



July 2013

## Freedom Under Fire

Dear Friend of Radio Liberty,

**“When people lose everything, and have nothing left to lose, they lose it.”**  
Gerald Celente, Publisher of the Trends Research Journal

There are limits to what the flesh can endure, which is why those of us who seek to live by the Spirit pray for grace to sustain us after we have reached those limits. This applies not only to the common sufferings that attend our journey through mortality, and to the miseries inflicted on us through the corrupt and abusive behavior of others – but also to the potentially soul-destroying opportunities to give free rein to a desire for vengeance.

Rockne Newell killed three people and wounded three others before being subdued and shot during an August 5<sup>th</sup> supervisors’ meeting in Ross Township, Pennsylvania. After opening fire with a rifle, Newell went back to his car to get a handgun and was tackled by two people – one a park official, the other a local citizen – after he returned and opened fire again. (1)

According to press accounts, Newell had what was described as a “long-running property dispute with the town.” His property was condemned less than a week before Newell went on his lethal rampage. A local newspaper reports that he had been removed from his property because of “code violations.” (2)

Newell was clearly wrong to commit an act of indiscriminate lethal violence – that is, murder. To understand his likely motives is not to justify his actions, and what most

likely drove Newell to murder was the sense that he was being killed, albeit incrementally, through the actions of the local government.

Newell's violent acts were visible. That isn't true of the violence used by the municipal government to deprive him of his property. His is the latest of several recent examples in which property owners have been driven to violence or despair by the actions of small-town regulatory bodies.

Last year, a chicken farmer in Roswell, Georgia, named Andrew Wordes was driven to suicide because of the patently illegal actions of a city government bent on confiscating his property. (3) Wordes was targeted for official harassment in the form of spurious "code violation" citations for keeping poultry on his property. He prevailed in court – but the legal struggle left him destitute.

The local branch of the political elite acted on motives similar to those of King Ahab, who coveted Naboth's vineyard. Ahab, whose wealth was not quite as vast as his corrupt ambition, offered to buy Naboth's property, but this offer was spurned by the proudly independent man. When the crestfallen king told his wife Jezebel what had happened, the queen – one of history's most loathsome women – rebuked Ahab for his timidity and suggested a plan: Invite Naboth to a dinner, arrange for him to be seated between two provocateurs who will accuse him of cursing God and the king, and the innocent landowner will be taken out and stoned by a mob. That's exactly what happened. (4)

The campaign to expropriate Andrew Wordes differed in detail, but followed the same diabolical script. The local municipal junta wanted to seize the poultry farmer's land for a planned "green space." To that end, after losing in court, they intimidated the woman who held the mortgage – who was eighty years old – into selling it for 40 cents on the dollar to another party who was allied with them. Wordes was barraged with bogus liens and court judgments and deprived of legal help. This led to an illegal effort to "foreclose" on the property. The despairing, weary, and anguished farmer set fire to his property, killing himself in the process. (5)

Clarksville, Tennessee, resident Ronald "Bo" Ward, who ran a barber shop for many years, was likewise driven to suicidal despair because of the actions of the local government. Bo, who was a well-known and beloved figure in his town, incurred debts by expanding his shop. This kind of thing happens all the time, either through misjudgment or misfortune. He petitioned the city council to re-zone his home in order to help him get a debt consolidation loan on his home. As he put in the request, Bo explained that if the loan didn't go through, "I lose my home, I lose my shop, I lose everything I got."

A few weeks later, the City Council turned down the request. Distraught, Bo declared: "Y'all have put me under," then drew a gun and killed himself. (6)

Bo had asked to make more profitable use of his own property, only to learn that, because of the socialist practice of municipal planning and zoning, he didn't really own that property – including the life ruined by the local zoning bureaucracy.

Some Americans may consider it odd or excessive to compare the actions of planning and zoning officials to those of socialist tyrants overseas. Montgomery, Alabama, resident Jim Peera is in a unique position to testify that the comparison is not only justified, but inevitable.

Peera was one of thousands expelled from Uganda by the depraved – and, apparently, cannibalistic — dictator Idi Amin. Tragically, the municipal government in Montgomery behaved in a lawless fashion for Peera and summoned memories of Amin's reign of terror. (7)

Professor David Beito of the University of Alabama reports that Peera “has fought a pitched battle with City Hall over his plan to renovate a strategic parcel of 121 apartments ... and rent them to low-income senior citizens.” The city government, which coveted that property for a multimillion-dollar development, set out to seize it through condemnation. (8)

Peera was battered with spurious criminal charges, mysterious arson attacks, and efforts to ruin the property's value through arbitrary zoning decisions. Each time he won in court, city bureaucrats would file endless expensive appeals.

