

The Public Trough

Carter's memory hole

by Bruce Bartlett

Last year, I detailed the Carter Administration's efforts to suppress facts about the massive amounts of conventional energy sources in this country in order to win support for its energy program. I noted that the suppression of evidence involved the firing of Dr. Vincent McKelvey as head of the U.S. Geological Survey and the firing of Dr. Christian Knudsen as head of the Energy Department's Market Oriented

Program Planning Study (MOPPS). I have argued that in each case the men were fired for contradicting the doomsday scenario upon which the Carter Administration has based its energy program—which would impose Draconian taxes and regulations on the economy in order to achieve energy conservation. I have since elaborated these facts in an article called "Killing the Messenger: The Carter Administration

and the Fact About Oil and Gas," *Washington Monthly*, April, 1978.

Recent developments show that the Carter Administration is continuing the energy coverup unabated.

As a result of my article about suppression of the MOPPS study, a *Liberarian Review* reader sent me the following memorandum which had been sent out by the U.S. Government Printing Office:

ATTENTION DEPOSITORY LIBRARIANS:

The Department of Energy has advised this Office that the publication *Market Oriented Program Planning Study (MOPPS), Integrated Summary Vol. 1, Final Report, December 1977*, should be removed from your shelves and destroyed. The publication was shipped on S/: 10,558 (2nd shipment of February 7, 1978), under Item Number 429-P (El.18:0010/1(D)). We are advised that the document contains erroneous information and is being revised. Your assistance is appreciated. /s/

J.D. LIVSEY

Director, Library and
Statutory Distribution Service (SL)
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C.

Needless to say, the implications of this document were self-explanatory: the Department of Energy wished to see the MOPPS study (which showed vast amounts of natural gas available at a higher price) go down the Orwellian Memory Hole.

Consequently, I immediately made this document available to friends at the *Wall Street Journal* and it was reproduced in a lead editorial on April 4, 1978.

But this was not the end of the story.

Following publication of the *Wall Street Journal* editorial I made an effort to obtain the MOPPS report referred to in the document. Inquiries were made through the Congressional Research Service of the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Government Printing Office, and the Department of Energy. In each case I was informed that under no circumstances would the MOPPS report be made available. A copy of the report was finally obtained only when a United States Congressman requested one directly from Secretary Schlesinger for his personal use.

An examination of the report shows
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Liberty's Heritage

Richard Cobden

Richard Cobden, a self-made, self-educated cotton manufacturer from the north of England, is one of the greatest names in the history of classical liberalism. For decades—up until his death in 1865—he persevered in employing his sharp, fresh intellect and his enormous polemical talents in the struggle for libertarian principles: for the free market at home, free trade among peoples, and international peace. Through his many writings and public speeches, through acting as a gadfly in the House of Commons to successive governments, and through organizing and promoting mass movements among the citizens, Cobden did perhaps more than any other individual of his time to make mid-19th century England a relatively free country.

Cobden and his friend John Bright were the mainstays of the Manchester School in British politics and thought. Together they led the Anti-Corn Law League, a mass movement that finally broke the back of the privileged aristocracy and brought complete free trade and increasing prosperity to England. Cobden fought untiringly for lower expenditures and taxes (“retrenchment”), for freedom of opinion and religion, and against paper money—which he called “the curse and scourge of the working classes.”

His greatest passion, however, was peace. War he saw not only as an evil in itself, but as producing every other political evil, particularly repression, inflation, high taxes, and poverty. Because of their adherence to principle, even in the midst of the Crimean War, Cobden and the other Radicals of his time were opposed and vilified by the conservatives, who attacked them as enemies of the poor and rootless cosmopolites, and looked on them as men who had no respect for the greatness and power of their own nation. Nonetheless, Cobden was admired and even loved by

many in the working and middle classes, who saw him as the great champion of their interests against the establishment. But the greatest tribute to the man is, oddly enough, a point of terminology: Sometimes, especially in Europe, “Cobdenism” is simply used as a synonym for the philosophy of classical liberalism.

—Ralph Raico

“The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible.”—Washington’s Farewell Address to the American People

To maintain what is denominated the true balance of European power has been the fruitful source of wars from the earliest time; and it would be instructive, if the proposed limits of this work permitted it, to bring into review all the opposite struggles into which England has plunged for the purpose of adjusting, from time to time, according to the ever-varying theories of her rulers, this national equilibrium. Let it suffice to say that history exhibits us, at different periods, in the act of casting our sword into the scale of every European State. In the meantime, events have proclaimed, but in vain, how futile must be our attempts to usurp the sceptre of the Fates. Empires have risen unbidden by us; others have departed, despite our utmost efforts to preserve them. All have undergone a change so complete that, were the writers who only a century ago lauded the then existing state of the balance of Europe to reappear, they would be startled to find, in the present relations of the Continent, no vestige of that perfect adjustment which had been purchased at the price of so much blood. And yet we have able writers and statesmen of the present day who would advocate a war to prevent a derange-

ment of what we now choose to pronounce the just equipoise of the power of Europe. . . .

In truth, Great Britain has, in contempt of the dictates of prudence and self-interest, an insatiable thirst to become the peace-maker abroad, or, if that benevolent task fails her, to assume the office of gendarme and keep in order, gratuitously, all the refractory nations of Europe. Hence does it arise that, with an invulnerable island for our territory, more secure against foreign molestation than is any part of the cost of North America, we magnanimously disdain to avail ourselves of the privileges which nature offers to us, but cross the ocean in quest of quadripartite treaties or quintuple alliances, and, probably, to leave our own good name in pledge for the debts of the poorer members of such confederacies. To the same spirit of overweening national importance may in great part be traced the ruinous wars and yet more ruinous subsidies of our past history. Who does not now see that to have shut ourselves in our own ocean fastness and to have guarded its shores and its commerce by our fleets was the one of policy we ought never to have departed from—and who is there that is not now feeling, in the burden of our taxation, the dismal errors of our departure from this rule during the last war?

. . . We have the argument which has, immediately or remotely, decided us to undertake almost every war in which Great Britain has been involved—namely, the defense of our commerce. And yet it has, over and over again, been proved to the world, that violence and force can never prevail against the natural wants and wishes of mankind: in other words, that despotic laws against freedom of trade never can be executed. . . . and yet people would frighten us into war, to prevent the forcible annihilation of our trade! [Cobden cites the famous example of Napoleon’s attempted embargo on Continental trade with England.] Where, then, is the wisdom of our fighting European battles in defense of a commerce which knows so well of itself how to elude all its assailants? And what have we to show as a per-contra for the four hundred millions of debt incurred in our last continental wars? . . .