

*The Rainbow Fish*—obviously some species of sucker fish—sets children up nicely for a life of wealth envy. In the wonderful world of the Rainbow Fish, you don't have to work to get what you want, all you need to do is demand it.

But the secret villain of this story, to me, is the octopus. Think, for a moment, about the role the octopus plays. When the Rainbow Fish starts being beleaguered by the jealousy of those around him, the octopus—a creature with many arms, remember—suggests that he should give away his belongings to those who have not.

You get it? The octopus is government—its tentacles reaching out in every direction to suck up the fruits of our labors, then telling us that we need to give up what we have left to those who have less.

If I may be so bold, I would like to suggest an alternative storyline to Mr. Pfister. Consider this: The fundamental problem of the story occurs when the Rainbow Fish recognizes that there's a demand for his colorful scales. Instead of deciding to give them away, why shouldn't he offer to *trade* them for something the twerp-fish might be willing to give up? Or perhaps the rainbow fish could even start a colorful-scale manufacturing business! After all, *The Rainbow Fish* is really a story of what happens when demand exceeds supply. Why not turn it into a marvelous opportunity to tell our children a story of free enterprise triumphant?

Even if Mr. Pfister had a sudden change of heart and revised his story in future printings, however, that would only be a drop in the bucket. It'll take a lot more than banishing the Rainbow Fish from the family aquarium to banish this "everybody ought to have an equal amount of stuff" idiocy.

I'll explain in the next chapter.

## NICE PENCILS!

Now, Fork Them Over . . .

What? I'm picking on government schools again? Don't I have anything better to do with my time?

No, I don't. A day spent slamming the concept of government indoctrination is a day well spent.

I love this country, but I believe it's in deep trouble. I believe we're losing our sense of individuality and our love of liberty. Americans have little idea of the sacrifices that so many made to create this country where we live our lives of plenty.

Most adults have no idea of how essential our system of economic liberty is to the standard of life we enjoy today, and are unaware of how American free enterprise has already lifted much of the world out of poverty, want, and despair.

Furthermore, most Americans don't understand something as basic as the importance of private property rights in maintaining freedom and promoting prosperity.

And for this state of affairs I place the bulk of the blame on our system of government-owned and -operated schools.

I'll go one step further: Many of our government schools today, perhaps even the one to which you have surrendered your child, start in from day one trying to discredit the very concept of property rights.

How do they do it? Let's start by defining some terms.

Some of our brethren on the left denounce the idea of property

rights by saying human rights are always more important than property rights. It's a clever line, but it's really a kind of misdirection, like a magic trick.

Why? Because property rights *are* human rights.

Think about it this way: Property has no rights. People have the right *to* property, and that right to property, the fruits of one's labor, is one of the highest human rights.

Chances are it's been quite a few years since you were in grade school. Believe me, much has changed since those days. Back when you were in school, for instance, it was probably okay to play tag during recess. Not so today. Why? Because tag involves (gasp!) *touching!* And besides, in tag someone is chased, and someone does the chasing. This teaches our precious little children *predatory behavior*. Now we can't have that, can we?

As if that weren't bad enough, the campaign to abolish private property starts with almost the first moment your child enters school.

Remember those weeks before school started for your brand-new first grader? There you were, you and your proud new student, walking the aisles of the local Wal-Mart, your list of school supplies in hand. Item by item you checked things off your list as you dropped them into the basket: pencils and erasers, notebooks and pencil holders, construction paper and paste. By the time you made it to the cash register, you had a full basket and a happy kid. As soon as you got home, your budding Einstein took the supplies to his room and spread everything out on the bed. This was *his* stuff, and it was important stuff, too—his very own tools and supplies, the things he'd use to learn and grow. And tomorrow he would be taking them to school. He couldn't have been more proud. On his last night before that magic first day of school, just before he went to bed, your young student would pack all his stuff in his backpack . . . then unpack it . . . then pack it again.

The next morning, it's showtime! Off we go, full of apprehension and pride. Your young man is taking another grand step toward adulthood! What could go wrong at school?

Plenty. Remember, it's a government operation staffed by government agents.

As soon as the students are seated, the bell rings, and as fast as you can say the Pledge of Allegiance, the indoctrination begins: Your child is about to be introduced to the wonderful concept of "the common good."

Ready for class? Nope, not yet. There's a small matter that must be attended to first.

The government teacher steps in front of her virtual hostages and promptly delivers the first raw lesson in the power of government:

She instructs her students to bring all of their precious new school supplies to the front of the classroom and put them into a huge box.

Wait just a minute here! *Why am I putting my stuff into that box? My daddy took me to Wal-Mart and bought that stuff for me! It's mine! You can't take it away from me!*

Oh, yeah?

As your child sits in stunned silence, the teacher tells him and his classmates that these supplies now belong to *all* of the class. What was once private property has been seized and transformed into *community property*, courtesy of the teacher's demands—demands that amount to a government mandate. There is no due process. No rule of law. After all, in school the teacher *is* the law. Your child's supplies are now everybody's supplies, and the teacher has assumed the responsibility of distributing them as needed.

Know this: This whole "dump all of your school supplies into this box" is no mere innocent exercise, no simple whim of a few individual teachers. It's a conscious policy, and it has a purpose that goes beyond simple expediency for the teacher.

Your child, and every other child in that classroom, is being taught that their private property rights end when someone in authority *says* they end. In this instance, that person in authority is the teacher—a government employee. And even if your child isn't able to understand that it's actually the government who's seizing his property, he certainly *does* understand that his property is being seized, and converted

into everybody's property. Worse yet, he is told, very clearly, that this is a good thing.

And who is there to tell him otherwise?

