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Starting a Brush Fire for Freedom

An interview with US Rep. Ron Paul

by John W. Whitehead

Monday, February 9, 2004

When asked what advice he would give to Americans concerned about the growing power of the federal government and the various threats to our liberties, Congressman Ron Paul (R-Tex.) quoted Samuel Adams: "Every individual has a responsibility to be informed, to know what is going on and to know the issues. As Samuel Adams once said, 'Go out and start a brush fire.' And you can do that with one individual or many. You can become a teacher or a writer or help somebody in politics. But you can only start a brush fire for freedom if you feel confident that you understand the issues and really can defend liberty as being the best system for all of us."



Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Ron Paul graduated from Gettysburg College and the Duke University School of Medicine, before serving as a flight surgeon in the U.S. Air Force during the 1960s. He and his wife Carol moved to Texas in 1968, where he began his medical practice in Brazoria County as a specialist in obstetrics/gynecology.

While serving in Congress during the late 1970s and early 1980s, Dr. Paul's limited-government ideals were not popular in Washington. While serving on the House Banking Committee, he was a strong advocate for sound monetary policy and an outspoken critic of the Federal Reserve's inflationary measures. Dr. Paul consistently voted to lower or abolish federal taxes, spending, and regulation, and used his House seat to actively preserve, protect, and defend our constitutional principles of government. In fact, in Congress he is known as "Dr. No" because he refuses to accept any legislation that does not pass strict constitutional muster.

In 1984, Dr. Paul voluntarily relinquished his House seat and returned to his medical practice in Texas. However, in 1997 he returned to Congress and has continued to advocate a dramatic reduction in the size of the federal government and a return to constitutional principles.

Since the 9/11 tragedy, Dr. Paul has been an outspoken critic of the USA Patriot Act and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, which he believes are a threat to liberty and a sign that our country is becoming more like a police state. "The idea that search

warrants could be granted so easily under the Patriot Act," says Dr. Paul. "... with sneak and peak searches and going into libraries and other places to find out what people are doing is wrong. It's total surveillance."

Dr. Paul has also been a strong critic of the war in Iraq, going so far as to call it "unconstitutional" because there was no formal declaration of war, and "immoral" because there was no direct attack on our country. "Iraq is a Third World Nation that couldn't defend itself," says Dr. Paul. "This has been proven to be correct. We had been bombing them, flying over their air space, intimidating them and controlling them for 12 years. They have been trying to shoot our airplanes down, and never have been able to. Iraq simply could not defend itself."

Obviously, opinions like this have made Ron Paul somewhat of a lone wolf in Congress. But as one writer pointed out, "There has always been one politician in Washington who has never been a politician. That man is Congressman Ron Paul from the 14th District in Texas who has always been a throwback to the original 'citizen statesman' that the Founders promoted as the ideal type of leader for the Republic they had formed." Indeed, Dr. Paul is quick to point out that we have "drifted away" from the original idea of a Republic and have more of a centralized government which presents a threat to individual liberty. Still, he remains cautiously optimistic about the future of America. "I am not optimistic in the short run," Paul admits. "I have a lot of concerns. But we will have to wait and see what evolves. However, I am optimistic enough to believe that if we put the time and energy into fighting for our country and the Constitution, there is as good a chance of winning this fight as losing it."

Rutherford Institute President John W. Whitehead interviews Ron Paul to talk about his lone wolf status in Congress, the USA Patriot Act, the war in Iraq, and the rise of big government under Republican leadership.

JWW: You are quoted as saying: "Man's nature is unchanging, and so are the principles of liberty. And when I raise my hand to swear to Almighty God that I will preserve, protect and defend the Constitution, I mean it with all my heart, as you would. That's why, before every vote I take, I ask if the legislation under consideration is constitutional. Of course, it virtually never is. That's why they call me 'Dr. No.' I will not support any bill that violates the Constitution." Are you a lone wolf in Congress?

