

Rose W. Lane

RWL

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Dear Leonard,

My letter to Professor Mises was entirely too rough; unpardonable. I did it because every courteous approach from me (about democracy) was received with the blandness with which the duck's back receives the raindrop. The man's intelligence is so great, that IF the American political principle could be got through his skull, the result would be tremendous. Even the hope of it seems to me worth every possible effort. You and Orval and others have told me that you have tried; from him, it is evident that you all have failed. It occurred to me that it might be possible, by extreme rudeness, to jolt his complacency enough to make a slight chance for you. You others value his friendship and do not want to impair it; I have nothing to lose. So I tried the experiment, and sent you a copy of my letter so that you would know that he has received it. It may be that in conversation he will give you an opening that you can develop with friendly firmness.

It isn't a question of like or dislike; it is a question of historical fact. The American government was founded in opposition to democracy; the purpose of the men in the Constitutional Convention was to stop the threatened development of democracy here. The American government is a federation of sovereign States having a strictly limited power, which is divided into three parts organizationally so arranged that each acts as a brake on the power of the other. In this complex organization, the only element of democracy is direct popular election, for short terms, of the men who assess taxes and appropriate money; and at the time, the vote was restricted to property owners, whose money was the taxes. ~~Now~~ restricted to the rich, nor to "capitalists," but to owners of property, as little in amount as \$250. The purpose of admitting this element of democracy was to protect ownership of property; and this element was restricted to that direct protection by the owner of his property, i.e. his taxes. Anyone ~~who~~ will read the Federal Constitution cannot avoid seeing this historical fact. (I labored long to persuade Mises to read the Federal Constitution. He replied that Toqueville, whom he suggested that I read, wrote about democracy in America, so this country is a democracy, but-- his tone implied,-- there, there, never mind, don't bother about such things; be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever.)

Mises' attitude would be no more than amusing, as European ideas of this country usually are, if he were not genuinely intelligent when he wishes to be, and therefore of great ~~weight~~ influence. I agree with you completely as to Röpke, from reading his work. You know him; I don't; of course I don't offer an opinion as against yours of him. But from his books only, the defect seems to be one of character; his intelligence seems as keen

as Mises's and not as narrowly restricted to one field. Like Schumpeter, Röpke seems to play both ends against the middle and always to be so poised on the fence that you can expect him to jump either way. A lack of character-integrity, of any center, of any basic certainty. This is the impression that his work makes.

I wait eagerly for your journal of the Conference, and thank you for having a copy made for me. You know that I like nothing more than seeing you, at any time.

RWL

Have you seen the list of "subversive" organizations compiled by Friends of Democracy, and their confidential bulletin to members on methods being used to destroy them? pages 53-55, in pamphlet, It Isn't Safe to Be an American, by Joseph Kamp. 3 for \$1; from Constitutional Educational League, 342 Madison avenue. Worth your attention.