I've talked about this property confiscation on the air many times. Some parents call in to scold me, convinced that I'm lying, that this doesn't really happen. But for every one who does, plenty others call in to confirm what I'm saying—to report that it happened to their own child! I've even heard from young parents who believed I was making it up . . . right up to the point when their own child returned home from his first day of school.

The most surprising thing to me is that some callers—even some parents whose children have had their school supplies confiscated—actually don't see the problem with the policy. Wake up, folks! The very concept of private property is under attack here, and government is leading the charge.

It is a simple truth that property rights are the very basis of human freedom. We come into this world with nothing but our bodies and our minds. Those are the assets we bring with us to the marketplace. And no society based on economic and social freedom has ever survived the loss of private property rights.

Nobody would seriously argue against the notion that we, as individuals, are the sole owners of our minds and our bodies. We present our physical and mental labor to the free enterprise marketplace and trade it there for wealth, usually in the form of money. It can be said that we have received that money in exchange for the expenditure of a portion of our very lives. When we convert that money to other forms of property, that property, too, represents a portion of our lives. That property is every bit as much ours as our very bodies and minds are.

To demand that we forfeit that property to the government—even so trifling a piece of property as a schoolboy's notebook—is to demand a degree of involuntary servitude from us all.

I know this may sound a little preachy, but the importance of the basic human right to property, and its role in the preservation of a free society, cannot be overstated. When the government schools we pay

for are working to destroy that concept, from the very first day of a child's very first grade, it's our duty to speak up.

Today we see property rights under attack from all quarters—as anyone who's ever confronted the idea of eminent domain knows too well. Government, after all, has an interest in weakening the concept of private property rights. The more Americans can be conditioned to accept the idea that the government has the right to confiscate our property for "the common good," the stronger government becomes and the weaker we as individuals become.

*Come on, you say, my kid is only six years old! You don't expect him to realize what's happening and ask the teacher to respect his private property rights, now do you? What is he supposed to do, demand to be compensated for the seizure of his property?*

Of course not. Junior is a long way from understanding those concepts. But don't kid yourself: He certainly does understand, at least on a subconscious level, that his new teacher—someone he knows he is supposed to respect and look up to—thinks that the idea of seizing private property for general use is just fine. *After all, the logic goes, there are other people out there who might need some of your stuff. And it's just not right for you to have something other people don't have or can't share in, is it?*

All you need to do to correct this perceived injustice, according to these teachers, is to let your superiors even things out a bit by taking some stuff from you and giving it to someone else.

Karl Marx had his own words for this concept. "From each according to his ability," he said, "to each according to his need."

So what can be done to fix the problem? Well, I'll tell you what I did.

Actually, in my case, I didn't have to wait until my daughter, Laura, got into government school for this collectivist concept to rear its head. We learned this lesson in day care.

One afternoon I picked up Laura at her day care center. As she got into the car, I could see that her eyes were red; there were still traces of tears on her cheeks.

What happened? I asked.

"The lady," she said, had taken her candy.

You see, it was the day after Halloween and Laura had taken a bag of goodies to day care, to dip into throughout the day. As soon as the day care supervisor saw her bag, however, she seized it. She told Laura that it just wasn't right for her to have anything that every other child didn't have. If she didn't bring enough to share with everyone, then she couldn't have it at all.

As soon as I heard that, I spun my incredibly hot Ford Pinto around and headed back to the day care center. Once there, I asked for a private meeting with the director. I asked her if she was familiar with the concept of private property. She said yes. Then I asked why it was the day care center's policy to indoctrinate children into the idea that it was not right for them to have property that other children didn't have.

Blank stare.

Then I asked her how she would feel if the bank took her next deposit and distributed it evenly among its other customers, telling her it wasn't nice for her to have money that other people didn't have.

She got it.

The next time Laura brought some candy or cookies to day care, the supervisors left her alone.

For nearly all children in America, Day Number One at school—whether it's in an informal day care center or a public kindergarten—is also their first time in an independent social setting. It's their first chance to experience how the world is going to treat them. Until we do something to fix it, however, Lesson Number One your children learn that day may be that their rights exist only as long as the government allows.

And that's just the first week! Wait a little while, and you just might get that call from Teacher with vague, dark hints of a better world for your child if you'll just allow him to go on Ritalin.

## SHINING A LIGHT ON ARTS FUNDING

Let's say you go into business manufacturing widgets. After dedicating a big chunk of your young life to designing these widgets and perfecting your manufacturing and production process, you come to a sobering conclusion: Nobody wants to buy them. Despite all the hard work you put in displaying them for the public, nobody's buying. Sure, people stop by and check out the selection; some snicker others walk away with furrowed brows. But no one leaves any cash in the till.

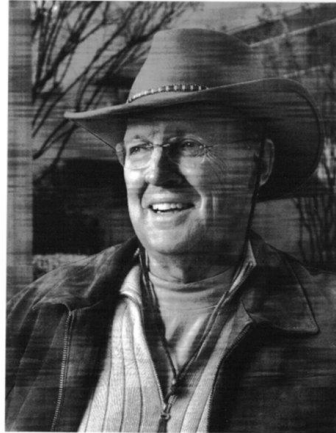
What do you do?

For most people, there would be only one answer: Close up shop, settle your debts if you can (or declare bankruptcy if you can't), and start looking for another way to make a living.

For others, however, there's a different option: Ask the *government* to use the one unique power that only government has—the power to use deadly force to accomplish any goal it sets for itself—to *force* people to buy your widgets.

After all, you've worked long and hard at this widget thing, and it's not your fault that the crass consumers don't understand how much more fulfilled their lives would be with a few of your widgets in their home. Since the consumers obviously aren't acting in their own best interests, you call on the government to help.

*Come on, Neal. The government's not in the business of floating failing businesses, is it?* Think again, folks. This very scenario plays itself



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