

November 1996

Contents

- [October Speaker](#)
 - [The President's Desk](#)
 - [Letters to the Editor](#)
 - [Response to Antitheist article](#)
 - [Another Response to Antitheist article](#)
 - [Dear AOF Friends](#)
 - [Save the Darwin Fish!](#)
 - [Notable Freethought Quotes](#)
 - [Celebrity Atheists \(and Famous Dead Non-Theists\)](#)
 - [No Prayer Breakfast](#)
 - [AOF Board](#)
 - [AOF Committees](#)
 - [November Program](#)
 - [Newsletter Freebie Policy](#)
 - [Calendar of Events](#)
-

October Speaker

The speaker at AOF's October meeting was Joseph Farina, a criminal defense attorney and Chair of the [Libertarian Party in Sacramento](#). He was a 1992 candidate for the California Assembly.

Farina spoke of the libertarian philosophy, which transcends politics and is based on the principle of "live and let live." Applied to government, their philosophy is that the government which governs least is the one that governs best. It should have only a limited function, such as national defense, a judiciary, and police, and be strictly limited to those items that are explicit in the Constitution. He then concentrated his talk on five personal issues and five economic issues, providing the libertarian proposal on each.

Personal issues:

1. Ending the draft, relying on volunteers. A draft would not be necessary if the US was not involved in politics all over the world. If there were a military threat, there would be enough volunteers.

2. Ending government control of radio, television, media, and the internet. This can be a sensitive issue when it comes to access by children to inappropriate content, but libertarians would not abdicate parent's control to the government.
3. repealing regulations on sex between consenting adults. Prostitution would be made legal and removed from the streets.
4. Repealing all drug laws. The drug war has been a complete failure. The consequence of current drug laws have been prison overcrowding, increased crime (e.g. turf wars, burglaries and robberies to get money for frughs, etc.) and no reduction in drug use. Ending the drug war, and providing drug education and treatment with proceeds from the sale of legal drugs would be more rational.
5. Let peaceful people cross borders freely. There would be no government benefits available, but people who came to work would be allowed to do so.

Economic Issues

1. Ending subsidies for businesses or farms. The practice of paying price supports or paying farmers not to grow crops would end, as would subsidies for industries.
2. Initiating universal free trade with no tariffs. There would be no NAFTA, no GATT, no more favored nations. Trade would be free across the board.
3. Repealing minimum wage laws. These laws cause unemployment, and salaries would find the level of their value to a business.
4. Ending taxes, replacing them with user fees. The example used was national parks; only some people visit them, and they could support them with user fees.
5. Funding all foreign aid privately

Farina's other recommendations included eliminating the FDA and replacing it with private organizations like Underwriter's Laboratories, maintaining prisons only for those who are destructive to others, and voting against all bond issues, as the funding for these would come from tax receipts. Farina further suggested that affirmative action has become unwieldy, and that Jim Crow laws would have changed without government action.

Several questions from the audience suggested a mix of agreement and skepticism about Farina's positions.

President's Desk

by Karen Abbe

I'm in a mad dash to get the desktop publishing of this newsletter and other important matters done in time so I can leave on vacation in a couple of days. An active volcano is calling my name in a land far away. So all I have to say in my president's message this month is, "Aloha."

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

"Antitheist" is the term Mary Jo Brooks coined (in the [Oct. News & Views](#) to describe her feeling about organized religion). I assume she coined it, I haven't heard it before. I like it. It's a great neologism, and it makes an important distinction between passive non-belief and active disbelief.

To put it into human terms, an "antitheist" would be someone as outspokenly anti-religious as Madeline Murray O'Hare. An "atheist" might be someone like you or I who doesn't parade their disbelief - out of fear, lack of passion, or maybe a genuine feeling of tolerance for the beliefs of others (however mistaken they may be).

My personal religious trajectory is probably pretty typical. Raised in a believing, Episcopal family, I somehow escaped religious indoctrination. Sunday School was boring and I stopped going when I was finally given the choice. Religion just never mattered to me. My few adult attempts to find a personal religious connection failed. Religion made no sense. In fact the more I sought meaning the more convinced I was that there was nothing there - it was a "Wizard of Oz" situation.

As a young adult I railed against religion. I tried to show people the error of their ways (isn't youthful arrogance amazing?). I was an "antitheist." I argued, I cajoled, I reasoned, I pleaded - to no avail, of course. Eventually I learned that people don't like to have their crutches taken away, even if the crutch is as insubstantial as the Emperor's new clothes. As one wag put it: "Somethings have to be believed to be seen."

