identity, and I would establish the cult of victimology. I would get all minorities to think that their lack of success was all the fault of the majority by starting a grievance industry blaming all minority failure on the majority population.

**6.** I would establish dual citizenship and promote divided loyalties. I would "celebrate diversity." Diversity is a wonderfully seductive word. It stresses differences rather than commonalities. Diverse people worldwide are mostly engaged in hating each other—that is, when they are not killing each other. A diverse, peaceful, or stable society is against most historical precedent. People undervalue the unity it takes to keep a nation together, and we can take advantage of this myopia. Look at the ancient Greeks. Dorf's *World History* tells us:

The Greeks believed that they belonged to the same race; they possessed a common language and literature; and they worshiped the same gods. All Greece took part in the Olympic games in honor of Zeus and all Greeks venerated the shrine of Apollo at Delphi. A common enemy Persia threatened their liberty. Yet, all of these bonds together were not strong enough to overcome two factors ... (local patriotism and geographical conditions that nurtured political divisions ...)

If we can put the emphasis on the "pluribus," instead of the "unum," we can balkanize America as surely as Kosovo.

**7.** Then I would place all these sensitive subjects off limits—make them taboo to talk about. I would find a word similar to "heretic" in the 16th century that stopped discussion and paralyzed thinking. Words like "racist" and "xenophobe" should serve the same purpose: halt argument and even conversation.

Having made America a bilingual/bicultural country, having established multiculturalism, having the large foundations fund the doctrine of victimology I would next make it impossible to enforce our immigration laws. I would develop a mantra: "because immigration has been good for America, it must always be good." I would make every individual immigrant sympathetic and ignore the cumulative impact.

Note: Please keep this plan confidential. America could still wake up. ■

---

*Richard D. Lamm was a three-term governor of Colorado. A variation of this essay was delivered at the annual dinner of the Federation for American-Immigration Reform.*

# Libertarianism: A Home for Conservatives?

## Marxism of the Right

By Robert Locke

Free spirits, the ambitious, ex-socialists, drug users, and sexual eccentrics often find an attractive political philosophy in libertarianism, the idea that individual freedom should be the sole rule of ethics and government. Libertarianism offers its believers a clear conscience to do things society presently restrains, like make more money, have more sex, or take more drugs. It promises a consistent formula for ethics, a rigorous framework for policy analysis, a foundation in American history, and the application of capitalist efficiencies to the whole of society. But while it contains substantial grains of truth, as a whole it is a seductive mistake.

There are many varieties of libertarianism, from natural-law libertarianism (the least crazy) to anarcho-capitalism (the most), and some varieties avoid some of the criticisms below. But many are still subject to most of them, and some of the more successful varieties—I recently heard a respected pundit insist that classical liberalism is libertarianism—enter a gray area where it is not really clear that they are libertarians at all. But because 95 percent of the libertarianism one encounters at cocktail parties, on editorial pages, and on Capitol Hill is a kind of commonplace “street” libertarianism, I decline to allow libertarians the sophisticated trick of using a vulgar libertarianism to agitate for what they want by defending a refined version of their doctrine when challenged philosophically. We’ve seen Marxists pull that before.

This is no surprise, as libertarianism is basically the Marxism of the Right. If Marxism is the delusion that one can run society purely on altruism and collectivism, then libertarianism is the mirror-image delusion that one can run it purely on selfishness and individualism. Society in fact requires both individualism and collectivism, both selfishness and altruism, to function. Like Marxism, libertarianism offers the fraudulent intellectual security of a complete *a priori* account of the political good without the effort of empirical investigation. Like Marxism, it aspires, overtly or covertly, to reduce social life to economics.

Continued on Page 18

## In Defense of Freedom

By Daniel McCarthy

Arthur Schopenhauer once wrote a marvelously cynical manual of eristics called *The Art of Always Being Right*. The philosopher advised his readers against resort to logic; *ad hominem* attacks and other plays upon the passions could be much more effective. Put the opponent’s argument in some odious category, he urged.

Conservatives are long accustomed to residing in such a category: as their enemies would have it, conservatism is the ideology of the rich, the racist, and the illiterate. That this caricature bears no resemblance at all to the philosophy and social thought of Edmund Burke or Russell Kirk, Richard Weaver or Robert Nisbet, is irrelevant. The stereotype endures not because it is true but because it is useful.

Sadly, a few conservatives seem to have learned nothing from their experience at the hands of the Left and are no less quick to present an ill-informed and malicious caricature of libertarians than leftists are to give a similarly distorted interpretation of conservatism. Rather than addressing the arguments of libertarians, these polemicists slander their foes as hedonists or Nietzscheans. In fact, there are libertine libertarians, just as there are affluent and bigoted conservatives. But libertinism itself is as distinct from libertarianism as worship of Mammon or hatred of blacks is distinct from conservatism.

Libertarianism is a political philosophy, not a complete system of ethics or metaphysics. Political philosophies address specifically the state and, more generally, justice in human society. The distinguishing characteristic of libertarianism is that it applies to the state the same ethical rules that apply to everyone else. Given that murder and theft are wrong—views not unique to libertarianism, of course—the libertarian contends that the state, which is to say those individuals who purport to act in the name of the common good, has no more right to seize the property of others, beat them, conscript them, or otherwise harm them than any other institution or individual has. Beyond this, libertarianism says only that a society without institutionalized violence can indeed exist and even thrive.

Continued on Page 20