

I Must Speak Out
Volume II

I Must Speak Out Volume II

**The Best of THE VOLUNTARYIST
2000 - 2020**

**Selected by Carl Watner
Edited by Carl Watner and Dave Scotese**

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VERITAS NUMQUAM PERIT.

Truth never dies.

Dedicated to:

Those Many
Unknown Voluntaryists
Who Constitute the Remnant

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Part I: Overview

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Statement of Purpose: The Voluntaryists are advocates of non-political strategies to achieve a free society. We reject electoral politics, in theory and in practice, as incompatible with libertarian principles. Governments must cloak their actions in an aura of moral legitimacy in order to sustain their power, and political methods invariably strengthen that legitimacy. Voluntaryists seek instead to delegitimize the State through education, and we advocate withdrawal of the cooperation and tacit consent on which State power ultimately depends.

The Voluntarist Spirit

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 124, 1st Quarter 2005)

[Author's Introduction of February 2004: This hitherto unpublished essay was first written in June 1983, and then revised in August of that same year. It sat for two decades (receiving only limited private circulation) until it was read by Peter Ragnar of Avalon Mint and Roaring Lion Press. At Peter's request it was re-edited with a view to posting on the world wide web. The author wishes to thank Alan Koontz (editing of 1983) and Julie Watner (editing of 2004) for their timely assistance in commenting on this essay.]

Voluntaryism is a dual doctrine, having both a positive and a negative side. As a brand of anarchism, it is the doctrine that all coercive government (what most people would refer to as "the State") should be voluntarily abandoned; that all invasions of individual self-ownership rights should cease. This is its negative side. Its positive side is that all the affairs of people should be conducted on a voluntary basis. It does not argue for the specific form that voluntary arrangements will take; only that the sovereignty of the individual must remain intact, except where the individual coerced has already aggressed upon the sovereignty of another non-aggressive individual.

To voluntarists, this dual doctrine represents a means, an end, and an insight. The end, predicated upon a theory of self-ownership and just property titles, is a peaceful anarchy, an all voluntary society. All the affairs of people, both public and private, should be carried out by individuals or their voluntary associations. The means to reach such an end state must be consistent with the goal sought. As shall be demonstrated, it is in fact the means that determine the end. So only voluntary methods of persuasion, education, and nonviolent resistance to State criminality may be used to bring about voluntarist goals. People cannot be coerced into freedom. Finally, voluntaryism is a realization about the nature of political society, viz., that all States are grounded upon general popular acceptance and require the cooperation of their victims.

These three aspects of voluntaryism mutually reinforce each other. The very goal of an all-voluntary society suggests its own means. The attempt to use governmental or political processes to reform or abolish the evils of coercion is not a voluntarist means because it rests on coercion. The distinguishing marks of voluntaryism - that it is at once both nonviolent and non-electoral in its efforts to convince people to voluntarily abandon the State - set it apart from all other methods of social change. The voluntarist insight into the nature of political power does not permit people to violently overthrow their government or even use the electoral process to change it,

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but rather points out that if they shall withdraw their cooperation from the system, it will no longer be able to function or enforce its will.

The voluntaryist spirit is thus an attitude of mind or a sense of life, if you will, which animates those engaged in the struggle for the recognition of self-ownership rights and the demise of the State. It is the passionate, disinterested love of justice for its own sake, regardless of the consequences which the struggle brings to one personally. It is a knowledge that if one takes care of the means that the end will take care of itself. It is an understanding that the morality and principles of voluntary interaction with other self-owners is the only practical manner of living life upon this earth. It is an epistemological rejection of violence, a knowledge that coercion can never rationally convince. Come what will, wherever the chips may fall, voluntaryism seeks the perfect way but it differs from other philosophies of life in seeking it with utter disinterestedness. Right means are an end in themselves, their own reward.

There is a great deal of affinity between what has been called “the aristocratic spirit” and the voluntaryist spirit. Writing in the March 1920 issue of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, Hanford Henderson defined the former “as the love of excellence for its own sake, or even more simply as the disinterested passionate love of excellence. The aristocrat, to deserve the name, must love excellence everywhere and in everything.” Continuing on, Henderson wrote:

He must love it in himself, in his own beautiful body, in his own alert mind, in his own illuminated spirit and he must love it in others; must love it in all human relations and occupations and activities, in all things in earth or sea or sky. And this love must be so passionate that he strives in all things to attain excellence, and so tireless that in the end he arrives. But not even the hope of Heaven may lure him. He must love and work disinterestedly, without the least thought of reward, enamored only of the transcendent beauty of excellence, and quite unregardful of himself.

