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"I Need My Pain!"

by L. Neil Smith

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In the fourth *Star Trek* movie, *Final Frontier*, Mr. Spock's half-brother Sybok, part revolutionary, part Vulcan Svengali, offers to free Jim Kirk of all his inner pain -- as he has done for Scotty and McCoy -- if the *Enterprise* captain will join his quest to find G-d.

"Don't take away my pain!" cries Kirk. "I need my pain!"

I've thought about that scene often over the years, especially after I put in several months as a regular co-host on a conservative talk radio show where I was the resident expert on Second Amendment matters.

I had persuaded one of my publishers and the national bookseller who sold more of my novels than anybody else to purchase four weeks' worth of advertising on the station. I give good radio, and nearly always light up the switchboard and jam the phone lines. But in those four weeks, the ads for my books failed to generate a single response. As you may imagine, I was embarrassed beyond my ability to describe it.

But that wasn't the worst.

By nature, I'm a problem-solver and, I freely confess, something of a Utopian -- meaning that whenever I see anything I regard as a political wrong I am absolutely driven to try to correct it, so that the result comes closer to the vision I have in my mind of a society worth living in and fighting for. You can see some of this in my books *The Probability Broach*, *Pallas*, *Forge of the Elders*, *Roswell, Texas*, and also *The Mitzvah* and *Hope*, two novels I wrote with Aaron Zelman, founder of Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership.

I have always brought exactly the same values with me, whether to the podium or the studio: identifying problems and generating possible solutions, always aimed at creating what Aaron calls a "Bill of Rights culture". However what I discovered during my stint on this particular radio station, is that many conservatives aren't interested in solving their problems. In fact, they actively resent anybody who is foolish enough to present them with ideas useful in defeating the enemies of liberty.

I've come to call individuals like this "dishonest players" in the Great Game (Rudyard Kipling first gave it that name in *Kim*) that we all must play in order to stay alive and free. Some, maybe most of them, are simple "neophobes" (to quote Robert Anton Wilson) who fear an unknown future -- even if it includes a totally free society -- more than they fear the miserable but all-too-knowable state of the world today.

It is unfortunate that most human beings appear to be more easily moved by fear than by hope. As a species, we do not seem to have been constructed by evolution to experience much joy. We are vastly better equipped to tremble and suffer and lament, and bitterly detest anyone who won't join us enthusiastically in our trembling, suffering and lamentation. On the other hand, we entered the world ill-equipped for flying, but learned to do it anyway. Which is why, modern views to the contrary, we must confront nature -- especially our own -- and defeat it.

Another kind of dishonest player is the professional "pro-gun activist" whose vision of the future does not include an end to gun control. There are two varieties here, those who desperately need the constant threat of more gun control because they are desperately lost without it and have nothing else to do with their lives. The other sort are those who would starve to death if victim disarmament went away. Some of them work in a fancy office building and have golden parachutes.

Then there's the uppermost echelon of organizations like that who have turned out to be nothing more than shells for the Republican Party, pursuing a political agenda that doesn't necessarily have anything to do with preserving the individual right to own and carry weapons.

Amusingly, they have their counterparts on the other side of the aisle, antiwar Democrats for whom the socialist agenda is nevertheless more important than ending a war or saving lives. They hate the fact that their favorite candidates are hawks, but don't want to criticize them for fear of derailing their election campaigns and with them, the agenda.

Then there are those -- usually older warriors who've spent their entire lives in the general freedom movement -- who have simply given up because they're politically worn out, and feel helpless before what appears to them to be the implacable forward march of socialism. What they don't realize, however -- what they *can't* realize because the socialized school system and the left-leaning mass media don't want to talk about it -- is that socialism itself is worn out and on its deathbed. The monster actually breathed its last breath quite a while ago, but like the dinosaur it resembles, it's too dumb to realize it's dead.

However worst of the whole lot are those who would rather complain than actually do something effective, because they perversely value their status as victims more than they do their rights or anybody else's. Tell them it's possible to bring a total and permanent end to gun control, and they will tell you, in so many words, what Kirk told Sybok.

