

Short vs Long, Opportunism, Just This Once



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"Finding the Challenges" is an original column appearing every other Wednesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Verbal Vol. Verbal is a software engineer, college professor, corporate information officer, life long student, farmer, libertarian, literarian, student of computer science and self-ordering phenomena. Archived columns can be found [here](#). FTC-only RSS feed available [here](#).

Because many humans cannot control their raging hormones (and I'm not talking about reproductive instincts), there are far too many who will not look before leaping. Too many do not comprehend that everything has both a short term and a long term. Too many learn nothing from the past, squander the present, and fail to recognize how poorly they see the future but regard it's mirage constantly with fear.

Short Term vs Long Term

I learned a great lesson, while I was away from home at college, in the 60s, from my father. Perhaps it was the best lesson during my college years.

Dad was a Division Director in the state Highway Department. In those days, if not still, the political party occupying the governor's mansion would subsidize the continuing campaigns *du jour* by requiring division directors to sell fish fry tickets to 100% of the employees in the division. Dad refused. He went so far as to say that he would fire any employee who asked him to sell a ticket to them. They could go elsewhere to buy a ticket.

For that act, Dad had the division taken away from him, and his desk was moved into the elevator lobby. He went to work, with no assignment, at the expense of the tax payer, so the hierarchy could pretend they had put his head on a pike.

I am gratified to report that he held his head high for three years in that situation. When a new regime came in, he ascended to a higher station.

My dad was one of the most accomplished civil engineers in the world, a pioneer in the field of mapping via aerial photography, among many other things. There is a direct connection between him and the amazing satellite images and GPS we can see and use today.

I have written here before about Dad, upon his passing two years ago, so I won't get into another biography now. My point in the story above, however, is to illustrate the importance of standing on principle. Even though I worked for government (two different states, ten different functions/agencies), I never gave a dime to any politician. I never went to a fish fry. I made my work serve principle, never convenience, never charlatans. I always made sure I was worth more than I was paid.

I'm sure my Dad was doing that even while he sat at a desk in that elevator lobby for three years. He spoke truth to power.

There was a confluence, a happy confluence of my formulating this story with the theme of our latest Lifelong Philosophy meeting, the Pursuit of Happiness. I have never pursued happiness, I have always been predisposed to happiness. Like my Dad. He stood on principle so he could be happy with his life in the long term, not in the very short political term.

Rothbard Quote #19 — Opportunism

The major problem with the opportunists is that by confining themselves strictly to gradual and "practical" programs, programs that stand a good chance of immediate adoption, they are in grave danger of completely losing sight of the ultimate objective, the libertarian goal. He who confines himself to calling for a two percent reduction in taxes helps to bury the ultimate goal of abolition of taxation altogether. By concentrating on the immediate means, he helps liquidate the ultimate goal, and therefore the point of being a libertarian in the first place. If libertarians refuse to hold aloft the banner of the pure principle, of the ultimate goal, who will? The answer is no one, hence another major source of defection from the ranks in recent years has been the erroneous path of opportunism.

— Murray Rothbard, For A New Liberty

Libertarianism, and, in a purer sense, voluntaryism is built on long term principle. Do not be an opportunist. An example of an opportunist is a candidate for the LP nomination for POTUS, a candidate who rejects the NAP (non-aggression principle). Eight years ago, the LP nominated an oddball, washed up republican, and ticketed him with a gambling kingpin

(How do you get to be a gambling kingpin? Cronyism.) Why would the LP use the same flawed political process to select a standard bearer as do the RNC and the DNC? You are astute, historically informed. You know the disasters that have been instituted, through opportunism, in the POTUS-picking game.

The political game is one for opportunists. Stay instead with principles. As a voluntaryist, make sure that all of your relationships are voluntary. The only way that you can make sure is to enter each, one at a time. There are no collectives in which you can be sure that you have an accord with the other. Sure, join collectives voluntarily. There are very good groups such as those that are parenting-centric, those that are recovery-centric, those that are hobby-centric. But the moment when opportunists begin to try to take the upper hand, remember that one of the principles a voluntaryist must have is to stand against authoritarianism.

Logic Fallacy #48 – Just This Once

Last time, I recommended Kevin Gutzman's wonderful exposé, from a freedom-lover's point of view, on the destruction of the US Constitution. Almost every sword cut to the corpus of that once hopeful document was inflicted by political opportunism, by a choice to go with the times rather than long term principle.

Entire civilizations have fallen by accepting this fallacy. Disaster is at hand! We must do something — even if it is wrong. This cataclysmic choice is often made most simply, most deceptively, due to lack of patience. Every group, even down to two, is composed of those who are more patient and those who are less patient. Even individuals are comparatively more or less patient at different points in time. As a rule of thumb, don't be ruled by the less patient.

Politics is all about playing upon the emotions of the less patient, usually by invoking things of which to be afraid. In the early teens of the last century, our grandparents were sold, through fear, on the ideas of federal income tax and war. Just this once, Woodrow Wilson said, we will pay for the "War to end All Wars." Most of you will not even be taxed, just the rich folks, just this once. That was our introduction to what has become a crippling and ever growing tax burden.

How many degradations have we now undergone, just this once, since 9/11? When will those temporary measures, the police state, the unconstitutional surveillance, the TSA, the upsized ICE, FBI, BATF, DEA, NSA, and CIA go away? Never. Not even once.

The panicky members of any group will try to seize control. Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Humans are consigned to space and time. We cannot be in two places at once.

We have to opt for the present and the future, but the options can only be effected in the present. Options effected in the present, however, always and forever have consequences rippling through the entire future. Act in haste, repent at leisure

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