Both the aristocratic spirit and the voluntaryist spirit demand the highest effort of the individual. It is a contradiction to say that aristocracy or voluntaryism asks for privilege, which can only be upheld by violence. Coercive grants of power are contrary both to the doctrine of perfection and voluntary means. What the aristocrat and the voluntaryist want is that people come to share their attitudes toward life. Neither “may accept nothing which others may not have upon precisely the same terms, and the terms are unremitting, passionate effort. ... It is neither a matter of birth, or occupation, or education. It is an attitude of mind carried into daily action. ...”

Terence MacSwiney, an early 20th Century Hibernian patriot, referred to the voluntaryist spirit as “a moral force,” “that great virtue of mind and heart that keeps a man unconquerable above every power of brute strength.” “A man of moral force is he who, seeing a thing to be right and essential and claiming his allegiance, stands for

it as for the truth unheeding of any consequence. It is not that he is a wild person, utterly reckless of all mad possibilities... and indifferent to any havoc that may ensue. No, but it is a first principle of his, that a true thing is a good thing, and from a good thing rightly pursued can follow no bad consequence. And he faces every possible development with conscience at rest - it may be with trepidation for his own courage in some great ordeal, but for the nobility of the cause and the beauty of the result that must ensue, always with serene faith."

Although neither Henderson nor MacSwiney would have considered themselves anarchists, they did realize that this mind cast made for a *laissez-faire* attitude, particularly in such fields of endeavor as education and industry. The aristocratic spirit seeks excellence in variety and resists the tendencies towards enforced uniformity in all areas of life. It looks for a multiform and varied excellence. "The aristocratic world is not one of dead levels, but a world of varied interests and constant promise and unfaltering progress. It is, in a word, the world of evolution." In fact, it is only in a voluntarist setting that the aristocratic spirit can truly operate. The attempt to coerce must inevitably vitiate such a spirit. For as Henderson concludes, the teaching that the end justifies the means is not at all in harmony with the aristocratic spirit. "The whole event must be excellent, the means as well as the end. ... It is only in the disinterested quest of excellence that anything notable can be accomplished. ... Disinterestedness is the essential condition of success."

MacSwiney, too, understood the importance of means and ends in the Irish struggle against England. "A fight that is not clean-handed will make victory more disgraceful than any defeat." He maintained that Ireland could not win her independence by "base methods" and that no physical victory could compensate for a spiritual defeat. He also noted that every sphere of a man's life is interconnected with the rest. Therefore he claimed that the secret of strength was the development of individual character in every activity of life. In an interesting comment on means and ends, he noted that "the middle of the day has a natural connection with the beginning of the day and the end of the day, and in whatever sphere a man finds himself, his acts must be in relation to and consistent with every other sphere. ... One cannot be an honest man in one sphere and a rascal in another. ... Everything that crosses a man's path in his day's round of little or great moment requires of him an attitude towards it, and the conscious or unconscious shaping of his attitude is determining how he will proceed in other spheres not in view."

Voluntarism relies heavily on the means-end insight to justify its own position. Indeed, without any formal guidelines as to the shape that an all-voluntary society will take, voluntarism necessarily concentrates exclusively on the means. Voluntarism is means-oriented, not goal-oriented because all it objects to is the initiation of coercion against the non-invasive person. So long as the means are peaceful, respectful of self-ownership and property titles, the ends cannot be criticized from the voluntarist perspective. This is not to imply that the only standard of judging human behavior is whether or not it is voluntary. Certainly some behavior

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may be irrational, vicious, immoral, religious, irreligious, (etc., etc.) but the first question the voluntarist asks is: "Is it truly voluntary?" The voluntarist spirit attacks the State on precisely this basis: although certain government goods or services may be essential, it is not essential that they be provided by government. Whether we object to what governments do (i. e., the provision of whatever product or public service, whether it be public schools, the post office, etc.) is beside the point. Voluntarists oppose the State because it relies on force for its very existence. We oppose the State because of its means, regardless of its ends.

The means orientation of voluntarism is not unlike the concept of disinterested attachment associated with the aristocratic spirit. Similarly, it relates to the Hindu doctrine of nonattached action which relies on the paradox "that one cannot travel on the path unless one has become the path itself." Indeed, although one must have an ultimate goal and destination in life, one's attachment to it eventually becomes irrelevant and disappears. One's concern must be with the next step rather than the summit. Only in such a fashion can the exhilaration of the climb become an end in itself rendering unimportant the attainment of the peak. That is why the means to the goal become more important than the goal itself and why the means then become the test of progress. "To travel on the proper path" is more important than arriving at one's destination. Thus full effort becomes the measure of victory rather than the attainment of one's goal. The effort is within our power and control; the end is not.

