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Anarchosorcery
Or: The case against repeal
April 1, 1978

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“Pick an anti, any anti.”

This could be considered the libertarian equivalent of a card trick. In sleight-of-hand, the object is to have the member of the audience choose the card you want him to, while letting him choose whatever he wants. The libertarian trying to conjure up a convert—or at least a little attention—can load his deck in the same way.

What’s the trick? The stage magician wants you to select a card, any card—but from his deck. And the adept libertarian asks the same: select an “anti” position from the Deck of Political Issues.

So if the “member of the audience” says he’s anti-tomato soup, or anti-brushing one’s teeth four times a day, the libertarian just shrugs and says, “Laissez faire!” Then you remind the mark that he was supposed to pick a card from the deck, select an “anti” from political issues.

Anti-busing? Even the most retarded libertarian could demonstrate that the State is responsible for busing to atone for the sins of segregation visited upon the seventh generation.

Anti-gun? Well, this may bother some gun nut libertarians, but the trick, I assure you, always works. If the rube throws you a curve, reverse your stance to catch it. Try this:

“I’m sure you’ll agree we can’t get rid of all guns by force. After all, who will get rid of the guns held by those who are forcing everyone else to hold them?”

“But actually, there are indeed far more guns than people would freely produce if they had their way. And you know who has the most guns—to be used for offensive as well as defensive purposes—not to mention gas, planes, neutron bombs, killer lasers, missiles, tanks and on and on?”

Needless to say, the audience is once again facing the State as the obstacle to the satisfaction of their anti-ness. The same “reverse stance” can be used whether you’re given anti-sexism or anti-feminism, anti-pollution or anti-ecology, anti-war or anti-(reason for the war).

Anti-tax? You should be so lucky.

Now if I’m really that good a libertarian magician, I should be able to foil my own trick. Suppose I enter a parlor where some alleged libertarian, having only read the first half of this article, is wowing the guests with my ploy. He’s a deviationist of some kind, so assume I am annoyed. He decides to rub it in by looking at me, asking me to fall for my gambit. “Pick an anti, any . . .”

“Anti-repeal.”

More than likely, this deviationist is an anarcho-democrat (polite term for political-process libertarians ranging from cuddly Roycians to fire-breathing Partyarchs). If there is one thing every anarcho-democrat believes, one common denominator for any libertarian who’s the least bit soft-core on politics, it is support of repeal. Repeal of laws, repeal of taxes, repeal of regulations, repeal of office (impeachment)—what libertarian could be against that?

Got him!

But maybe this person has read two-thirds of the way through this article and was expecting this. Suppose, fiendishly, he throws it, back at me, like so:

“Say, aren’t you the guy who came up with this trick? Yeah, that’s right. OK, why don’t you show us all how to answer it?”

As I said, a good libertarian magician should be able to foil his own trick. A great libertarian wizard should be able to counter the foil when used on him. So I’d answer thusly:

“‘To repeal’ means ‘to enact legislation withdrawing or nullifying other legislation.’ That is, the supporters of a repeal divide into two groups: those who gain by further political processing, and those who just want to get another law off their backs.

“But many, if not most, laws are perceived to affect only a small interest group in a statist society; hence, in order to use the political process to get the law in question off their backs, the latter group must devote resources to persuade the less concerned to bestir themselves. The former group—politicians and their jackals—profit by allocating the resources and consuming much.

“The alternative is for the latter group (victims is a good name) to devote whatever resources they have for the struggle to protect or defend themselves while they are ignoring the law. Suddenly, the equation changes.

“Now the dead weight of the unconcerned has to be stirred to gain resources and consent to crack down on the law-abolitionists (counter-economists).

“Finally, a coalition of repeal groups, seeking repeals of various laws, find it difficult to see the common enemy (the State) and rather see themselves competing for the same people, same money, same time for their particular repeal. In stark contrast, every counter-economist is in solidarity with every other. ‘The Man’ is enemy of the smuggler, prostitute, dealer and street gambler alike. To fink is the ultimate crime.

“Repeal, then, perpetuates the State, and even where it passes, it leaves 99 and 44/100 of the oppression and plunder. The direct

action of counter-economics consumes capital only for the specific purpose desired, and can never be used to sustain the State. Every counter-economic act takes from the taxman and regulator, and snubs noses at their authority.

“And that’s why libertarian are anti-repeal as well.”

And that’s how the trick is done. Some may call it sorcery; I call it consistency. For an anti? Why, you’re libertarian! Presto!