Ron Paul: Yes, most of the time. My emotions range from the extreme feeling that I'm totally alone to working with almost everybody. There are times when neither side will agree with me and I will be voting by myself. I understand that I vote by myself more times than everyone else in Congress put together. So, there are times on economic issues where I will have many close and enthusiastic allies from both sides on war issues and sometimes on civil liberties issues. There are principled people from both sides that I ally with. Thus, in one way you could paint me as being totally alone. However, in another sense, I have a chance to work with almost everybody at one time or another.

JWW: This brings me to the question of the USA Patriot Act. You took a strong stand against the Patriot Act because of the expansive powers it gives to the federal government and the intelligence agencies. There are many conservatives across the country who, on a daily basis, take issue with me because I came out against the Patriot Act. They believe the Act is

absolutely necessary. Why don't you believe it is necessary?

RP: You don't have to give up freedom in order to protect freedom. In many ways, some of our problems came from the fact that we didn't put enough responsibility on individuals as well as property owners to protect their own property. For instance, I believe it is the responsibility of the airlines to protect their property as well as their passengers, just as an armored car has a responsibility, if necessary, to protect its cargo with guns. I believe we should have more responsibility to take care of ourselves. We have drifted from this principle.

Moreover, you don't have to give up freedom. You don't have to give up Fourth Amendment protections in order for the government to take care of us. The idea that search warrants could be granted so easily under the Patriot Act with sneak and peek searches and going into libraries and other places to find out what people are doing is wrong. It's total surveillance. The other thing that convinced me that it was such a bad deal was that these proposals are not new. These are the kinds of things that have been around, especially in the financial area, which I have followed closely. These proposals have been around for a long time, and many who were pushing these changes saw this as an opportunity. Then, of course, there was the procedure that went on at the time of the Patriot Act that raised a lot of questions as well.

JWW: Are you saying there was a conspiracy to get the Patriot Act enacted?

RP: It was taking advantage of the times, and the final version of the bill really wasn't available for study before it was passed.

JWW: Isn't that immoral?

RP: You would think so. But in Washington, it doesn't seem to bother too many. I'm glad that a lot of people caught on because they have sure raised a fuss. They have not wanted more of the same. However, it looks like we are getting more of the same because the Patriot Act has actually been strengthened.

JWW: On Saturday, December 13, 2003, President Bush signed the Intelligence Authorization Act into law. This was the same day Saddam Hussein was captured and Americans, thus, were obviously distracted. You, among others, have criticized this piece of legislation. Although this bill uses American taxpayer money to fund the various intelligence agencies, it included a redefinition of financial institutions. The phrase, which previously referred to banks, now includes stockbrokers, car dealerships, credit card companies, insurance agencies, jewelers, airlines, the U.S. Post Office and the catch-all phrase of any other business "whose cash transactions have a high degree of usefulness in criminal, tax, or regulatory matters." First, why are you concerned about this provision? And second, was this an obvious attempt to put into law what was earlier dubbed "Patriot Act II"?

RP: This is an expansion by way of the so-called Patriot Act II. In one sense, the people are waking up and some members of Congress are responding. However, the system still moves forward, mainly because of the advocacy of the Bush Administration and our leadership in Congress. They actually want more powers for the federal government to monitor everything that we the people do. Of course, they say this is to catch terrorists, but these rules affect all private, law-abiding American citizens as well.

JWW: In his State of the Union Speech, President Bush called for the Patriot Act to be extended and not to be sunsetted. Were you surprised that he came out so strongly and aggressively in favor of the Patriot Act in his State of the Union speech?

RP: It almost seems like the President is out of touch. I was recently in Utah, where we thought we could get about 300 people out on the subject of the Patriot Act. However, we had closer to 700 people, and none of them were for the Patriot Act. Therefore, when you see the President saying this, I wonder what his assessment is at the grass roots level. So, yes, I was surprised about how bold he was on the Patriot Act. I don't think the people want that. I believe there was a sense of this in the Congress because many members applauded at the wrong time when the President mentioned the Patriot Act. In other words, when he mentioned that it was going to be sunsetted and before he said that he wanted to strengthen it, the Congress applauded.