The means-end insight encompasses many important points, the least of which is the commonplace observation that the means one uses must be consistent with the goal one seeks. It is impossible in the nature of things to wage a war for peace or to fight politics by becoming political. Gandhi, who might be considered one of the true aristocrats of all times, understood that "there is a great mystery concealed in the fact that the means are more important than the ends." As he wrote:

They say means are after all means. I would say means are after all everything. As the means, so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and ends. We have limited control over means and some over the ends. Realization of the goal is always in exact proportion to that of the means. ... Our progress towards the goal is always in exact proportion to the purity of the means. This method may appear to be long, perhaps too long, but I am convinced, it is the shortest.

Since the means are the only things we have to work with, they are at least as important as the actual ends we seek. Means, to be means, must be within our reach. As John Dewey explained it, "the end is merely a series of events viewed at a remote stage and a means is merely the series viewed at an earlier one." Means must be viewed as intermediate steps but because of this the one closest to us must be considered the most important. The most important means is the next one, the next step in the series of intermediate actions we take to finally arrive at our destination. If

we take a false route, even though we know where we wish to go, we will never get there. To finish our journey we must not only begin it but we must begin it in the proper direction and this means attention to the means. "To reach an end we must take our minds off from it, and attend to the act which is next to be performed."

The idea that the ends can justify the means actually has the process in reverse order. Since the ends pre-exist in the means (like begets like, we shall reap as we have sowed), no end can ever justify a means. What actually happens is that the means not only justify what they accomplish, but they guarantee it. "What today is, makes tomorrow what it shall be." As Gandhi and many others have said: "take care of the means you employ and the end will take care of itself." The Rom (the gypsies) have a saying that "the road leading to a goal does not separate you from the destination; it is essentially a part of it" and this readily explains why impure means must result in an impure end.

Different means must inevitably bring about different ends for the simple reason that they lead one down different paths. For the voluntaryist concern with an all-voluntary society, this necessitates both eschewing the electoral process as well as revolutionary violence. Neither of these routes can even approximate voluntaryist goals because they depart from the voluntaryist spirit. The existence of a voluntaryist society depends on a change in attitude, an improvement in the moral tone of the people who comprise it. Therefore our means must be voluntary, for moral ends can only be attained by moral means. Our means must be as pure as our ends.

Emma Goldman, in her analysis of the Russian Revolution, written in the early 1920's, realized that "today is the parent of tomorrow." The means used to prepare for the future becomes its cornerstone and therefore she held that the means used to bring about social change must always harmonize with its purpose:

There is no greater fallacy than the belief that aims and purposes are one thing, while methods and tactics are another. This conception is a potent menace to social regeneration. All human experience teaches that methods and means cannot be separated from the ultimate aim. The means employed become, through individual habit, and social practice, part and parcel of the final purpose; they influence it, modify it, and presently the aims and means become identical. ... The whole history of man is continuous proof of the maxim that to divest one's methods of ethical concepts means to sink into the depths of utter demoralization.

The voluntaryist holds that "the only way to freedom is 'by' freedom." This path does not dictate what specific form the economic system of voluntaryism will take. Its only guidelines are that the resultant system be voluntary, which already implies a respect for self-ownership and just property titles. A regime of proprietary justice allows all economic systems to compete on a voluntary basis and there is no reason why voluntary cooperatives could not exist side by side with voluntary communes or

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voluntary capitalist companies. How people choose to conduct their voluntary affairs in the absence of the State is up to them.

In advocating an all voluntary society, voluntaryists place the burden of proof on those who wish to justify any form of the coercive State. The advocate of any form of invasive coercion - State or non-State - is in a logically precarious position. Coercion does not convince, nor is it any kind of argument at all. In fact, the initiation of invasive force is a confession of the failure of the invader's persuasive powers. As William Godwin said, "if he who employs coercion against me could mould me to his purposes by argument, no doubt he would. He pretends to punish me because his argument is strong, but he really punishes me because he is weak."

The epistemological bias against violence is an essential part of the voluntaryist spirit. Those in the position of initiating violence are in a morally and logically indefensible position. As Godwin added, "Force is an expedient, the use of which is much to be deplored. It is contrary to the nature of the intellect, which cannot but be improved by conviction and persuasion. It corrupts the man that employs it, and the man upon whom it is employed." Or as John Morley explained in his book, *ON COMPROMISE*, the burden of proof rests on the advocates of violence (or the State) because "liberty, or the absence of coercion, or the leaving of people to think, speak, and act as they please, is in itself a good thing. It is the object of a favorable presumption. The burden of proving it inexpedient always lies and wholly lies on those who wish to abridge it by coercion."

