

‘The Road To Recovery’— Unlearning Bad Habits

The following is excerpted from the keynote address by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., to the Schiller Institute Presidents’ Day conference, delivered on Feb. 13, 1999.

Every person today is aware of shocks to the international financial system, to institutions, which they would have considered unthinkable even a few years ago. The world as it appeared in the summer of the year 1997 to most Americans, and the world as it appears to them today, are two entirely different worlds.

Back in 1997, in October as I forecast, the world was entering the terminal stage of a global financial crisis, a crisis which would not end until that system had been destroyed, either by itself or by its replacement by some other forces.

This process has unfolded since October 1997 in a series of developments. Repeatedly, people have thought, “Well, the crisis is over.” Each time they say the crisis is over, it comes back with greater force. At the moment at which we speak, the international financial, monetary, and economic crisis is worse than at any time in the past 30-odd years.

Well, how did this happen? Where did they acquire the habits of reacting to a crisis in the way in which they’re reacting today?

They acquired these habits over decades. Many of these habits are hundreds of years old. The institutions involved are decades or hundreds of years old. They evolved traditions which are up to thousands of years old—most of them at least 600 years old.

So, today’s history, today’s crisis, did not begin in 1997. It did not begin 30 years ago. *It is deeply rooted in the experience of many successive generations and of the institutions associated with those generations.*

So, to understand ourselves, we have to look at history. History is not a period of so-called “normal times” separated by periods of instability and turbulence. History is a process in which the turbulence, the crises, the terrible times, are a product of the habits with which we lived during what we considered quiet or normal times.

The nature of history is such that it’s the history of crises, crises which come like tragedies, where the follies of habits acquired during so-called normal times, when the follies of cultivated experience and

The Dance

See how with hovering steps the couple in wavelike motion
Rotates, the foot as with wings hardly is touching the floor.
See I shadows in flight, set free from the weight of the body?
Elves in the moonlight there weaving their vapor-like dance?
As by zephyr ’twere rocked, the nimble smoke in the air flows,
As so gently the skiff pitches on silvery tide,
Hops the intelligent foot to melodic wave of the measure,
Sweet sighing tone of the strings lifts the ethereal limbs.
Now, as would they with might traverse through the chain of the dances,
Swings there a valorous pair right through the thickest of ranks.
Quickly before them rises the path, which vanishes after,
As if a magical hand opens and closes the way.
See! Now vanished from view, in turbulent whirl of confusion
Plunges the elegant form of this permutable world.
No, it hovers rejoicing above, the knot disentangles,
Only with e’er-changing charm rule does establish itself.

wisdom of experience have led us to doom. And it was not the crisis that brought us to doom. It was the habits, the lessons of experience which we treasured so much in the quiet times—these were the things that doomed us.

The time has come to pay the price for the follies which we built in the quiet times.

And thus, today, above all, to understand anything—not to simply go crazy in light of what is going to happen to this world, and is already happening—you have to understand, that what people thought were the lessons of experience, were the lessons of their own stupidity. What they thought were the lessons of their experience, as we see in Wall Street, were the habits of being stupid.

In former times, stupidity had a high price. You made money by being stupid with these habits. Then you had to pay the price for the habits, and then you were doomed. What you see is a civilization or a power destroying itself globally. And to see that civilization—to understand the lessons of that civilization, and to escape from the crisis, you must recognize one thing: that, up to now, you have been dead wrong.

For decades, you have been dead wrong. The

American people have been dead wrong for more than 30 years. The political parties have been dead wrong and worse by the year, for more than 30 years. The economic policies of the United States have been dead wrong and getting worse for nearly 30 years. Similar things have been happening in Europe. Similar things have been happening in Japan.

We didn't get into this mess because something came along and broke up the party. The party broke up, because everybody was drunk and they were breaking the dishes. It was the party that led to the break-up of the party.

Don't think of yourself as a spectator trying to bet on a horse race or the outcome of a boxing match, or betting on the next election. You are a person in the arena—the Roman arena—where the gladiators are killing each other.

Don't bet on the outcome—get out of the arena and move into the grandstand, and get rid of Caesar. Because it's these habits—like the habits of Ancient Rome, which destroyed it—but our habits, not Ancient Roman habits, are destroying us.

The time has come to look at the habits which we thought were wisdom over the past 30 years and sometimes longer, and to see that those ideas which we thought were the “right way of thinking,” are precisely what is destroying us.

Oh yes, there are some people who are evil, there are some people who are worse than others, there are some people with more power, there are some people with less power. But there are also people who commit the crime of standing by the side and watching; who sit in the spectator stands and watch the bloodshed in the middle of the arena and do nothing about it. They also are part of the history. They make history—it is *their follies that bring disaster upon themselves*.

And therefore, sometimes just standing by the wayside and saying, “Well, I'm not going to get involved in this”—you are very much involved. *Your non-involvement is part of creating the crisis.*

EDITORIAL

Ever destroyed, creation rotating begets itself ever,
And an unspoken law guides the transformative play.
Say, how's it done, that restless renews the swaying formations
And that calmness endures even in moveable form?
Is each a ruler, free, to his inner heart only responding
And in hastening course finds his own singular path?
Wish you to know it? It is the mighty Godhead euphonic
Who into sociable dance orders the frolicking leap,
Who, like Nemesis fair, on the golden rein of the rhythm
Guides the raging desire and the uncivilized tames.
And do the cosmos' harmonies rustle you to no purpose,
Are you not touched by the stream of this exalted refrain,
Not by the spirited pulse, that beats to you from all existence,
Not by the whirl of the dance, which through eternal expanse
Swings illustrious suns in boldly spiraling pathways?
That which you honor in play—measure—in business you flee.

—Friedrich Schiller