Now that the grey is salting my beard I am an "atheist." If the subject of religious belief comes up I'm happy to pooh-pooh the whole notion, but I leave the battlefield to other, stronger (more impetuous?) warriors. And I wish them well! I still believe religion is pernicious, but I also believe it is probably inevitable. Atheism seems to require a strength that most people either don't have or don't feel comfortable exercising (gee, maybe I haven't lost my youthful arrogance after all.)

So, Hooray for the Antitheists! Ans Hooray for the Atheists! ANd thank you Mary Jo for a useful new word.

John C. Reiger

Dear Editor:

Concerning Mary Jo Brooks October letter: "...we should call ourselves "Antitheist." (because) "it better describes those of us who have real opposition to organized religion."

I assume the "organized religion" referred to here is the Christian Coalition, the right-wing religious/political organization currently under scrutiny by the IRS for illegal political practices violating tax exemption laws. I realize I tend to be a broken record, but the purpose of AOF is to

promote the understanding and acceptance of atheism in our community. AOF is an educational organization whose tax-exempt status specifically prohibits actively participating in politics. To me, this means that AOF is here not to present "real opposition" to organized religion but to help us claim our rightful place at the community table.

I think it goes without saying that our members oppose organized religion to one extent or another and are concerned with maintaining separation of church and state, but not all members would be comfortable with being labeled "antithiest." Personally, as an atheist/humanist, I admire the actions taken by one local organized religious group, Sacramento Interfaith, with their solid opposition to the activities of the radical right-wing.

Back when AOF was established, much heated debate took place about reclaiming the word "atheist" from being misidentified as "anti-religion." We decided then that the word atheist simply means "without religion," (as opposed to a denial of God, a definition which implies there is a god in which to deny). AOF was founded to attract people who live without religion and wish to have a community in which to belong. Unfortunately so overwhelming are the religious messages in this society that it seems whenever the atheist voice is heard it sounds harsh and bitter, which lends credence to the "anti-religious" denigration which in turn gives even more power to the pulpit which in turn further intimidates those "closet" freethinkers AOF wants to reach.

AOF is a grand experiment aimed toward stopping this vicious cycle by giving atheists a platform to define not who or what we are against, but who we are and what we stand for! AOF members who want to tangle more aggressively in the political fray against organized religion would be better served by supporting several fine non-tax exempt organizations currently on the battle front: The American Civil Liberties Union, People for the American Way, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc., and the Institute for First Amendment Studies, (to name a few). I strongly encourage atheists, humanists, freethinkers, and yes even antitheists to support them. And while our members are supporting these warriors, AOF can concentrate on the home front gently cementing itself into the community by reaching out to our isolated brethren, teaching people how to live without religion peacefully, in dignity, and unafraid to speak out in defense of freethought.

by Pat Kelley

Dear AOF Friends

I was at the big debate in August. It was great! I wouldn't have missed it. Love Dan Barker. Hope you have more in the future. Keep up the good work. I look forward to my newsletter. Thanks. **Carol Mattern**

Save the Darwin Fish

The Atheists of the San Francisco Region have alerted us to a situation regarding a popular freethought symbol. The following is excerpted from their October newsletter: Recently a small Texas company is asserting claim to ownership of the Darwin fish image. They have sued people selling the Darwin fish. Al Seckle and John Edwards of Atheists United in Los Angeles say he had the idea of putting the word Darwin in a fish in 1983. They did not copyright the image because they wanted to keep the symbol in the public domain.

Gary Betchan is fighting the Texas company in the courts. He is asking the freethought community to help him. He says, "What we need are examples of Darwin Fish produced before 1990. We know that many were made as buttons, bumper stickers, tee-shirts, etc. They appeared in newspapers, newsletters, books, etc. We need these images, preferably on DATED items (like newspapers). And we need the names and contact information of any company or group that made or sold them in the 1980's.

Contact Betchan at GBetchan@usa.net or send (US) mail to:

Fish

PO Box 26523

Colorado Springs, CO 80936

Betchan says, "If this corporation, which has no known ties to the freethought community, LOCKS UP their ownership of this image, they will have the right to sell it, or refuse to sell it, to whomever they want. They could even sell all rights to the Darwin Fish to some group like the Christian Coalition, or to your local Christian millionaire preacher... On the other side, many freethinkers are trying to keep the Darwin Fish FREE to prove that it is IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN. Would you help us?"

(Note: because I received Gary's original note in my inbasket, I am including it here - Pat)

Free the Darwin Fish

Gary Betchan

Have you seen the neat little Darwin Fish? The one that really gets the Christians' goat? Of course you have. The image has been the rage of the freethought community for several years now. You might even have one on your car. Or you might have a T-shirt with the Darwin Fish on it.

But do you know where it came from..? Do you know who invented it? Do you know that a corporation is trying to own it..??

