



VICFA Voice

Our Mission: *To promote and preserve unregulated direct farmer-to-consumer trade that fosters availability of locally grown or home-produced food products*

January 2012

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Live Free or Die : Cause and Effect

By: Lois Smith

“Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath?” - Thomas Jefferson

Today, it seems that most citizens assume that rights are granted by our government. If that is true, then we have no “rights”, but instead have certain “permissions”. After all, what the government gives, it can take away. We, as a nation, have been ruled by Political Law since the Great Depression. It is law created out of nothing. We demanded our government to do something, thus giving the government more control of our lives. Political law is not based on logic or morality. In political law societies, the majority or dictators rule based on what they want, even if it is morally wrong.

America’s founding fathers believed that the moral laws that govern humans are a subset of the natural laws that govern the universe. They practiced Common law, which is a system for discovering and applying Natural Law in human affairs. Common law is based on two fundamental laws: “Do all that you agreed to do”, and “do not encroach on other persons or their property”. Political law has no regard for these two fundamental rules.

Liberty has two tenants: Common law is the legal side, and free market is the economic side. In a free market, individuals can produce, sell, and buy whatever goods and services they choose.

Is it really surprising that our food system is in the grips of Political Law and thus is in a dire state? While farmers are dying off, it is no wonder that their children are not willing to replace them as a serf in a caste society. It is not surprising that we have abundance of food, yet we are an unhealthy nation, where people eat poorly and many often go hungry. Does this make sense to anyone?

I have been an advocate for healthy food for many years, and I realize that buying local foods can be an asset to my local economy. Yet, without the liberty to buy from whom I choose and the freedom to purchase exactly what I choose, my choices are limited, arbitrary, exhausting, and many times, even futile.

I am amazed that many people are okay with the fact that their God-given rights to consume the foods that they know are good for their health have been taken away. Truthfully, I would be amazed that anyone would give up their rights to eat foods that are not good for them. Do you really think that the government should be able to tell you which foods you are allowed to eat? Where have we gone wrong, as a nation that claims to love liberty?

This brings me to the heart of this article. Are educated consumers and small farmers really expected

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to believe that it is in our best interest to work with the government to regulate the small farmers who sell directly to the consumers? Hasn't the government already done enough to destroy the family farms and as well as the health of consumers?

Four multinational companies control over 70 percent of fluid milk sales in the in the United States. These companies: Land O' Lakes, Foremost Farms, Dairy Farmers of America, and Dean Foods, have put dairy farmers in bankruptcy by controlling the market. They lobby Congress to pass laws on creameries so that consumers cannot buy milk directly from the farm. They use government food safety scientists to justify their regulatory positions, which are based on bad science. These problems exist because somehow, we thought that the government should have the responsibility to keep us safe from ourselves.

The government allows for the confining of animals whose waste cannot be safely absorbed in the land. The manures carry pathogens such as E coli, that can be 100 times more concentrated than human waste. Additionally, the government OKs the polluted air of residents who live near animal factories, but yet, this same government deems that buying from a local farmer is unsafe for society.

Are we expected to believe that government subsidies are bad, but small farmer's grants are good? How are consumers ever supposed to know the real cost of food? When the government gives money to some farmers while denying others, there is an unfair advantage.

Here's a concept: Get big brother, the government, off our farms so that consumers can make private contracts, engage in direct sales with neighboring farmers, and purchase the foods of their choice. This method would allow farmers to receive compensation equal to the full value of their products, while simultaneously allowing consumers to receive the full value of their selected goods, without having to pay a middleman or giving up the ability to go to the grocery stores.

On December 5, 2011, I attended a Food Security Summit at the University of Virginia. I was shocked to hear speakers such as Spencer Neale take the platform. Neale, who has pushed for animal traceability and currently oversees the international commodity trading for Farm Bureau, doesn't seem to demonstrate any care about our right as a consumer. I found myself wondering why Neale was invited to speak at this Food Security Summit event. In the end, I felt like the participants at this conference really seemed to be looking for ways to control the local food movement - a movement that for years, did not need to be controlled. The "control" needs to be with respect to the regulations that limit a free market. A truly free market would be the appropriate "control" mechanism for the local food movement.

Are we to believe that we need to work with government agencies if we want our freedoms respected? Isn't the government supposed to be working for us?

I left the Food Security Summit thinking: "Good try, Food Security Summit, but food liberty cannot be partnered with dictators."

I find it very strange that when a group does not see the government as a solution to farming issues, they are accused of being exclusive and radical. When fundamental laws are not obeyed and you are

fraudulently forced to enter into a transaction, the odds are that at least one party will suffer a loss. Who do you think will be the ones enduring such a loss? I believe that it will surely be us, the consumers.

"Live Free or Die." Listen to the words of our patriots. Boy, they were a radical bunch! ■

An Introduction to Botulism: The Main Argument Against Homemade Pickles

by Anne Buteau

Clostridium botulinum is an anaerobic, gram-positive, spore form rod that produces a potent neuro toxin which affects the central nervous system, gradually causing paralysis. Fatal outcomes due to respiratory muscle weakness can usually be avoided now, by mechanical ventilation, leading to a better prognosis.

