

The Twilight of the Villepinist Libertarians

You are about to enter another dimension, a dimension of sight and sound but not of mind. A journey into an ugly land of imaginary facts and twisted argument where the normal rules of logic do not apply. Next stop, the **Butler Shaffer Zone!**

To illustrate just how at variance with reality Mr Shaffer's views are, we have added links to the following quotes from him. Now follow us, gentle readers, into the BS Zone:

It is interesting to observe so many Americans trying to find "meaning" in the Bush administration's war against an endless parade of "enemies." From **Afghanistan** to **Iraq** to **North Korea**, the state continues to concoct "threats" for the consumption of a public that is neither empirically nor analytically demanding.

The **media** are quick to play their assigned roles, providing state-generated "information" and self-styled "experts" to convince the rest of us that everything the White House tells us is "just so," and that anyone who dissents from – or even questions – the state's purposes or policies is likely an apologist for terrorism!

Shaffer continues in this vein for a while and then proceeds to the real (or should we say surreal?) point:

Of course, it is not in the interests of the state – or of those who profit from statism – to have the nature of political systems explored; for to do so, might cause even the institutionally-deferential students to catch on to the vicious game being played at their expense. It is not enough to understand that the state often resorts to war: war is its fundamental nature. Every political institution from the local Weed Control Authority to the United States of America – depends, for its existence, upon men and women being conditioned to submit to the force and violence exercised by government authorities. The state is nothing more than institutionalized violence that we have become conditioned to revere.

But, back in reality, Western states aren't really like that. As libertarians, we have a lot of sympathy for the idea that taxation is theft. If the government takes the view that you have to pay tax,

you don't get to decline. It would be better if there were many organisations offering the services provided by governments enabling people to choose a policy that suits them. However, there is plenty of critical discussion of governments in the media and on the internet, and democracy provides a way to get rid of the government if people think somebody else might do better, which amounts to another way of criticising government policy. The same is true for **trial by jury**. The fact is that Western politics is overwhelmingly less violent than any other political system in human history. **The World** is sometimes critical of government policy but we do not fear the knock at the door. Nor is Shaffer at any risk of being bumped off or censored. To secure this peace we must be willing to fight against terrorists who would disrupt it, and the states that sponsor them. Backing away from this responsibility will not bring about peace – let alone a perfect libertarian paradise. Nor will the twilight ramblings of Mr Shaffer bring us one millimetre closer to a better society.

Mon, 07/28/2003 - 10:47 | [permalink](#)

Villepinist

Villepinist (n) - a term made up by right-wing neocon warmongers to smear valid arguments by pro-peace, true libertarians.

(credit to Jesse Walker for inspiration)

by a reader on Tue, 07/29/2003 - 20:13 | [reply](#)

if the labels fit, wear them

murders (warmongering) A Reader with a gun (right-wing) and makes pastries with his blood (neocon) leaving just some smears (smeared him good!)

-- Elliot Temple

<http://curi.blogspot.com/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Tue, 07/29/2003 - 20:38 | [reply](#)

How is the name of a diplomatic pinup, a smear?

French Foreign Envoy a Diplomatic Pinup (AP Online)

He is everything France likes about itself: cultured, literary, eloquent and more than a little dashing. As the government's point man in efforts to slow Washington's drive for war against Iraq, Dominique de Villepin has used his charm to full effect.

At the U.N. Security Council, the French foreign minister has faced down Secretary of State Colin Powell in pressing for more U.N. weapons inspections. In a rare move, U.N. delegates broke protocol to applaud de

Villepin after his impassioned appeal last week that war

should be a last resort.

by **Kolya** on Tue, 07/29/2003 - 22:12 | [reply](#)

Libertarian traditions

It seems to me that "**The World**" despite it's claims of having respect for traditions does not have a respect for libertarian traditions. One of these traditions is a skepticism that the intentions of those in power are the same as what they claim. Another of these traditions is a skepticism that even when intentions are not in question the results of a governmental action will be as intended. Traditions such as these did not start with Rothbard. They are at least 200 years old. As with all traditions the knowledge contained within them is not explicit. (Sometimes this knowledge is made explicit. E.g. : Tullock and Buchanan's examination of the democratic process)

As for Shaffer it seems that in part he is simply reiterating George Washington when he said: "Government is not reason, it is not eloquence, it is force; like a fire, a troublesome servant and a fearful master."

by a reader on Wed, 07/30/2003 - 02:25 | [reply](#)

Conjecture

Conjecture: The majority of European libertarians are pro-war.