Voluntaryist arguments proceed against State coercion by criticizing the means, regardless of the ends. Health care or vaccination may be important, but if they are to be achieved by force (the means) they "ipso facto" become tainted. If those who advocate compulsory vaccination or State health care must rely on force to accomplish their goals, then there is something drastically wrong with their ends. Vaccination or health care is either good or bad. Its goodness removes the need for compulsion and its badness destroys the right to coerce those who oppose it. Coercion never convinces, never brings about a change of mind.

Similar arguments may be applied against the State itself. Either it is good or bad. Its goodness should avoid the need to apply invasive force (for it should be possible to persuade people of its goodness) and its badness already speaks for itself. If a government cannot rely wholly on voluntary support, then it deserves not to exist. Statists, in their anxiety to coerce others, already demonstrate their own lack of faith in the prescription they suggest.

On the other hand, the voluntaryist spirit is permeated with peaceful, nonviolent means. Voluntaryism is certainly not the cure all or end all of social evils, but to the extent that people can be persuaded to embrace the voluntary principle, it offers the best of all possible worlds. Voluntaryism is not to be compared with the model of perfection, it is only offered as the most satisfactory among competing theories.

Voluntaryists do not operate on the principle that everyone necessarily knows his or her own best interest, but only that everyone should have the right to pursue his or

her interests as they deem best. “What is being asserted is the right to act with one’s own person and property and not the necessary wisdom of such action.” So long as you “do your own thing” with your “own” person and property you in no way violate the spirit of voluntarism.

The claim that governments have a monopoly on knowledge is implicit in the arguments of statist. However, given the fact that every individual person is a unique human being, it is highly unlikely that any monopolistic government could engineer or plan a society better than the outcome of the workings of the voluntary principle. Governments have no exclusive monopoly on knowledge or any exclusive monopoly of the knowledge of facts which would enable them to run an economy. In fact, they would have no need to resort to the use of force if their services were voluntarily desired. The very fact they must initiate force to sustain themselves proves they are unwanted and undesired by at least some of the people within their purview.

The fact that the State coercively monopolizes the administration of justice (courts, police, and law code in a given geographic area) makes the State, and its employees, automatically suspect. If there are certain natural laws of justice, then there is no reason for government to become a coercive monopolist. Because the principles of justice are grounded in objective, natural laws, they fall within the province of human knowledge; by all who choose to study them and reason them out. Just as we do not require a government to dictate what is right or wrong in steel-making, so we do not require a government to dictate standards and procedures in the realm of justice. If it is possible to verify objectively that one legal procedure is valid, and another not, then it does not matter who employs the procedure in question. We should look to reason and fact; not to government. On the opposing hand, if there is no such thing as natural law and natural justice, then government could certainly not claim to administer a thing which did not exist. In such case there would be no need for government.

Austrian economics, bolstered by the arguments developed by Ludwig von Mises, has long argued that economic calculation under central government planning is impossible. Since profit and loss serve as the central guide for directing the flow of resources, the government of a centrally planned economy has no rational way of calculating because it has sabotaged or destroyed the market pricing system. This inability to make rational economic decisions saps the vitality of any economic system and is inherent in all forms of government intervention. Despite their seeming ability to “direct” and “fine-tune” the economy, government employees and politicians have no special means of obtaining knowledge, any different from those of others. No one has a monopoly of knowledge and no single group or person has a monopoly on the truth, honesty, or fair play. As we have seen of government itself, the very fact that a centrally planned economy needs to initiate force to sustain itself indicates that it is not the most efficient method of social and economic organization. As Murray Rothbard has asked, “if central planning is more efficient, why has it never voluntarily come about through the creation of one big firm?”

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Voluntaryists, seeing all forms of government as invasive *per se*, nonetheless realize that the State is just one form of coercive monopoly which sustains itself by the use of force, albeit legitimized in the eyes of many. An examination of how to attack coercive monopoly on the market should shed light on how to undermine State power. After all, the problem with government is exactly the same problem as with any other coercive monopoly. The voluntaryist insight points out that all businesses depend on the cooperation, support, and patronage of their customers. The ultimate weapon of both consumers and producers on the market is the option of expressing their indignation by not purchasing from or selling to, boycotting, ostracizing, and not cooperating with the would-be or actual monopolist. In fact, all market activity on the free market can be interpreted as a variety of nonviolent resistance against those with whom one does not wish to deal. An understanding of monopoly theory applies not only to private monopolies but to any situation where one group has acquired control over the means of production over a large area.