Two long-term members of the Freethought community claim to have first put the word Darwin in a fish in 1983. (Al Seckle and John Edwards, Atheist United). They say it was their intent that the image be in the public domain, so they didn't file a copyright on it.

Today, a small corporation in Texas is using law suits and legal

threats to solidify their claim to ownership of the Darwin fish image. They recently got the better of Seckle and Edwards through a legal technicality. Today, they are on the verge of knocking two other Darwin fish sellers out of business.

If this corporation, which has no known contact with the freethought community, locks up their ownership of this image, they will have the right to sell, or refuse to sell it, to whomever they want. They could even sell all rights to the Darwin Fish to some group like the Christian Coalition, or your local christian millionaire preacher.. . On the other side, many freethinkers are trying to keep the Darwin fish free. To prove that it is in the public domain. Would you help us?

What we need are examples of Darwin fish produced before 1990. We know that many were made as buttons, bumperstickers, t-shirts, etc. They appeared in newspapers, newsletters, books, etc.. We need to find those images. Preferably on dated items (like newspapers). And we need the names and contact information of any company or group that made or sold them in the 1980s.

If you have such an item or information, or know where one is, please send an email to Gbetchan@usa.net

Please forward this message to all freethinkers, atheists, humanists, or anyone who might help us...

NOTE: This message is not intended to create a negative opinion or image of any entity. Nor is it intended to support or denigrate the validity of any entity's claim to creative or legal rights. The sole purpose is to solicit information.

[Gary Betchan is the President and Founder of the Freethinkers of Colorado Springs. He may be reached at Gbetchan@usa.net.]

Notable Freethought Quotes

"There is no greater robber in this world than he who robs us of liberty of thought. Deprived of that, we might as well go down on all fours, call the whole biped experiment of walking on two legs a mistake, and revert to our earlier posture of at least 30,000 years ago."

Lin Yutang

"Christian Fundamentalism: The doctrine that there is an absolutely powerful, infinitely knowledgeable, universe spanning entity that is deeply and personally concerned about my sex life."

Andrew Lias

No-Prayer Breakfast

Join fellow freethinkers for breakfast on Sunday, November 24th. This ungodly gathering will be held at 9:00 a.m. at Carrows at 1825 S. Street. To reserve your spot, call Betty Simonsma via AOF Information line 916-920-7834.

November Meeting Speaker

AOF's November 10th general membership meeting will feature a presentation from a Sacramento educator. The focus of Alfred Bifarelli's presentation will be critical thinking skills. Join AOFers on November 19th for a stimulating discussion about education.

AOF Board

- President: Karen Abbe
 - Vice-President: Cleo Kocol
 - Secretary: Kay Dickey
 - Treasurer: Ed McConnell
 - Directors-at-Large:
 - Don Massy, Edgar Brichta, Roland Roberge,
 - Kay Stinson, and Betty Simonsma
-

AOF Committees

- [Atheist Alliance](#) liaison: Cleo Kocol
- Dinners-for-the-needy: Kay Stinson
- Highway cleanup project: Hank Kocol
- Internet website: Pat Kelley
- Meeting facility: Betty Simonsma
- Speaker scheduling: Karen Abbe
- Newsletter editor: (opening available)
- Newsletter publishing: Karen Abbe
- Voicemail system: Karen Abbe
- Membership database: Betty Simonsma

Newsletter Freebie Policy

Just as a reminder, we'll send free monthly newsletters to anyone who requests same but that's only for your first three months. After that time, please subscribe to AOF's newsletter for only \$8 per year. Or become a member and get your newsletter free as part of your membership.

AOF ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION/MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name (s) _____ Phone () _____
Street _____ Apt. _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Join as a member of Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF) and help promote greater understanding and acceptance of atheism in our community. Please indicate the AOF category you prefer:

_____ Newsletter Subscriber Only (\$8.00) _____ Family membership (\$30.00)
_____ Low-income Member (\$10.00) _____ Patron (\$50.00)
_____ Single Membership (\$20.00) _____ Donation (Tax Deductible) \$_____

_____ Please check here if you do NOT want your name on lists occasionally provided to organizations similar to AOF.

Mail form to: Atheists and Other Freethinkers P.O. Box 15182 - Sacramento, CA 95851-0182.

AOF P.O. Box 15182 Sacramento, CA 95851-0182

See you at the next exciting AOF event!

Calendar of Events

Sunday November 10th, noon to 2:00 pm. - General Meeting (topic: critical thinking skills)
 Sunday, November 17th - Newsletter committee meeting
 Tuesday, November 19th, 6:30 to 8:00 pm. - AOF Board Meeting
 Saturday, November 24th, 8:30 to 10:30 am. - No-Prayer Breakfast
Sunday, December 8th, noon to 2:00 pm. - General Meeting (topic: global and environmental issues)