Numerous property owners, many of them black, have had their rights trampled in Montgomery, the so-called cradle of the modern civil rights movement. The same atrocities are committed every day in this supposedly free country in the name of eminent domain. (9)

In some cities, the governing elites have not only stolen people's property, they have also punished the victims when they protested their treatment.

During a standoff with city officials in Norfolk, Virginia, who sought to confiscate his property, Bob Wilson, owner of Central Radio Company, erected a large protest sign on his property – and was threatened with fines of \$1,000 a day for protesting. (10)

The Norfolk Housing and Redevelopment Authority seized more than 100 homes and businesses in an eminent domain rampage conducted on behalf of the state-funded Old Dominion University. The tract where Central Radio is found hasn't been thus designated, but it sits inside several parcels that have been condemned – so the land-grab soviet has announced its intention to confiscate that property as well.

In protest, Wilson hung a 375-square-foot banner on the side of his building: “50 YEARS ON THIS STREET; 78 YEARS IN NORFOLK; 100 WORKERS; THREATENED BY EMINENT DOMAIN.”

City inspectors issued a summons for violating a municipal ordinance that supposedly limits signs to a size no larger than 60 square feet. Yet in the same neighborhood can be seen much larger signs advertising Old Dominion University – the corporate benefactor of the Norfolk land grab. A class-action lawsuit filed by victims of the Norfolk land grab is pending before the state supreme court. (11)

Eminent domain confiscations can be propelled by malign motives apart from simple greed.

After the president of the Chick-fil-A restaurant chain expressed opposition to the peculiar – and blasphemous — social artifact called “same-sex marriage,” homosexual pressure groups announced their intention to boycott the business. Withholding business is a form of political activism compatible with property rights and the non-aggression principle, even when carried out on behalf of depraved ends. However, attacking the property rights of someone with whom you disagree is not.

Chicago Alderman Proco Moreno, who was born in the wrong time zone to be a Communist Chinese functionary, has announced that he would use zoning ordinances to block Chick-fil-A’s plans to establish a second store in the city. That action won the approval of Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who has displayed greater tolerance for urban street gangs than he has for Christian business owners. (12)

After extorting a pledge from the fast-food company to respect “all sexual orientations” and to “end donations to anti-gay organizations,” Moreno condescended to allow the company to build a store in the neighborhood. (13) A few weeks later, however, the capricious municipal commissar renewed his threat, accusing Chick-fil-A owner Dan Cathy of being insincere in repudiating his values. With practiced arrogance and displaying a boundless sense of entitlement, Moreno demanded a public act of contrition. (14)

Boston Mayor Thomas Menino briefly pursued a similar campaign of official persecution, using the same tactics against Chick-fil-A. He reversed his decision, however, after it dawned on him that in the current economy gestures of this kind might be the equivalent of political suicide. (15)

In an act of rudimentary intellectual honesty that put his career in peril, left-leaning pundit Adam Serwer of *Mother Jones* magazine admitted that “The government blocking a business from opening based on the owner's political views is a clear threat to

everyone's freedom of speech. . . .” Serwer neglected to mention that it is also lethal to the very concept of property rights. (16)

Many assaults on private property by zoning and planning officials begin with a single anonymous complaint – often made by people who are colluding with ambitious local rulers, just as Ahab’s paid shills were used to frame Naboth as part of a land grab plot.

A few years ago, Mark Grapin, an Army specialist who lives in Virginia’s Fairfax County, built a sturdy and elaborate tree house for his two young sons between deployments to Iraq. Grapin consulted the local building code office and was told that he didn’t need a permit. However, a single anonymous complaint to the County Planning and Zoning Commission resulted in an order to tear down the tree house. (17)

Grapin filed an appeal with the local planning soviet, and then took his case to the media. After an eight-month struggle that cost a considerable amount of money, Grapin was able to extract permission to maintain the tree house – which is on his own property– for five years.

Many terms are suitable to describe a society in which property rights are nullified on the basis of a single anonymous complaint. The word “free” isn’t on that list. Grapin’s experience summons the memory of an old joke:

An Englishman, a Frenchman, and a native of Soviet Russia were condemned to death and granted one last wish. The Englishman requested a pipe; the Frenchman, a bottle of wine. The Russian told his captor: “I want my neighbor Ivan’s horse to die.”

