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Free Your Laundry from Government Mandated Filth

by Jeffrey Tucker

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Guide 1.0

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Consider this situation in its worst possible incarnation, which happens to be the situation in the average home. Your washing machine is using fungus-breeding temperatures that do not kill any diseases that happen to be in your clothes. The bacteria and fungi look forward to a good washing so that they can breed even more. You have soap that scrubs but stays, locking in dirt and oil and attracting even more. You use very little water so that the clothing is sloshing around in its own tepid filth for an hour before being vaguely spun out but leaving all existing muck because there was no rinsing agent in the detergent. At best, you end

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up with clothing as internally dirty as before - even worse, because it has enjoyed a tepid water bath. At worst, your clothing is a source of ghastly infections and filth despite your every effort. But there is a way out.

Almost all the clothing we wear today is filthy dirty as compared with decades past. Most everyone struggles with this problem, and we have an intuitive sense that this is true. Something nags at us, nearly daily, that there is something wrong. Why do our tee shirts get so stained? Why are our sheets not quite crisp and spotless? Why do our napkins feel just a bit oily?

People of a certain age recall laundry that was clean and fresh every time, without crazy additives, bleaches, or expense; moreover, they stayed clean longer. Today, clothing is never as clean as when it was new, and we have to change all clothing every day without fail. We look at the piles of laundry and note just how absurdly dirty and stinky it all is, even without having done anything particularly vigorous.

Maybe it is the detergent that needs some supplement - many shoppers obviously think so. Look at the stunning array of

things available at the grocery store: there are spot cleaners, boosters, bleachers, power gels, sprays, soaking agents, scrubs, and a hundred other things of that nature that didn't exist 25 years ago. Does this represent some kind of innovation? Nope. In the old days, you only needed detergent and you were done. Now we have a cabinet full of products, spend vastly more, wash more… but the clothes are dirtier than ever.

You have probably heard the claim that if your clothes are dirty, you are probably using too much detergent. That's a bit of a startling and counterintuitive idea, don't you think? You have been adding more, thinking that this would help, but you are only making it worse. So you add less than before, then less, and less; but that doesn't really work either. Besides, how does it even make sense that if you add less of the thing that is supposed to be cleaning you would get things more clean? Maybe it's true, but it is surely puzzling.

The Banning of Phosphates

Actually, all of these problems are easily explained by one big factor and two smaller ones that I will address later. The big reason: beginning in the late 1970s and constantly growing since, the United States government has mandated the elimination of phosphates from laundry detergent. That's why, if you came of age at some point before that, you perhaps have a memory of what clean clothes were like. The cottons were crunchy. The wools were dry, and smelled right. The synthetics were all bright. Everything smelled, looked, and stayed clean.

By 1980, everything had changed. It suddenly became impossible to clean things. That was when bleach became the common additive in detergent and fabric softener. We began to dump bleach all over our clothes – this stuff we had previously used to clean shower floors and for killing fungus on wood fences. This mean and aggressive chemical was being poured all in our laundry -- eating our clothes, destroying the threads, causing them to rip and die and requiring us to replace them year after year. Bleach is absolutely horrible for all clothing: it is, and will always be, a corrosive agent. It's clothing death. Using bleach on cottons indiscriminately is like scratching your car paint with a key or walking on hardwood with golf cleats. It is a destructive act, completely counterintuitive to the purpose we use it for.

So what is phosphate and why does it matter? Phosphate is the essential ingredient in any soap. It is not a cleaning agent itself, it is a rinsing agent. It is the thing that grabs the soap and says "let's blow this joint." It has the effect of separating soap from physical objects and letting the soap float off. It does not cause the soap to clean more; it releases the soap, and the dirt, and the oil, and (now) the bleach from the thing they were used to clean.