JWW: In June 2002, you gave a speech on the House floor in which you asked the question, "Are we doomed to be a police state?" You went on to give one of the most intelligent speeches on the state of our nation and our freedoms that I've heard in a long time. You painted a grim picture of a nation quietly slipping into a kind of "democratic totalitarianism" in which, I quote, "the principle tool for sustaining a police state, even the most militant, is always economic control and punishment by denying disobedient citizens such things as jobs or places to live, and by levying fines and imprisonment." It's been a year-and-a-half since you made that speech. Do you think we've moved further down the road toward a police state?

RP: I think we are. The government responded to 9/11 by making more rules and laws such as the Patriot Act and its extensions.

JWW: Why do you think Congress and the media paid so little attention to the creation of the largest government bureaucracy since World War II, the Department of Homeland Security? As you have said, when the Department of Defense was created in 1947, Congress held hearings for two years before Truman signed the legislation. This legislation passed in a matter of weeks. Given the fact, as you have pointed out, that the creation of the department dramatically increased the size and scope of the federal government and will mostly serve to spy on the American people, why do you think Congress, and particularly congressional Republicans who have historically been for smaller government, willingly supported such a radical expansion of the federal government?

RP: I believe the American people are frightened and the members of Congress are taking advantage of it—especially those who want big government. They see this as a chance to move in that direction. And since 9/11, I think the American people have wanted something done. They want to feel more secure. They have some very natural reactions. However, if those in charge have a tendency to want to depend on government, then they are going to expand government.

JWW: Are you saying that George W. Bush is an advocate of very large government?

RP: When Bush talks, he does not sound like he is an advocate of big government. But if you look at what has happened in the last three years of his administration—whether it is in medicine, education, the Department of Homeland Security, military adventurism or nation building—big government has been thriving. If you look at the budget

and the exploding deficits, this would confirm that belief.

JWW: The Republican Party and the conservatives have been associated with private sector theories. The Left has always been concerned with the ideological strengthening of government in a way that threatens the private sector. Are you saying that Bush is really pushing more of a leftist ideology than a rightist ideology?

RP: The results are that we are getting more social engineering under the administration.

JWW: Which is leftist ideology.

RP: That is correct. We are ending up with a leftist ideology from Bush. I hate to interpret all the beliefs, convictions and motivations of individuals. However, despite the rhetoric for a limited government and balanced budget, if you look at the results, the Left is winning. Supposedly, the Republicans are in charge. There are many good conservatives who would like to vote more often for a limited government. But there is this tremendous desire to accommodate and be part of the party system. Washington, D.C. is a partisan city. Thus, it ends up that when these proposals are made—for whatever reason—they get passed rather easily.

JWW: Are you saying that representative government has broken down? In other words, it is not working effectively?

RP: It is not working very well, which means that the people must remain vigilant. They have to look at the total conclusion, rather than just the rhetoric and spin, and face up to the reality of what is happening around them.

JWW: Watching television—CNN and shows like that—one could at times get the idea that the media has become the voice for the Bush Administration. In fact, there are sound bites by news people indicating, for example, that “government sources say today...” One wonders which government sources they are talking about. Then they proceed to give this report on what the Bush White House has told them as unbiased news. It is very pro big government at times. How are the people ever going to be vigilant if the media is not questioning their government sources on a regular basis? They are simply passing on information from the government as news.

RP: That has always been a problem, although I believe it is less of a problem now. That is why I am feeling better about what is happening. I had an earlier stint of duty in the Congress in the '70s, and what you just said was much truer then. There were three major networks, which controlled 90 percent of the news. It's different now because there are more news outlets. Thus, you get more opinions on television. People have access to cable stations. However, where I am excited is in the area of the Internet and radio talk shows. There is a lot more information out there, and I think that is the reason the people are very much aware of a bill like the Patriot Act. Their doors have not been knocked on by the police. They have not yet suffered directly from the Patriot Act, and yet they are alert to it. Thus, we have to overcome the bias of the media. But I think we are able to do that better now than we have ever been able to.