The voluntaryist spirit attacks government and coercive monopolies where it hurts them the most: it destroys whatever legitimacy they lay claim to and urges the withdrawal of the consent and cooperation on which all organizations depend. The “popular health movement” of the 1830s and 1840s in the United States illustrates this attitude at work in two distinct ways. First, it shows what incredible diversity can come about when a government does not attempt to monopolize knowledge and coerce people into accepting its authority. Second, it demonstrates the integral nature of freedom. As one medical historian has explained: “A people accustomed to govern themselves... want no protection but freedom of inquiry and freedom of action. It was the spirit of the times to throw all fields of business and professional endeavors open to unrestricted competition - why not medicine among the rest?... Hence medicine, with all other human activities, must take its chances in the grand competitive scramble characteristic of the age.” If Americans were entitled to religious freedom, why not medical freedom as well?

“The freedom to discover truth” is what competition is all about. It is only through voluntary exchanges that the truth of the market place can be discovered. “The subjectivity of human wants implies that only individuals participating in an exchange can be the legitimate judge of their own interests. Competition is a learning process” where self-ownership and property rights “provide an incentive to make individuals responsible for their mistakes and give them an incentive to learn.” It is only under voluntaryism that this learning process and self-responsibility are able to exist.

The voluntary principle insures that while we may have the possibility of choosing the worst, we also have the right to choose the best. “By attempting to compel virtue, we eliminate its possibility.” Thus we can see that “freedom is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the achievement of virtue.” Certainly the price of moral freedom is the responsibility of acting at one’s own peril and this always includes the possibility of failure. The voluntaryist spirit, however, asserts that

the real victory goes not to those who win the battle but rather to those that fought the best. As David Norton, the author of *PERSONAL DESTINIES*, has explained, “moral nobility is earned by the efforts of the individual. It comes about in no other way, it is available to all persons, and it is not a matter of birth but of individual effort.” He reminds us, “that if there is a chance for a good life, the risk of a bad one must also be accepted.”

The voluntaryist spirit, as we have seen, comprises several diverse areas of libertarian thought. It expresses the epistemological bias against violence by arguing that rational persuasion is the only means of judging success. In a very real sense, there are only two relations possible among men - that of logic and war. The person who does not accept physical might as the expression of truth, who rejects the doctrine that might makes right, demands logic instead of force. The person who always demands proof and who never assumes anything on faith alone therefore always remains implicitly a voluntaryist. Such a person refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of government because it “wields the most violence,” or because “no human society has ever existed without it,” or because “there would be chaos without government-provision of law and order.”

The resort to violence, in place of argument, is an implicit confession that one’s argument is weak and unconvincing. This explains why freedom is better than compulsion. To paraphrase the argument of a 19th Century English bishop, who preferred to see Englishmen free (and possibly drunk) rather than compulsorily sober, we say: With freedom, in the end we might attain our highest desires, but on the other hand, compulsion assures us that we would lose both freedom and our most highly cherished ends. A poor freedom is always better than a rich slavery.

Voluntaryism also emphasizes the importance of self-ownership and just property titles, which form the underlying basis for the very definition of voluntary relationships with others. In fact, we can have no concept of what it is to violate the rights of others, nor can we even make the distinction between invasive and non-invasive force without having an implicit concept of justice, or a code of principles, which defines what a man is due. In short, the very distinction between voluntaryism and coercion depends upon and presupposes a theory of justice in property titles and people, “The principle of self-ownership means we must treat all others with absolute respect for their self-ownership. You literally have no claim on the lives of others, nor they on you. You can only relate to them when, where, and how they want you to; otherwise you must let them be. You must treat them with respect for their self-ownership rights or not at all.”

Voluntaryists have a clear understanding of the nature of power (what they call “the voluntaryist insight”) - that all governments and human institutions depend on the consent and cooperation of its victims. A person who harbors the voluntaryist spirit understands that he or she cannot be compelled to do anything against his or her will. Such a person may suffer the consequences of holding to his or her belief, but as Corbett Bishop, a World War II conscientious objector who fasted for over 400 days

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in government prisons and hospitals, pointed out: Governments know that they can terrorize individuals into submitting to tyranny by grabbing the body as hostage and thus hoping to destroy the spirit (of conscience and resistance within the individual). But if one repudiates the body and will have nothing to do with it, the spirit remains free. This is the essence of total non-cooperation with one's oppressors. The voluntaryist spirit also reminds us of the stoics "who were different from others" in refusing to allow pain to disturb the equanimity of their minds and the exercise of their reason.

