

Freedom Matters

A News & Opinion Paper

Dane County, Wisconsin

Preserving Property Rights

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Our republic limits government to securing individual unalienable rights to life, liberty, and property. These rights are eroded by legislatures, and by courts complicit with them. To encourage wise jurists and journalists to help, *Freedom Matters* dedicates itself to the fight to restore that republic.

"Useful Idiots" Dane County Style

by Bob Bowman

To Vladimir Lenin, the first communist leader of Russia, "useful idiots" was a term for fellow travelers in communist causes, but who were not communists. They were single issue folk who on that one issue went along with communist front groups, and thereby were "useful" in furthering the communist movement and the communist cause even if they were "idiots" for not being insightful enough to be communists. (Isn't it interesting that "idiot" and "ideologue" sound so alike?)

The classic "useful idiot" issue is "peace." Peace is so generally desirable that some people fall into the trap of believing it is always the only correct choice. Yet, peace at any price can be an idiotic stance. How difficult it is to avoid polemics is describing extremists, of whatever stripe. However, as an equal opportunist in decrying extremism, I also note that one can find "useful idiots" who are in favor of war. No issue has a monopoly on the supply of "useful idiots." But I digress.

The focus of this newsletter is on freedoms, and on property rights as arguably the most basic freedom. If we do not own the fruits of our labor, then we are slaves. We are not free. It is the freedom to own property (i.e., to have the free use of property) that is the basis, the *sine quo non*, for a free market, and for capitalism. Ownership of property is also the basis for independence, without which one is not free. It is a free people, working in their own self-interest, which is the basis for a free society governed by the consent of the governed. Hence, when government takes over the ownership of property, it is taking away the basis for individual freedom.

Zoning, with its concepts of permitted uses and conditional uses, takes away the free use of property; i.e., it takes away freedoms. It needn't, if it purely enforced the constraint that one has no right to harm others (harm referring to damage and not to aesthetics). In that case, zoning and conditional uses would be inexpensive ways of simply preventing harm between people, thus to fulfil the social contract for peaceful coexistence.

However, zoning has not been kept so restrained. Worse, it is being coupled with land use "planning" as a further encroachment on the free use of property; i.e., as a further repression of the freedom of the people. It is

an encroachment on our civil rights, just as much as are the restrictions simultaneously being put on free speech in America. These are deathly times for liberty.

One problem with zoning, and with land use planning as well, is that it politicizes land use. It recasts the free society into the socialist, common-ownership society. In common-ownership societies, as George Orwell so tellingly portrayed, some individuals are more equal than others. Socialist societies, which come into being by unequal application of the law, continue to abuse the law by playing favorites in the distribution of land use and wealth. Siegan, in *Property and Freedom* describes the political abuses that plague zoning.

Which brings us back to "useful idiots" Dane County style. Zoning and planning are the tools whereby the socialists among us are trying to seize private property as the essential way to impose a socialist government. In this effort, the socialist core opposes almost all commercial use of land, and in general, opposes almost any use by humans of land outside of urban boundaries. In order to do so, they must increase the legal power that the government has over all land and all land use.

Amazingly, this is being supported by people who believe in private property, who build fine homes in the country and who make their living via private businesses which depend on private ownership of property, and yet, who are helping the socialists increase the power of government over land. They have not figured out that they are cutting their own free throats.

Why do free people help the socialist agenda? Many do so out of the NIMBY mentality, whereby they not only do not want nearby commercial or business development, they sometimes do not even want to allow other rural homes similar to their own. Others of them operate out of an ENVIRO ideology, whereby they act to stop all development, except their own of course, in order to preserve "open space" or to create hypothetical original wilderness. Still others may operate out of a MALTHUSIAN ideology, believing it is necessary to shut down economic development in order to shut down the use of the earth's resources, lest we use them all up and destroy civilization. Still others may buy into the assertion of man-made GLOBAL WARMING, at a time when data do not prove if the earth is in a futuristic warming trend, and if so, whether it is via human causation. *Freedom Matters* has presented evidence that all of these are idiotic reasons for destroying freedoms.

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