JWW: In November 2000, you wrote a rather prophetic column entitled “Our Foolish War in the Middle East.” You warned

Americans that a "lack of understanding of Middle Eastern history and religion, combined with our policy of aggression and empire building, has led to a dangerous interventionist attitude." You went on to say, "It is clear that we are not in the Middle East for national security reasons, but rather to protect powerful commercial interests. This assures that we protect oil supplies for the West and provides us with an excuse to keep the military/ industrial complex active." In closing, you said, "Congress and the administration must understand that the greatest threat to our national security is our own bad policy." Do you believe that 9/11 was a consequence of that bad policy? And do you think we continue to aggravate the situation with our present policy?

RP: It is a combination of things. The commercial interests are very, very important. Oil interests are a major part of it. Even in 1990, then-President George H. W. Bush said that we had to intervene in the Middle East to protect American oil. His administration modified that after awhile because it didn't sound good. Next, it was suggested that we were going over there for jobs. Finally, it was said that we were over there to stop aggression. Thus, the supposed reasons for our presence in the Middle East varied. But there was an admission that it was for oil. Oil is a major issue.

I also believe the continuous inference of the military/industrial complex has a role in our intervention in the militant type foreign policy. I think that is extremely important. I also believe the philosophy of the President's advisors now on foreign policy is a neo-conservative one. They believe that, over and above the oil objective, they are doing something very good and very noble—that is, going in and getting rid of the bad guys and putting good guys in power. They can even lie to accomplish these so-called good things.

Also, the fact that we have taken sides in the fight between the Palestinians and Israel has also sewn some seeds of discontent. It was no big secret that Israel was very anxious to get rid of Saddam Hussein. And I have no objection to that. I was one of the very few who said that Israel had every right in the world to do whatever they wanted when they bombed the nuclear site in Iraq. I defended them. But not with American money. We should not use American money. The Middle East should be dealt with by the Middle Eastern countries, not by America. Our commercial interests are important, but there are other factors as well.

JWW: In a September 2002 address to Congress, you said, "Military force is justified only in self-defense; naked aggression is the province of dictators and rogue states. This is the danger of a new 'preemptive first strike' doctrine. America is the most moral nation on earth, founded on moral principles, and we must apply moral principles when deciding to use military force." Do you think America's invasion of Iraq was immoral? Unconstitutional?

RP: It was clearly unconstitutional because there was no declaration of war. It was immoral because there was no direct attack on our country. And it was immoral because the response was not appropriate. Also, Iraq is a Third World Nation that couldn't defend itself. This has been proven to be correct. We had been bombing them, flying over their air space, intimidating them and controlling them for 12 years. They have been trying to shoot our airplanes down, and never have been able to. Iraq simply could not defend itself.

JWW: Some have asserted that the Bush Administration waged the war against Iraq simply for political reasons. In other words, the Bush Administration saw the Iraqi war as a way to bolster a

future political campaign. As a result, American troops were sent to Iraq for political purposes. And now we have hundreds of troops that have died for a political reason?

RP: I wouldn't be willing to simplify it to that point. However, I do know that probably 99 percent of everything everybody does in Washington has a political overtone to it.

JWW: But when American troops die for politics, isn't that different?

RP: That makes it immoral. This is especially true if the war is not legitimate and it is not waged for national defense purposes. What really aggravated me was the unconstitutionality of the so-called Iraqi war and the fact that we were really going into Iraq to boost the United Nations—that is, to make sure that the United Nations, if they are not willing to enforce their own rules and demands, then the United States will do it for them in order for the United Nations to remain strong and powerful. I saw this as strengthening the United Nations. At this very same time, what did our administration do? They put us back in UNESCO. This is something that Ronald Reagan had gotten us out of approximately 20 years ago.

JWW: You have said that true limited government conservatives had been corrupted by the rise of the neo-conservatives in Washington. How do you define the term neo-conservative?

RP: It is a term that these people gave themselves. There were leftists who wanted to be strong on national defense, more militant and more aggressive. They did not agree with the old Left of the '50s. Thus, they joined the Republican Party and called themselves conservatives. However, they didn't want to be traditional conservatives. They became neo-conservatives. They were very much involved in social engineering through federal control of education, welfare and medicine. That is exactly what we have been getting.

JWW: So the neo-conservatives are actually leftists?

RP: The neo-conservatives have essentially nothing to do with conservatism.

JWW: Is President Bush a neo-conservative?