Certain conditions promote germination and botulism toxin production:

- a) a moist LOW ACID FOOD (pH greater than 4.6)
- b) a temperature between 40F and 120F
- c) an anaerobic environment (less than 2% oxygen)

According to a report "Foodborne Botulism in the United States 1990-2000" by Jeremy Sobel of CDCP, Atlanta, Georgia:

"C.botulinum rarely causes illness because the confluence of conditions required for its germination and toxin production- low acidity, high water activity, absence of preservatives, ambient temperatures and anaerobic milieu- rarely occurs in foods."

According to the US FDA: "Almost any type of food that is not very acidic (pH above 4.6) can support growth and toxin production by C.botulinum. Botulinal toxin has been demonstrated in a considerable variety of foods, such as canned corn, peppers, green beans, soups, beets, asparagus, mushrooms, ripe olives, spinach, tuna fish, chicken and chicken livers, liver pate and luncheon meats, ham, sausage, stuffed eggplant, lobster, and smoked and salted fish." Nowhere on this list are pickles mentioned.

An "acidified low acid food" is a food that is naturally above pH 4.6, such as figs and tomatoes (which are slightly above pH 4.6). These must be acidified to a pH of less than 4.6 by the addition of lemon juice or citric acid to be safely processed in a boiling water canner.

Often in the food safety arguments related to pickles, botulism statistics relating to "home canned foods" are referred to. This is a misrepresentation as "pickles" are a very unique subset of "home canned foods" with their own built in safety feature..the high acidity that makes them safe by inhibiting the growth of the toxin producing spores as explained above. Most "homecanned foods" are low acid and therefore need to be pressure canned carefully to avoid potential food poisoning.

In 2010 at the House of Delegates Ag Sub Committee hearing, a scaremongering gentleman spoke against "the pickle bill" and said he'd known people that had had botulism and what a nasty disease it was etc etc, but produced no facts as to how many people got sick, when and from what, so I went to the VDH and did some research. The results follow:

research. The results: **Annual Summary of Communicable Disease Statistics for Virginia**

Epidemiology Bulletin Virginia, from the Virginia Dept of Health website: www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/surveillance/surveillancedata/index.htm

Year, followed by # cases of botulism
(not specified whether foodborne, infant or wound)
1987: 0; 1988: 0; 1989: 0; 1990: 0; 1991: 0; 1992: 0; 1993: 0
1994: 0; 1995: 0; 1996: 1; 1997: 0; 1998: 1; 1999: 0; 2000: 0
2001: 0; 2002: 1; 2003: 0; 2004: 0; 2005: 0; 2006: 0; 2007: 1

These are the facts. Opposing arguments have been based on frightening rhetoric and about how the pickle industry would suffer if people became ill from homemade pickles. On the contrary, everyone would buy from the store!

From CDCP records:

There were 4 cases of foodborne botulism in Va from 1950 till 1996, so if the cases in 1998, 2002, and 2007 were all of foodborne botulism that would total 7 cases in the state of Virginia in 47years. The likelihood is that the botulism cases were not from pickles but from other low acid home canned food or commercial food based on the ratios of 1:263 and 1:143 from CDCP stats below.

From CDCP statistics:

From 1990 to 2000 there were 263 people affected by foodborne botulism in the USA, an annual incidence of 0.1per million. There was only ONE homemade pickle related incident.

From 2001 to 2008 there were 143 foodborne botulism cases in the whole of the USA, of which there was ONE homemade pickle related case.

Total: TWO cases in almost 20 years in the WHOLE OF THE USA

Conclusion: Homemade Pickle eating is a lower risk activity than driving a car, smoking, and drinking alcohol! **Please Support An Amendment To "The Kitchen Bill" . Based on the statistics, to not do so does not make sense!** ■

VICFA Notes

Come to our Jan. Meeting

The January Meeting will be held in Paris, VA on January 8, 2012.

We will share in a potluck lunch at 12:00 pm, followed by our general business meeting from 1:00 - 3:00 pm. VICFA membership meetings are open to the public. Please bring a dish and a big helping of enthusiasm to share. Broaden our reach - invite a friend or neighbor to join you.

Sunday, January 8, 2012
at Liberty Farm, hosted by Martha Boneta
1037 Gap Run Road
Paris, VA 20130 | (571) 839-1143

Note: This is a working farm. There is no residence on site. Simply drive up, past the iron gates, and park inside the privacy fencing in front of the barn. The meeting will take place in the barn.

DIRECTIONS:

Locate the I-66 and US 17 North junction (Exit 23). From here, take US17 North, towards Delaplane / Paris. Go 7.6miles; and turn left on Gap Run Road. Liberty Farm (address 1037) is about 1/10th mile, on the right.



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