There is the story of a Stoic who was captured and told to renounce his beliefs. He refused and was tortured. Still unable to make him recant, his captors told him he would be put to death. He answered they could do whatever they wanted with his body but whatever they did could not injure his philosophy. That was in his mind and their authority, in its physical and moral aspect, did not extend [that far].

As the relator of this story continues, "Stoicism was unique in that its martyrs did not go to death believing their ideas would change the world." They went to death because their integrity was worth more to them than their existence. For life, if the courage to die be lacking, is slavery. The man who is afraid to die cannot possibly live up to his vision of the truth because he fears for both his person and property. Thus the only favorable course to those who uphold voluntaryism is "to remain loyal to one's own integrity. For man, as a moral agent, has an obligation to value truth for its own sake, not for any supposed benefits it might bring as a by-product."

The emphasis on the means-end insight in voluntaryism explains why voluntaryists deem it necessary to take action to achieve their goals. They know they cannot run away from weakness, that sometimes they must resist and disobey or else lose their own self-respect. The voluntaryist spirit is a passionate, disinterested quest for justice and truth. Since all times are proper for pursuing what is right, they realize that there is no time like the present; that the first chance is always the best. They are not bound by difficulties, but by justice. They must do what they think right and let the consequences take care of themselves. The love of truth is infectious. One's ideals and ideas must be professed everywhere; there is no escaping it and no middle way. If voluntaryism is worth anything, it is worth the effort to try to work towards it. The truth is something to be done, not just something to be believed. The true secret of freedom is the courage to resist. "No one ever remains free who acquiesces in what they know to be wrong." In the context of the voluntaryist critique of the State, disobedience to invasive laws is the greatest virtue.

It is said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, and the voluntaryist realizes that only by beginning the long-term efforts to delegitimize the State can any progress be made toward his or her goal. As futile as a single step may seem, it is only by taking that very first step that the journey towards voluntaryism

can be started. Those who are moved by the voluntaryist spirit realize that they must do everything humanly possible to move towards their goal. People may not feel they have done everything they can do until they have tried to do it.

It was Ludwig von Mises in his NOTES AND RECOLLECTIONS who argued that it is a matter of temperament how we shape our lives in the knowledge of inescapable catastrophe. In high school he had chosen a verse by Virgil as his motto: “*Tu ne cede malis sed contra audientur ito.*” (Do not yield to the bad, but always oppose it with courage.) In the darkest hours of World War I he recalled this dictum:

Again and again I faced situations from which rational deliberations could find no escape. But then something unexpected occurred that brought deliverance. I would not lose courage even now. I would do everything (I) could do. I would not tire in professing what I knew to be right. ... I regret only my willingness to compromise, not my intransigence.

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Voluntaryist Resistance

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 125, 2nd Quarter 2005)

[Author's Introduction of February 2004: This hitherto unpublished essay was first written in January 1983, and then revised in May of that same year. It sat for two decades (receiving only limited private circulation) until it was read by Peter Ragnar of Avalon Mint and Roaring Lion Press. At Peter's request it was re-edited with a view to posting on the world wide web. The author wishes to thank Alan Koontz (editing of 1983) and Julie Watner (editing of 2004) for their timely assistance in commenting on this essay]

Introduction

The Voluntaryists are advocates of non-political strategies to achieve a free society. We reject electoral politics, both in theory and practice, as incompatible with libertarian principles. Governments must cloak their actions in an aura of moral legitimacy in order to sustain their power, and political methods invariably strengthen that legitimacy. Voluntaryists seek instead to delegitimize the State through education, and we advocate withdrawal of the cooperation and tacit consent on which State power ultimately depends. Voluntaryists are exclusively committed to using nonviolent strategies to oppose the State. The purpose of this paper is to show why this commitment is a function of voluntaryism and how voluntaryist resistance differs from conventional nonviolence theory.

I. What Is Voluntaryism?

Voluntaryism is a dual doctrine: the beliefs that a) all human interactions should be voluntary; and b) that the State is an inherently coercive institution, and therefore undeserving of any support. The voluntaryist understanding of the relationship between means and ends precludes both the use of electoral politics and violence. This is the distinguishing mark of voluntaryists, that we are, at once, both nonviolent and nonelectoral.