RP: The policy of the Bush Administration is neo-conservative. Therefore, the President's appointments and the people he listens to are neo-conservative. I have a much firmer belief about the Vice President as being a neo-conservative than I do the President. He is more philosophically in tune with Donald Rumsfeld.

JWW: Does it bother you that the Bush Administration seems to have chosen a political philosophy that tends to err on the side of strength? That is, it seems to have chosen to value safety, security, authority and the idea that the ends justify the means over individual freedom and liberty? If so, why?

RP: It bothers me very much. I seem to struggle with it every day, trying to make the point that we as a nation are spending too much. We are moving in the wrong direction. We are supposed to be shrinking the government. We shouldn't have an expansion as the empire-building foreign policy. But this type of philosophy is not brand new. This is not a new creation. It is a culmination. It wasn't created by the Bush family

and the other neo-conservatives. It is etched in our history. For example, Woodrow Wilson and Teddy Roosevelt thought like neo-conservatives. It was the so-called progressive wing of the Republican Party, which was very much like the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. The philosophy has come together now with George W. Bush's administration.

JWW: Do you believe the neo-conservative influence on our government can be reversed now that we've launched a preemptive war, chosen to use force to impose our ideals and weakened the Constitution's ability to protect our freedom and privacy? Haven't we gone beyond the point of no return?

RP: I believe there will be a reversal. I am optimistic that this will happen. We are going to win because we are going to run out of money. The old Soviet Union is an example. What happened to the Soviets was what Ed Meese, Attorney General in the Reagan Administration, had predicted. He said that socialism doesn't work. The Soviet empire collapsed from within. Throughout history, the neo-conservative philosophy that promotes welfarism and empire building has never worked. It always collapses eventually. The tragedy is that when it does happen, many people will suffer as a result of the collapse. Thus, it will not last.

JWW: There is a huge problem. The United States is presently carrying a \$7 trillion debt. But virtually every day President Bush has a new program that will cost millions or billions of dollars, such as \$12 billion to fly to the moon. Within 30 years, with the new Medicare proposal, it is now predicted that this country will be totally bankrupt. Where is the hope in all of that?

RP: Our country is insolvent, and bankruptcy will come. And there will be liquidation of debt. Daily there is liquidation of debt.

JWW: Does this mean a depression?

RP: I think it is going to be very, very bad. We are much poorer than we think we are. The debt, however, will not be paid. Some actually think the \$7 trillion can be paid off. But the debt will be liquidated. The danger is that there is a lot of turmoil when that happens. There is also the fear that in order to keep order we will resort to having a much stronger Executive Branch—a centralized power in one man. I am just hoping and praying that we get enough information out there and that the people will not resort to a complete statist takeover—that is, the idea that the government has to take care of us rather than us opting for the freedom to take care of ourselves.

JWW: Isn't this type of statist philosophy taught in the public schools?

RP: Yes, it is.

JWW: History teaches us a lesson here, does it not? Once people accept the statist philosophy, there is danger of an authoritarian state. That is how Hitler came to power. When the German government collapsed economically, the German people asked for a Caesar. They wanted someone to save them, and the result was a military state. Is there a great danger of that happening in this country?

RP: There is. However, you must remember that Estonia and Latvia now exist as separate countries from Russia and the Soviet system. Some of

these countries have an improved economy. Thus, systems can collapse and countries can rise again and break up the monolith. But exactly how it will come about, we don't know. My personal responsibility is to warn people of what is happening and tell them that we cannot sustain the system the way it is presently operating. We must continue to argue the case for the Republic and individual liberty with full confidence that people don't have to lose their freedom. They don't have to lose any of their financial benefits. Actually, we as a people are enhanced if we have more freedom. Thus, at base, it is an intellectual struggle rather than a political struggle alone.

JWW: It is the educational struggle that we seem to be losing. For example, the younger generation coming out of high school seems to have no concept of the rights, liberty and freedom that are enshrined in our Constitution.