All soap makers since the invention of soap have known about phosphates, an entirely natural element. It is not difficult to obtain phosphate, and it can even be made. You can still find soap makers today – if they are producing at home – who add the stuff to soap. But for actual commercially available soaps they are not there, for they were banned from being added to the product.

The reason had to do with the environment because phosphates are not only essential in cleaning but also in fertilizer for farms. When phosphates got into rivers and caused high algae growth, government could have gone after large corporate farming and their tendency to pollute. But no, that would not have been politically expedient. Instead, they came after you and me and outright banned our ability to clean our clothing.

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There was no real announcement: "Attention citizens! From now on your clothes will be dirty." Neither government nor industry wanted this known. You can imagine the horror on the part of commercial soap makers, but what are they to do? Come out with a sticker "New and Worse" to put on their product? No. They didn't want consumers to know what happened. They tried to make the best of an awful situation by inventing all kinds of mostly useless additives and selling them.

It all happened rather quickly, but too slowly for people to fully figure it out (much less discern cause and effect). However, the bottom line was essential. One generation to the next went from clean clothes to dirty clothes. This is not insignificant, and the problems go beyond aesthetics (dirty clothes are dingy clothes) and economics (dirty clothes have to be replaced more often).

The real issue is a matter of what we might just call the story of civilization. Obtaining clothing and keeping it clean has been a major task of humanity for tens of thousands of years - we went from wearing skins only, to learning to cultivate crops and domestic animals for hair. We learned to mill and to sew and weave, and automating all these processes was essential to our economic advance at the industrial revolution. To clean them, we learned to boil them and make soap to get them right. We discovered presses for washing and ringing.

Then that great moment finally arrived to which all of history had been pointing. In the 1940s and 1950s, we got the washing machine and machine detergent along with it. Thus was half of humanity – women whose work this had been since time immemorial – suddenly freed from drudgery. An entire generation celebrated. Time was now free for other things. The clothes became clean on their own!!

The joy lasted only thirty years or so before the state decided that progress had gone too far and history had to be turned back. It wasn't just detergent; it was the machines and water too, and we'll get to that subject in a bit. But let us first deal with the incredibly easy solution that allows you to fight back.

Solution to Intractable Dirt

The solution is a product called Trisodium Phosphate. That only means that this phosphate has salt in it too. It is offered for sale in hardware stores like Lowes and Home Depot or it can be purchased online. There are two main brands available in powder form: Savoran and D.A.P.

The solution is a product called Trisodium Phosphate.

The stores carry this product for painters, so look for it in the paint section of the store. Painters use it for preparing services. They scrub the surface with many chemicals and soaps to clean it, but (like clothing), it is never enough just to clean something. You have to have a way to extract the cleaning agents and the dirt and grime that come with it. This is the whole point of TSP - it removes the cleaning agents to leave a clean surface.

Painters who fail to do this will be painting a dirty and oily surface. After a year, the paint will begin to look blotchy and dirty and begin to peel off the surface. The painter will get calls to redo the work or gain a bad reputation. Painting on a dirty surface is intolerable. This is why painters insist on TSP.

As for the rest of us, we are being denied our rights to clean clothes – a denial to which we acquiesce only out of ignorance of the right cause. We can buy TSP and add it ourselves. We should add about a quarter cup to every single load of laundry without exception. This way we can add more soap to make sure that everything gets truly clean.

One warning, however: do not buy artificial TSP substitute.

There are many of these on the market. They claim to be TSP, but when you look carefully, you will find that it is just TSP substitute. This is a fake and a fraud. It has nothing to do with TSP. It is an attempt to trick you into thinking you are buying what you need while buying something else completely.

If you run across a store that carries TSP, you might as well stock up. Actually, you might as well buy all that they have: whether that is 5, or 10, or 100 boxes. After all, you are going to need this product until the end of your days on this earth, and, for that matter, your children and grandchildren are going to need it too. What's more, it is not actually expensive. It runs about $10 per box, and a box will easily last a month or two (depending on how much laundry you do). This $10 can save you hundreds in other expenses: too much washing, clothing replacements, plus massively improving the way you look and smell.