Voluntaryism is at once an end, a means, and an insight. It signifies the goal of an all voluntary society, one in which all interaction between individuals is based on

voluntary exchange, and thus calls for the abolition of the State. Voluntaryism represents a way of achieving significant social change without resort to politics or violent revolution. Since voluntaryists recognize that government rests on mass acquiescence (the voluntaryist insight), they conclude that the only way to abolish government power is for the people at large to withdraw their cooperation. As a means, voluntaryism calls for peaceful persuasion, education, individual civil disobedience, and group nonviolent resistance to the State. Since voluntaryists see a direct connection between the means they use and the end they seek, they realize that only voluntary means can be used to attain the truly voluntary society. People cannot be coerced into being free. The very goal of an all voluntary society suggests its own means. The voluntaryist insight provides the only logical and consistent way of achieving liberty and abolishing the State.

II. The Voluntaryist Insight

The underlying premise of all voluntaryist thought is an insight into the way political society is organized. It has been expressed by many different thinkers over the course of several centuries. The voluntaryist insight is the understanding that every tyranny must necessarily be grounded upon general popular acceptance. In short, the bulk of the people themselves, for whatever reasons, must acquiesce in their own subjection. All oppression demands the cooperation and compliance of its victims. Oppression cannot operate without the sanction of its victims. This is the essence of all voluntaryist thinking and it is important to grasp this concept of “voluntary servitude” because it forms the foundation of many subsequent arguments. It is the basis for voluntaryist resistance since it demonstrates that governments depend on the consent (willing or unwilling) and cooperation of those they govern. If this consent and cooperation can be withdrawn, then State power must disintegrate.

Gene Sharp has succinctly stated the voluntaryist insight and the implication to be drawn from it:

No government can exist for a single moment without the cooperation of the people, willing or forced, and if the people withdraw their cooperation the government will come to a standstill. ... Even the most powerful government cannot rule without the cooperation of the ruled.[1] When people refuse their cooperation, withhold their help, persist in their disobedience and defiance, they are denying their opponent the basic human assistance and cooperation which any government or hierarchical system requires. If they do this in sufficient numbers and for long enough, that government or hierarchical system will no longer have power. This is the basic political assumption of nonviolent action.[2]

In effect then, voluntaryists are arguing that all power ultimately derives from consent, whether it be willingly given or based on reluctant compliance or that

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derived from strict enforcement of governmental law. This can be summed up by saying “that all rule is permitted by the ruled.”[3]

III. The Means-End Insight

The question of means and ends plays a very significant part in voluntaryist thinking. In conjunction with the voluntaryist insight it provides the justification of our nonviolent, nonelectoral approach to social change. It is nearly impossible to understand voluntaryist resistance without comprehending our vision of means and ends.

There are two important aspects of the means-end insight: the first dealing with the question of means and the second with the end. With regard to the means, it is a common observation that the means one uses must be consistent with the goal one seeks. It is impossible in the nature of things to wage a war for peace or to fight politics by becoming political. “There is a great mystery concealed in the fact that the means are more important than the ends.” Gandhi, perhaps the greatest exponent of nonviolent resistance, grasped this fact. He exemplified his position by stating: “If ones takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.”[4]

They say that means are after all means. I would say that means are after all everything. As the means, so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and ends. We have limited control over means, and some over the ends. Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exceptions. ... Our progress towards the goal is always in exact proportion to the purity of our means. This method may appear to be long, perhaps too long, but I am convinced it is the shortest.[5]

What Gandhi is saying to us is that we live in the here and now. The only way we can approach the future is through the present. So the means we adopt and use must inevitably influence the ends we eventually achieve. The only things we have to work with are in fact the means. So it is critically important that the means be kept pure if the ends are to be so.

This means-end insight sheds some very interesting light on the question of gradualism vs. immediatism. For one thing, it leads to the conclusion that one must take action now in order to eventually reach a stateless society. This implies that in fact there is no transition period, or what in fact amounts to the same thing, that every period is one of transition. The important thing for voluntaryists to do is to make a serious attempt to travel in the direction of a stateless society and not be concerned with its imminent arrival. This can only be done by people behaving now in a manner consistent with their ultimate ideal. The idea of an all voluntary society is as much of a guide to present activity as it is a future ideal. This is what is meant by saying that the means are the ends in process.

The second aspect of the means-end insight deals with the question of the end sought. All anarchists share a like goal: the abolition of the State. This goal is based on their commonly shared understanding that all government, by its very nature, is invasive. What distinguishes voluntaryists from all other anarchists is that voluntaryist goals do not stop with the elimination of government. We could still have a society full of violence, even though there was no government. Human beings require an orderly society. (One must question the assumption that governments provide such an environment.) However, political law and government coercion are not the only way to provide for a peaceable existence.[6] Voluntaryists want an all voluntary society, one in which interpersonal relationships are based on mutually agreeable and voluntary exchanges. This is the end of voluntaryism: a regime of peaceful relationships based on respect for self-ownership and proprietary justice. It is this peaceful end which leads us to embrace nonviolence as a means.