The majority of North American libertarians are anti-war.

by a reader on Wed, 07/30/2003 - 03:20 | [reply](#)

manifest truth?

we disagree with the libertarian insistence that government leaders persistently lie about their views and motives. but i assure you we have taken that view into consideration.

-- Elliot Temple

<http://curi.blogspot.com/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Wed, 07/30/2003 - 03:38 | [reply](#)

Who are "We"?

Um...Elliot, you might want to reconsider your disagreement with the "insistence that government leaders persistently lie about their views and motives." I think overwhelming historical evidence is against you on this one (as well as Public Choice theory, which was referenced earlier). In fact, I think that persistently lying about one's views and motives has become a prerequisite to electability in most democracies.

Would all those who agree that government leaders DO NOT

persistently lie about their views and motives please come forward and defend this remarkable claim?

And I'm not interested in a semantic game about what "persistently" means. No libertarian claims that politicians ALWAYS lie. Just that they do it often, when it suits their purposes, and these purposes are not the same as the interests of the public.

by **Gil** on Wed, 07/30/2003 - 17:26 | [reply](#)

apparently not you...

even people like terrorist leaders who are just asking to be KILLED for it, tell the truth about their worldviews frequently and loudly.

-- Elliot Temple

<http://curi.blogspot.com/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Wed, 07/30/2003 - 18:11 | [reply](#)

Conjecture = false, I think

Conjecture: The majority of European libertarians are pro-war. The majority of North American libertarians are anti-war.

British, quite possibly; European: sadly not true (at least, in my vast experience of European libertarians).

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Sarah Fitz-Claridge

<http://www.fitz-claridge.com/>

by **Sarah Fitz-Claridge** on Tue, 08/05/2003 - 21:13 | [reply](#)

Villepinist is not a smear

A reader wrote:

'Villepinist (n) - a term made up by right-wing neocon warmongers to smear valid arguments by pro-peace, true libertarians.'

First of all, villepinist doesn't just apply to libertarians, it also applies to many lefties, like most of the Democratic Party, a substantial chunk of Labour in Britain and some right wing bastards like Kenneth Clarke of the British Conservative Party. None of these people are libertarian, all of them are villepinists.

Second, it isn't a smear of any kind. Villepin opposed the war on Iraq, so did villepinist libertarians. From whence does the smeariness originate?

by **Alan Forrester** on Wed, 08/06/2003 - 23:59 | [reply](#)

Respect for Tradition

'It seems to me that "**The World**" despite it's claims of having

respect for traditions does not have a respect for libertarian traditions.'

I do have respect for the libertarian tradition, it contains a lot of valuable knowledge, it is also flawed and respect does not consist of mindlessly cleaving to traditions but of trying to improve them.

'One of these traditions is a skepticism that the intentions of those in power are the same as what they claim.'

Government officials often do tell the truth about their intentions. I don't doubt that Tony Blair's intentions of, say, making the NHS work are sincere, it's just that they are hopelessly flawed and utterly unworkable, he just doesn't have the knowledge available to realise that. I'll take cockup over conspiracy in the vast majority of cases.

'Another of these traditions is a skepticism that even when intentions are not in question the results of a governmental action will be as intended.'

In some cases the outcomes of some specific policies will be more or less what the government intends. The Iraq war happens to be one of them, the NHS is not. The NHS is inherently unworkable and based on fundamental misconceptions about politics, economics, human nature and so on. The Iraq war was based on a relatively clear understanding of the situation that required the removal of Saddam and how that can be accomplished.

by [Alan Forrester](#) on Thu, 08/07/2003 - 00:15 | [reply](#)

Outcomes

The very existence of Israel is an example of how very powerful governments cannot control the outcome of the actions they take.

What allied or axis power visualised a Jewish state as one of the outcomes of WWII ? The U.S. has a very powerful military, but it ultimately has no control over what happens in Iraq (unless mass genocide is an option).

by a reader on Thu, 08/07/2003 - 01:07 | [reply](#)