A Tale of Two Shirts

Let me illustrate the problem and the solution by way of an experiment I had begun conducting for myself. Frustrated and fed up with my local laundry where I was paying $2 per shirt for washing and folding, I finally decided to wash them myself just to save money on laundry expenses.

What had not occurred to me yet, however, was really how much cleaner my clothes would be getting this way. When I washed with TSP at home, my shirts would come out white and crunchy and pretty. I would iron them and fold them and they were ready for wear.

I did this for a while until the time cost of doing this became too expensive. I started taking them to the laundry again. The difference in the cleanliness was a little bit apparent, but as much as one might expect. But then an interesting difference appeared: when I would wear a commercially laundered shirt, it was mostly dirty by the end of the day; the cuffs were gray on the edges, the collar looked soiled, and the general look was saggy and not sprite. I would have to throw the shirt in the dirty clothes hamper by the end of the day, without fail.

This was not true with the hand-laundered shirts using TSP at home. I would take one off after a day of wear and not see the slightest sign of dirt (of course I wear undershirts), and it was very easy to wear it a second day. Then I could even wear it a third day. Only by the fourth day did it start to look like the laundered shirt looked at the end of one day.

Why would this be so? I began to develop the following theory: the soap was not actually rinsing from the clothing, it was staying in there with the dirt that the soap washes. That produces two main effects: the dirt still in the fabric would rise to the surface, and the soap still in the fabric would attract dirt from the outside. This double-dirt attack would occur throughout the day until the shirt itself would become a gathering spot for grime, making it completely unwearable even by the evening.

The next stage was to confront the laundry. I explained what I had found and presented my theory. The owner did not dispute anything I said, he just said that he "is doing the best he can." I asked why he can't just use TSP, and he said that it is absolutely forbidden by federal law. I asked whether he could use some in mine and just do them separately. He said this was not possible. He referred further questions to the Laundry Institute.

There is no clean like TSP clean.

The next day I called the Laundry and Dry Cleaning Institute and got a scientist on the phone. As I explained what I had discovered, he confirmed it all on the condition that he not be named personally: "There is no clean like TSP clean." I said, "But don't you find it outrageous that the government is not letting you do your job?" He said, "Yes but this fight was long over," and that they are currently "fighting on an even larger front to retain the right to use chemicals in dry cleaning that the government is trying to ban."

Returning back to my own shirts, I decided on a compromise that seemed to make sense to me. I would wash my own shirts in TSP but not undertake the time-consuming process of ironing them and starching them. I would simply wash them and take them to the laundry for folding and ironing. It would still cost $2 per shirt but at least I could buy some time.

When I presented my pre-cleaned shirts, the owner said, "That's fine, but in order to get them properly starched and ironed, they had to be put through the whole process, so they would be washed again." That did not immediately set off alarm bells. Nothing wrong with that, I thought.

I was wrong. I began to notice the same problem of a shirt that became dirtier much faster than it might otherwise have. I puzzled about this for a while – after all, I had washed them myself – but then I realized the answer. When I took them in, they were being tossed in with

everyone else's clothing that had not been washed in TSP. So they were swishing around in everyone else's dirt and soap and coming out dirtier than when they went in!

This was when I realized that there could be no compromise. I had to do all my own laundry the right way. I would have to stand up to the division of labor and decline to use it. I would have to use my own time rather than pay someone else to specialize. Thanks to government intervention, I would have to become the specialist.

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This is a regrettable situation, but not as awful as actually wearing dirty clothes that wear out faster or paying hugely exorbitant costs of professional laundries who are not allowed to do their job properly.

The inescapable conclusion: you must do your own wash and you must use TSP in every load. Use it for whites, colors, woolens, and even delicates. TSP itself is not actually harsh when used in small quantities. You can try experiments in the sink with only one item. Put a colored sock in hot water with soap. Mixed it around. Then add a small bit of TSP in the water and stir it around.