RP: I see that all the time. However, I am also in a congressional district where home schooling is very strong. There are a lot of private schools as well. There are also many religious schools, both Protestant and Catholic. This is very encouraging. And although there aren't as many children in private schools as there are in public ones, there is a portion of the younger generation that will have a sense of what freedom means. To win any battle, you do not have to convert a majority. You have to convert a determined minority who are in a position of influence. Thus, as another generation comes to maturity, there is a chance for other views to prevail.

JWW: You are opposed to President Bush's government program to support "healthy" marriage. You've said that "an initiative aimed at promoting moral values will be funded immorally, by taxing people who may have no interest in such government folly." What do you say to conservatives and those on the religious right who think this kind of thing is a good idea?

RP: I do not want to sound as if I don't care about a healthy marriage. To the contrary, I believe that the marriage/family unit is serving one of the most important functions. It should be the family and the parents who are raising the children, rather than the government. However, the notion that our government should—to the tune of a billion and half dollars—tell people why they ought to be married is ludicrous. First, we should not be spending money we don't have. And second, the odds of this making people aware of the fact that marriage is a good idea is absurd. Can you imagine the founders of our country placing in the Constitution the notion that government should promote marriage? The more I think about it, the sillier I think it is.

JWW: The Bush Administration has been criticized for "keeping score"; that is, rewarding loyalty and punishing disobedience. Have you ever been the victim of any retaliatory moves on the part of the Bush Administration because of your opposition to the war in Iraq? Have any colleagues of yours?

RP: Not really. We have heard a couple of rumors about the Bush Administration trying to get people to run against me. However, that has never been confirmed. And it certainly didn't work because although I got a very poor Republican district in the redistricting draw, no Republican filed against me, no Democrat filed against me and no libertarian filed against me. I'm the only one in Texas who has no opponent whatsoever. Thus, I can't complain too much right now of anyone doing me any harm—not that they wouldn't like to.

JWW: What advice would you give to people who are concerned about the rising power and reach of the federal government and

the growing threat to our privacy and civil liberties? How can average citizens best assert themselves to preserve our constitutional freedoms and limit the reach of the federal government?

RP: Every individual has a responsibility to be informed, to know what is going on and to know the issues. As Samuel Adams once said, "Go out and start a brush fire." And you can do that with one individual or many. You can become a teacher or a writer or help somebody in politics. But you can only start a brush fire for freedom if you feel confident that you understand the issues and really can defend liberty as being the best system for all of us.

JWW: Does it bother you that corporate America seems to be so well represented by and connected to the Bush Administration? Many have even likened the events of the last two years to a kind of corporate takeover of America and its policies. Given the amount of money it now requires to run for public office and given the enormous power and influence that corporations now have over the political process, do you think we are beyond fixing what Eisenhower warned us about the military/industrial complex?

RP: It is true that the military/industrial complex has a tremendous influence over our country. We can certainly find examples in the Bush Administration. But this is not new. I also believe the Democrats unfairly get a pass on this because of their rhetoric, which is just like the rhetoric of the Republicans in that they are supposedly for less government. But few check on what they are really doing. Democrats are always bashing the Republicans for having ties with Wall Street and the military/industrial complex. However, if you look closely at the Democrats, you will see that they are very well connected as well to Wall Street and the military/industrial complex. Thus, they are part of the process as well. Republicans and Democrats will both be influenced by the military/industrial complex as long as our government is doing things they shouldn't do. The reason they are doing those kinds of things is because of the lack of understanding of the voters and the politicians who believe that the Congress should be allowed to do as they please. If we, as a Congress, would not do things that are unconstitutional, there would be no incentive and no benefits to the military/industrial complex. That indirectly would take care of all the obscene lobbying that goes on in Washington, which amounts to some \$150 million a month that corporations spend lobbying Congress to get more influence.

JWW: Many argue that our Constitution is antiquated. Then there is the concept of the living Constitution, which judges can mold and change to meet society's needs. There are even those who advocate a new Constitution. Isn't our original Constitution good enough?

RP: It is good enough for me. But we are doing something much worse than raising the question of either rewriting or doing away with the Constitution, which has worked for over two centuries. What we are doing today is undermining, ignoring and even ridiculing our Constitution. As an example, I tried to make the International Relations Committee vote on a Declaration of War concerning the Iraqi situation just to make the point that we ought to be declaring war and not just giving this power to the President.

