

## CONCORD BRIDGE

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In search of freedom

### EDITORIAL BY JUSTIN GELFAND

Concord Bridge, the historic landmark a few miles from Brandeis, marks the first victory of the American Revolution. It is the place where freedom began, the site where an April skirmish launched the war that led to the birth of America. For the first time in history, the tenets of monarchy were challenged on the grounds of natural rights philosophy. Colonists began referring to themselves as *American* and cries for freedom and independence in the most profound sense of the words, sounded throughout the colonies. As John Adams eloquently said, it was a “revolution in the hearts and minds of the people,” and there was no turning back.

The end to monarchy on American soil ushered in republicanism, and America’s experiment in democracy would, in time, create the international military and economic superpower that the United States is today. It is a model of capitalistic enterprise, an archetype of political stability, with peaceful transition of power crafted into its institutions. Ingrained in its laws is the respect for individual autonomy – the necessary foundation for ethical politics.

Politics is not, as some argue, only a study for scholars and theorists. The implications of voting within a democratic system reach far beyond the oft-considered ‘interested parties.’ In its utmost simplicity, politics is a necessary component for living a good life; everything from the mundane to the complex cannot be separated on some level from political thought and political exercise. One’s politics reflect character, crystallizing it to one’s most integral values.

Leftists from the halls of Congress to the quadrangles of America’s college campuses have attempted to monopolize the idea of compassion, painting the picture of a utopian America: improved health care, decreased poverty, a society conducive to ‘globalization,’ and an ‘environmentally friendly’ planet.

The American Left nobly strives for a better society. But this is the most dangerous false dichotomy. On the whole, these are values shared across the political spectrum. The goals of the popular Left do not differ greatly from those of the popular Right. Both schools of political philosophy work towards improvement.

The real dichotomy is not in the goal, but in the methodology. Good consequence is important, and should be pursued in line with just practices. And this is where the American Left clashes with classical liberalism. The American Left supports good consequence at any cost, whereas classical liberal political philosophy looks to principle. Political thought and action must be founded in noble principle.

Maximum individual freedom and limited government are hallmarks to any just society. An interventionist welfare state is unethical, as are paternalistic laws that dictate to Americans how to live. When one individual takes something from another without consent, it is rightly considered theft. How is so-called ‘wealth redistribution’ more justifiable? In the abortion debate,

those who support an individual's right to choose often support policies that eliminate individual choice – statutes that criminalize drugs and other paternalistic laws. The 'justification' is always the same: this genre of legislation saves lives. That may be true, but individuals have the ethical right to live as they will without harming others. A government does not have legitimate authority over its citizens' lives and property simply because it is endorsed by a majority.

Your vote does matter, both empirically and ethically. Every vote in favor of paternalism and governmental expansion comes with victims. In American politics, these are victims you will never meet; they are the forgotten ones, the ignored.

At the cost of taxpayer dollars and incalculable infringements on liberty, the government continues to lose its wars against drugs and poverty. Limited government is not only intrinsically more ethical; government is less effective in tackling the real issues and the private sector has demonstrated its ability to better solve problems, operating on voluntary contributions as opposed to forced taxation.

It is easy to support Robin Hood economics: steal from the rich and give to the poor. But it is theft nonetheless and the fairytale dismisses the harm. Please do not ever forget the victims of your votes, or set them aside from your political calculus.

*Concord Bridge* magazine was founded to uphold this ethic. It has been a genuine and profound privilege providing the Brandeis community with a journal that upholds the values of classical liberalism. Founding and editing the publication has been invaluable and educational; trials and tribulations ensued along the way, and I could not have asked for a better editorial board and staff to confront these challenges with professionalism, respect, and courage. Brandeis is a special place; students and faculty alike are concerned and impassioned to improve the world. There are issues from which we cannot avert our eyes, and I urge Brandeisians to proudly and boldly confront these many pressing endeavors. In pursuing our noble goals, I confidently encourage Americans to strive towards good consequence while upholding the highest respect for the individual.

I am sincerely proud and excited. The first chapter of *Concord Bridge* now comes to a close, lessons learned and forever cherished. Thank you for reading and considering the arguments presented in its pages. I have confidence that when these contentions are given their due attention, and when these ideas penetrate the American political psyche, the world will improve. After all, this will be another revolution in the hearts and minds of everyday people – political actors – who will demand a just society, and finally understand exactly what that means.