You will immediately see the soap leave the article of clothing along with traces of oil and dirt. Lift out the sock and you will see all the soap drain out very quickly. This does not happen without TSP. The soap and the oil and dirt stay in the item. You can lift out a soapy, dirty thing and see that this is an intolerable situation. But this is precisely what has been going on for decades in the American home!

With this one change, then, you can forget all the bleach (thank goodness!), the sprays, the additives, the boosters, and everything else. Just throw them all away. What you are left with is one detergent and one quarter cup of TSP, and mercifully clean clothes.

How Much Water?

There is an additional problem that relates to the long-running campaign by the government to force us all to use less and less water: the washing machines themselves have been degraded over the course of the same period of time, roughly from the 1980s to the present. Each successive round of regulations forces ever smaller containers for clothing and requires ever more absurdly low water-use levels.

This tendency has culminated in the so-called side loading washing machine, which attempts to use not much more than a gallon of water to wash an entire load, So you can just imagine this situation. There's no phosphate in the detergent, there's very little water even to rinse what is there, and the result is inevitably a slushy, muddy, sticky, soaped-up mess that we are supposed to call clean. You might as well throw your clothes in a swamp and pull them out.

There are a number of workarounds that will work for now until the government makes them illegal. The water settings on the washing machine are typically labeled something like "normal," "large," "extra-large," or "maximum." When you are putting in your laundry, you might think "well, this is not all that much really," so you dial in to "normal." In actual fact, all that these settings indicate is how much water is being used. As it turns out, washing clothes actually takes a tremendous amount of water.

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For a normal load, you should be using the maximum setting. This is not wasting water. No matter how high the setting, it will still be less than you would use in a typical bath or shower. Surely the cleanliness of your clothes makes that much worth it!

Whatever Happened to Hot Water?

Another factor concerns the temperature of water. Many items ask for cold water because they are delicate, and that's fine. But remember this: in the end, unless your water is hot - by which I mean 130 degrees Fahrenheit - you are not really killing old bacteria.
I like to think of it this way: when I make bread, I heat the sugar water for the yeast to 110

degrees. That's what inspires the yeast to grow. If you heat the water to 120, you risk killing the yeast, and it will certainly die at 125 or 130.

Now consider the default setting on most hot-water heaters that are shipped today. They will be set at 110 degrees. This is typically below the government mandate just because manufacturers are also trying to avoid liability issues. There is just no possible way that whites, or darks, or socks, or napkins, or sheets, or tablecloths, or anything else is going to get clean at this level. This is tepid water. This is disease-generating water. This is fungus-loving water. This is the stuff of which whole epidemics have been made in the past.

So please consider this situation in its worst possible incarnation, which happens to be the situation in the average home. You are using fungus-breeding temperatures that do not kill any diseases on your clothes. Moreover, the bacteria and fungi look forward to a good washing so that they can breed even more. You have soap that scrubs but stays, locking in dirt and oil and attracting even more. You use very little water so that the clothing is sloshing around in its own tepid filth for an hour before being vaguely spun out, but leaving all existing muck because there was no rinsing agent in the detergent. At best, you end up with clothing as internally dirty as before and maybe even worse because it has enjoyed a tepid water bath. At worst, your clothing is a source of ghastly infections and filth despite your every effort.

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However, there is a solution:

- Always use the highest water level on your washing machine.
- Always use TSP no matter what and never wash without it.
- Always turn up your hot-water heat to at least 130 degrees.

More Hacks for Clothes

There are sometimes situations in which these hacks can't happen. Perhaps your hot water heater is unhackable. Perhaps you are stuck with a front-loading washing machine. Perhaps TSP is

banned in your community and you can't take the risk.