That kind of petty, vindictive cruelty is the purest form of covetousness. It brings to mind the attitude confronted by Solomon in the incident involving two women claiming to be the mother of a newborn child: The woman who lied about being the true mother was willing to see the child murdered in front of her eyes, rather than allowing him to be restored to his family. There is nothing new – and, it should be acknowledged, innately Russian – about the genuinely Satanic attitude of people who, knowing they can’t be happy, seek to make others miserable.

Those who presume to rule us - at every level - will exploit every opportunity to plunder what we have earned, and to cultivate conflicts that will keep us preoccupied with fighting each other. Once again, there is nothing new about this; the scriptures – particularly the prophetic books of the Old Testament – abound in historical accounts describing how those tactics were used by ancient rulers, and prophetic condemnations of those crimes. Our economic hardship is relentlessly abrading away the veneer of wealth and civility that has disguised what lies at the heart of our implacably materialistic culture – and what we’ll find behind that façade may well prove to be truly horrifying.

## REFERENCES

- 1) "Town Meeting Shooting: Property Dispute Led to Fatal Rampage, Cops Say," ABC News, August 5, 2013.
- 2) "Alleged municipal-building gunman had long-standing dispute with officials," The Evening Sun (Hanover, Pennsylvania), August 6, 2013.
- 3) "Chicken Man kills himself after long fight with Roswell Government Officials," Off-Grid Survival, March 27, 2012.
- 4) I Kings 21:1-16.
- 5) "City of Roswell, GA bullies Andrew Wordes to death over his backyard chickens," Natural News, April 10, 2012.
- 6) "Details emerge on 'Bo' Ward Suicide; City Council Chambers Closed," Clarksville Online, October 5, 2007.
- 7) "This shouldn't be happening in Rosa Parks' backyard," Reason online, May 1, 2009.
- 8) "Fight Property Abuse," David T. Beito, Tuscaloosa News, April 26, 2009.
- 9) "Blight Fight," Slate magazine, September 17, 2010.
- 10) "Pushed out and shut up: 78-year-old business fights back against eminent domain, censorship," The Daily Caller, June 22, 2012.
- 11) "Norfolk eminent domain battle may finally reach end," Virginian-Pilot, June 16, 2013.
- 12) "Alderman to Chick-fil-A: No deal," Chicago Tribune, July 25, 2012.
- 13) "Reports: Alderman To Let Chick-fil-A Go Ahead after New Pledge," CBS News, September 19, 2012.
- 14) "Moreno reverses again on Chick-fil-A: Wants public statement from fast-food chief Dan Cathy," Chicago Tribune, October 20, 2012.
- 15) "Mayor Menino on Chick-fil-A: Stuff it," Boston Herald, July 20, 2012.
- 16) "In Defense of Chick-fil-A," Mother Jones magazine, July 26, 2012.
- 17) "Father battles Fairfax County zoning laws for sons' treehouse," Washington Post, October 12, 2011.

Written by William Grigg

I share William's concern.

We must never forget Lord Acton's warning that:

**"Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."**

When I interviewed former U.S. Senator Mike Gravel in the early 1990s, he shared his modification of Lord Acton's warning. Senator Gravel stated:

**"Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely... everyone."**

The men who created the United States recognized the danger of unbridled government, and limited the power of the Federal Government so men could be free. What was the result? Federal officials can't legally confiscate private property without just compensation, but local officials can.

What can you do? You can discuss the problem with your friends, you can help me educate the public, and you can elect local officials who believe in the sanctity of private property.

What does the future hold? I believe a small group (Brotherhood of Darkness) controls the United States. What is their goal? They want to establish a world government, they want to destroy Christianity, and they want to establish a new religion.

Will they succeed? I don't know, but we face a serious problem.

What is the problem? Richard Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations and a member of the Trilateral Commission, wrote: (Time magazine, May 13, 2013, page 19):

**"We lurch from crisis to crisis, nearly going over fiscal cliffs, threatening not to pay our bills to creditors, cutting much needed investment in human and physical capital, stealing from our children by refusing to rein in spending on retirement and Medicare, and educating people from abroad who want to stay and contribute to this society—and then refusing them the opportunity to do just that.... Our debt trajectory is unsustainable. Unless something meaningful is done, it is a question of when, not if, a major economic crisis materializes."**

**"It is possible that things will turn out all right in the end. But I am not so sure."**

If Richard Haass is concerned about the danger of a financial collapse, you should prepare for that possibility.

Barbara and I appreciate your loyal support, and your faithful prayers.

Yours in Christ,

Stanley Monteith