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"I LIKE YOU, TOO"

SWITCHING from one TV channel to another, I stopped momentarily to audition a debate between a noted socialist and a self-styled conservative. What a confrontation! And to what purpose? It was obvious that neither party moved the other his way. Each came to listen only to himself, and went away more firmly convinced than before. To the viewing audience, this had the value of a prize fight: entertainment. No enlightenment could possibly result from such a hassle, for each contestant rated verbal victory ahead of truth.¹ Each aimed to outwit the other and thus gain applause or perhaps a following.

But let's not judge such wrangling too harshly; most of us are addicted ourselves, and daily indulge in the same thing small-scale. That is, we lock horns with our ideological opposites, and with no more shedding of light than from the TV performance.

This poses the question: What then? Will not freedom suffer if we drop our combative postures? My answer, having been learned the hard way, has changed from an insistent "Yes!" to an emphatic "No!" What follows is the case for a better way.

Several of us were relaxing at luncheon during a FEE Seminar. A free market affirmation of mine, quite at odds with popular notions, evoked from a lady, "I *absolutely* disagree with you." My response, "I like you, too," brought a good-natured chuckle and ended the discussion on that subject for the time being.

¹ "It makes all the difference in the world whether we put Truth in the first place or in the second place." Archbishop Whateley (1787-1863)

At the Seminar's conclusion, the lady waved a smiling farewell, "I like you, too."

It isn't that "I like you, too" is necessarily an appropriate response to a mind that has suddenly closed; but it symbolizes a recommended attitude, that is, if the purpose of discussion is mutual enlightenment. Upgrading understanding has no greater deterrent than two overly-serious, humorless, closed minds squared off against each other in verbal combat. Nothing but ill-feeling can result from such behavior. To open the door, educationally, one of the two must break the combative spell.

THOUGH it affronts my instincts, *I am done with argument!* Contentiousness and confrontations demote rather than promote the libertarian ideal. Leave verbal combativeness to those who naively expect that repulsion will somehow induce attraction, that intolerance of another will draw him to you, that displaying a closed mind will inspire others to explore it, that know-it-all-ness will invite others to partake of the know-it-all's "knowledge." Might as well expect darkness to give light.

Indeed, I have resolved not to enter upon ideological and philosophical matters with anyone unless that other is seeking light from me or I from him. Such remarks as "I *absolutely* disagree with you," and other variations of intellectual absolutism, can hardly be construed as quests for light. Thus, so far as I am concerned, no talk!

A logical corollary of this posture requires of me that I never think ill of another for avoid-