Under these conditions there is really only one solution: you need the largest stock pot you can find -- Huge -- put some soap and water in it, and set it to boil; then, put your clothing into the pot one item at a time, pull it out, and hang it up to dry. This is the age-old method of hand washing, and is guaranteed to work. It recalls the way clothes were washed in the 19th century and before - and it still works.

You might say, "Oh Jeffrey, that's absurd. I don't need to go that far." Fine, but consider one of the greatest and most practical laundry problem of all: dirty socks. These are often the source of stinky feet; the stink is transferred from the foot to the sock, which never gets clean (no matter how much you wash it), and then gets transferred to the shoe, which in turn re-soils the sock, which gets the foot stinky again.

This endless cycle goes on and on and there seems to be no escape. And let's just face the truth here: stinky feet can absolutely ruin your life. They destroy dinner parties, bedroom romance scenes, board meetings, and can make you a pariah at the gym. A person with stinky feet is a wreck and is stopped in more ways than he or she wants to admit.

Stinky feet can absolutely ruin your life.

Here again, the government is the cause due to its regulations on water use, water temperature, and detergents. But are you going to let the government defeat you? You don't have to. Follow the prescription above, while taking care to wash your feet well, and all will be well. If you can't follow the above for whatever reason, you can always break the cycle of stink simply by boiling your socks one by one.

You can even use your own washing machine to do this. Boil several large pots of water and add them to the machine along with soap and TSP. Bypass the washing stage and go directly to the agitation and spin cycles and drain. This sounds time consuming, and to some extent it is, but it all depends on whether you really want super clean clothes free of stink.
Boiling water is death to stink. Death to bacteria and fungus. Death to professional and romantic embarrassment.

I would encourage anyone who has doubts about any claim herein to try a test. Try any of the

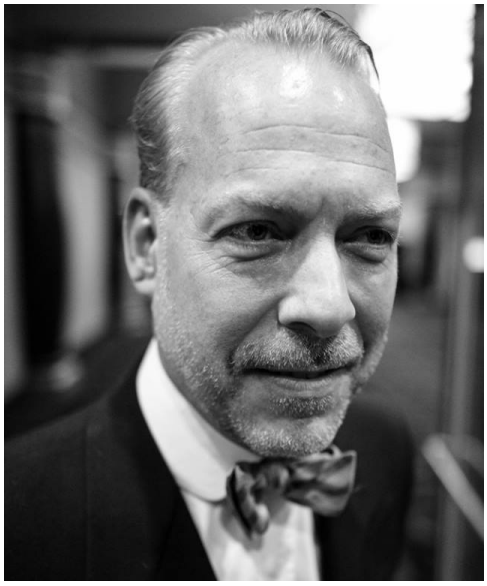
tricks in here and compare the results. You will find that it all checks out. If you do all of this correctly, you will be the one person in ten thousand with truly clean clothes; you will wash less and replace your clothes less; you could save thousands of dollars, stay healthy, and have a vastly better life – all free from the government imposed tyranny of filth that it has forced upon us.

Dishwashers: Out, Out Damn Spots

Roughly the same situation afflicts our dishwasher, though the phosphates in those detergents were forced out much later in history, sometime within the last ten years. The same is true for water usage too. They use less and less. The solution is similar too: you need to use about two tablespoons of TSP in each dish load, and never use anything but the highest setting with the hottest possible water.

One Final Note

Everything above applies also to carpets. Phosphates were once used to clean them as well, but no more. This is why you can pay thousands for professional carpet cleaners and your carpets can look dirty again in a week. Two options: 1) ask your professionals to use TSP, or 2) do the carpets yourself and make your own detergent mixture. Otherwise, they will not get clean. Prepare for a shock when you first look at the color of the water you extract from your filthy carpets.



Jeffrey Tucker

Founder
Liberty.me

Executive Editor
Laissez Faire Books

Author
A Beautiful Anarchy
Bourbon for Breakfast
It's a Jetson's World