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Friday, July 23, 2010

Clowns to the Left of Me, Jokers to the Right [\[Mark Krikorian\]](#)

I participated a panel on the Arizona law, and immigration more generally, at the libertarian Cato Institute yesterday; the [video](#) is now up, assuming you want to watch all 82 minutes of it. Much of the discussion was the usual stuff, but two things stood out.

First, one of the panelists, Cato's Tim Lynch, spoke about how the Arizona law will lead to false arrests and showed an excerpt from this video:



The hero of the video, at least from Lynch's perspective, was one of the most obnoxious people ever recorded, refusing to answer a query as to his citizenship from a [Border Patrol agent](#) at a highway checkpoint (within 50 miles of the border, the Border Patrol has extraordinary powers rightly denied to law enforcement elsewhere). Starting at about 2:20, his repeated, boorish cries of "Am I being detained, Agent Soto?" and "Am I free to go, Agent Gilmore?" were so ridiculous even Lynch realized he'd made a mistake in picking that video. (A colleague of mine said the protagonist of the video, one [Terry Bressi](#), is the kind of guy who didn't get beaten up enough in high school.) But aside from the unintended humor, this really shows the utopianism of libertarians — even necessary, legally defined measures necessary to enforce American sovereignty are simply unacceptable to them. This isn't support for a system of ordered liberty — it's anarchism.

The other interesting point came at 76:40 in [Cato's video](#), where an audience member made the following comment:

You mentioned that the Arizona law came about as a public, popular public response to federal inadequacies, and we can argue about whether the federal government has been doing their job or not. **But something that caught my attention was that idea that we should rely, we should shape public policy based on the majority, or majority opinion, and in large measure an *uninformed majority***, because I'm willing to be that a lot of those people don't understand and are not well-informed on the intricacies of immigration reform. Now, some of the lowest points in our country's history have come based on these sorts of actions. Recall for example, there's many examples, but recall for one example Japanese detention camps after World War II.

Now, Cato's not responsible for every nitwit who attends their events. But this woman was more candid than any leftist I've seen (and I'll eat my hat if she wasn't a left-winger) that the people are simply unworthy to rule. That's certainly a plausible point of view; Franklin, after all, rightly observed that "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters." But if the Left thinks that we have, indeed, ceased to be a virtuous people (or never were), and our corruption and vice necessitate undemocratic rule by, say, well-informed judges and bureaucrats (and confiscation of guns, which can really only be justified on these grounds), then I wish they'd be honest and just admit it, like this woman did.

I'm afraid those are the poles of the immigration debate — the post-American right and the post-democratic left. But I'm happy to be stuck [in the middle](#) with [the American people](#).

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