"Don't take away my pain! I *need* my pain!"

They dearly love to whimper about what big government and even bigger corporations did to them yesterday, what big government and even bigger corporations are doing to them today, and what they think big government and even bigger corporations are going to do to them tomorrow. Almost never is there any consideration given to fighting back effectively, politically, right now, although they spend lots of time, energy, and money on weapons and survival equipment, getting ready for a physical fight -- which they will lose gloriously, of course -- in a future that usually resembles those bleak scenes in *The Terminator* where robot tanks are running over piles of human skulls and crushing them.

They need their pain because it's the way they define themselves. At one level or another, they're afraid they'll cease to exist without it. But it's time for these pathetic specimens to grow up and to start defining themselves, as the Founding Fathers did, in terms of their rights instead of wrongs, real or imaginary, they see happening around them.

Is that likely to happen any time soon? I can't say. A few years ago, an infamous anti-industrial, anti-capitalist greenie lawyer (as Paul Harvey says, he'd want me to mention his name) made headlines when he sued to stop a series of laboratory experiments that might someday -- no sooner than a generation or so -- result in the medical ability to regrow damaged nerves and severed limbs. He was working, he explained straightforwardly, on behalf of a group of handicapped folks afraid that if the experiments succeeded, they would be forced to accept the new treatment, losing their government benefits and special status.

To paraphrase Karl Marx, progress is the curse of the wheeled class. That, apparently, is how much some individuals cherish their victimization.

Those of us who do not enjoy being victims have a lot of work ahead of us if we wish to remain free and not fight -- and lose -- some dismal, cataclysmic future civil war. The Patriot Act and similar legislation must be disposed of. It has no place in a Bill of Rights culture.

But that's probably too much work for those who cherish their victimization.

Licensed concealed carry of weapons by ordinary individuals has done a great deal to reduce violent crime, but it's trumped in every respect by "Vermont Carry" -- under which no license or government permission of any other kind is required to exercise your right to own and carry weapons -- a system much more consistent with the Second Amendment.

But that's probably too much work for those who cherish their victimization.

The widely-rumored merger of the United States, Canada, and Mexico into a "North American Union" is not the unstoppable juggernaut it's said to be by those who cherish their victimization. Circulated on the net, a formal Declaration of Non-Recognition, signed by Americans, Canadians, and Mexicans, would stop the NAU dead, as would the right kind of state or federal legislation. A Constitutional amendment might be nice, but that's probably too much work for those who cherish their victimization.

The Canada to Mexico "supercorridor", four football fields wide, could be killed in a few weeks by the legislatures of states in its path, but that's probably too much work for those who cherish their victimization.

Recently, several of the states have passed legislation refusing to cooperate with federal program to make their driver's licenses compliant with a Bush Administration scheme to create a national identification system. Now the Kommandant of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, has begun threatening them with various illegal sanctions. This would-be dictator needs to be booted out of office and jailed, but that's probably too much work for those who cherish their victimization.

More than anything, we need a penalty clause appended to the Bill of Rights that would punish any official, at any level of government, who violated anybody's rights under the first ten amendments or tried to abolish those amendments altogether. I've been thinking that it might be good to reopen Alcatraz for that purpose, and I'd be willing to toss in the first few bucks for rotting meat to chum the bay for sharks. But that's probably too much work for those who cherish their victimization.

The truth is that we don't have any time left for coddling those who cherish their victimization. They need to do something real or get out of the way. There's simply too much to be done if we're going to have a free society again instead of a coast-to-coast concentration camp.

I don't need my pain.

Do you need yours?

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The Webley Page: <http://www.lneilsmith.org>

The Libertarian Enterprise: <http://www.ncc-1776.org>

The Probability Broach: The Graphic Novel, Roswell, Texas, and TimePeeper (August 2007): <http://www.bigheadpress.com>

LNS at Random (blog): <http://www.bigheadpress.com/lneilsmith/>

LNS at JPFO: <http://www.jpfo.org/lneilsmith.htm>

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