JWW: In other words, Congress should follow the letter of the Constitution.

RP: Yes. I was told that this provision in the Constitution was no longer followed because it was anachronistic and I was being frivolous to have raised it. I was put down by both the chairman of the committee, as well as the ranking member of the committee, for even suggesting this old-fashioned idea that Congress should declare war, rather than allowing the President to make the final decision.

JWW: You've said that America was never meant to be a democracy, that the founding fathers meant to create a republic and that nowhere in the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution does it mention anything about democracy. Given all the talk lately about defending "democracy" and "democratizing" the Middle East and the world, it would appear we've lost touch with the original philosophy that our country was founded on.

RP: We don't understand it very well. We have drifted away from it. We don't have a true republic; we have a centralized government. Moreover, we place a lot of emphasis on the dictatorship or the power of the majority. We cannot forget that a section of the Constitution that was clearly wrong was the section dealing with slavery. But a majority of the people at that time were willing to go along with this and at least either overlook or endorse slavery. The majority won. That was at least one serious flaw. But now we have accepted the majoritarian flaw. We now believe, as a people, that the majority always knows what is best for the individual, rather than saying that the Constitution should be there to protect the minority and the small groups—especially to protect the individual's right to live his life as he chooses.

JWW: A democracy is a 51 percent vote. How does a republic differ from a democracy?

RP: In a republic, you actually still have the democratic election of the leaders. However, you don't have 51 percent determining rights. If one percent can vote to confiscate 99 percent of your wages, then you don't have much left of your life. You have become enslaved. They literally have that authority and at times have taken taxes up to that height. Thus, in a republic we have representation, and the whole purpose of a constitutional republic is to protect the liberty of the individual.

JWW: In a republic, there are statesmen, not politicians. Is there a difference?

RP: There is a difference. However, it is interesting that in Washington a statesman is one who is willing to sacrifice his firmly held principles for the benefit of the whole. It is called statesmanship. I have heard that expressed on the floor. Some are complimented for their willingness to go against their deeply held beliefs—for example, not raising taxes—because it was so necessary to compromise to move the process forward.

JWW: But these are not statesmen. They are politicians.

RP: It is called statesmanship now. That's how language has been distorted. I agree with your definition of statesmanship. But in Washington, newspeak prevails. As a consequence, a statesman is the opposite of what you and I might consider a statesman.

JWW: Do you think one man can really make a difference in Washington anymore?

RP: That is hard to say. But I know that one good idea and the truth can make a difference. And if one individual can have an influence against the horde, then our system works. We should believe that the participation of one individual can make a difference or otherwise we are involved in a fruitless venture.

JWW: So you are not a pessimist?

RP: No, I am not a pessimist. People frequently ask me why I am not more frustrated because I don't win very many things. I am not a bit frustrated because the truth is I have very low expectations for Washington. We win more fights than I assume we would. I am also very much aware of the fact that this is a slow process. It is a situation where ideas do win out and ideas do have consequences. Therefore, I don't really deal in the political world. I try to stick to the world of ideas, principles, economic policy and the Constitution—where I feel comfortable.

JWW: Thomas Jefferson said that the key to the future of freedom was an educated citizenry. Such a people knew their rights and the Constitution. They had an educational background so they could understand the issues. However, as we often see today, our educational system doesn't teach these precepts very well. Thus, how are we going to preserve freedom if our citizens are not being taught how to be free?

RP: This is an example of what happens when the government takes over the schools. In such an instance, the government will act in its own self-interest. It will not teach these virtues because such virtues don't enhance big government. However, as long as there is some freedom left to opt out of the educational system—such as home education and private schools where such things are taught—there is hope. Therefore, what we have to cling to is the freedom to opt out.

JWW: Are you optimistic about the future of freedom and liberty in America?

RP: I am cautiously optimistic. I am not optimistic in the short run. I have a lot of concerns. But we will have to wait and see what evolves. However, I am optimistic enough to believe that if we put the time and energy into fighting for our country and the Constitution, there is as good a chance of winning this fight as losing it.



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