IV. The Nonviolent Insight

All libertarians and voluntaryists recognize the right of self-defense, which entails the right to preserve one's self and property with whatever force is reasonably necessary against actual violence or its threat. This right to use force against aggressors stems from our self-ownership rights in our own bodies and justly owned property. Violence, however, is just one form of resistance, which allows us to oppose, defeat, and attempt to frustrate those who violate our rights.

The nonviolent insight calls attention to the fact that we may resist both violently and nonviolently in self-defense. "Whether one uses violent or nonviolent resistance in self-defense depends on the nature of the aggressor."

Voluntaryists are not pacifists since they recognize the right of the individual to use violence in self-defense. Yet, they are often accused of offering a double standard because they advocate nonviolent resistance against the State, on the one hand, and allow for the use of violence against the common criminal. Isn't the State itself nothing but a common criminal, and therefore aren't those who have their rights violated by the State justified in reacting violently? Such critics misperceive the true nature of the State. The State can only be identified by its institutional features which render it invasive *per se*. This is what distinguishes State aggression from common criminality. "Violence may be directed at individuals, but when it comes to the State where is the violence to be directed?" Institutional arrangements can never be touched by violence because they are ideas carried in the minds of people practicing them. Public buildings may be destroyed, public officials murdered, but such efforts will never bring about the destruction of the idea of the State. The State is a state of mind, an idea which cannot be harmed by violence. Ideas can only be attacked with better ideas. Therefore, there is no double standard involved when voluntaryists urge the use of nonviolent resistance against the State. The individual criminal is a real person while the State is an idea, an institutional arrangement. One does not go about extirpating the State in the same way that one defends one's self from a common

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criminal.[7]

Some anarchists and libertarians argue that the use of force, as in the American Revolutionary War, is justified. Voluntaryists have no qualms about the use of force in self-defense, but since they see State control as essentially an issue of legitimacy, they ask: "How can the idea of legitimacy be attacked with force?" It is possible, although most present governments have armaments and military weapons far superior to those available to the insurgents, that we might rid ourselves of a particular government by resorting to violence. Yet, even if a small, powerful minority were successful in abolishing such a government by violence, how would this affect the larger majority of people who still believed in the legitimacy of the State? State legitimacy will only be destroyed when sufficient numbers of people come to view government actions in the same moral light as that of the individual. If this moral leveling is not brought about, if this delegitimization is not accomplished, then violent revolution must inevitably fail, even if it were successful in battle. The destruction of State legitimacy must precede the advent of violent revolution, and when that has occurred, violent revolution will be unnecessary. Under any other circumstances, violent revolution will only result in the replacement of one government for another.[8]

Voluntaryists also reject the use of electoral means as the course of changing society. Electoral politics only serves to reinforce State legitimacy. Political parties and their attempts to campaign for and hold State offices are all inconsistent with the final end of a nonpolitical society. Voting, running for office, or holding office are all counter-productive to the voluntaryist goal of delegitimizing the State. (Furthermore, there are profound questions of personal integrity involved in collecting a government salary or swearing an oath to a government constitution.) All such efforts to wield political power are an attempt to exercise power over other people. It is precisely for this reason that voluntaryists do not view electoral politics as a form of nonviolent action.

Nonviolent strategies serve to unite the means with the end because it is only by adherence to nonviolence in practice that we can show the State to be the invasive institution that it actually is. If voluntaryists use violence, then the issue of legitimacy becomes lost because the State can argue that it is defending itself from attack. However, if we take a totally nonviolent stance, the State is either forced to ignore us or to use violent means to throw us in jail or punish us. Either way voluntaryism wins. That is the beauty of nonviolent resistance. By relying on nonviolence, the general public is encouraged to see the State's actions as violent and aggressive. (This is something that many of them are unable to comprehend from our theoretical arguments, but when they see armed men attacking people who offer no violent resistance in return, there is no question about who is the aggressor and who are the innocents.) On the other hand, if the State tries to ignore our resistance, the public at large must inevitably be encouraged by our success and will eventually conclude that they, too, can ignore the State without any danger. Should the State try to counter voluntaryist resistance with nonviolent tactics of its own, so much the better. Danger

to the resisters will be minimized and the public still emboldened. Voluntaryists, by initiating nonviolent resistance, should always be able to counter with more sophisticated forms of nonviolence.

Voluntaryist Resistance

Voluntaryist resistance rests on an epistemological rejection of violence. William Godwin, the father of anarchism, stated this quite clearly. Consider, he said, the effect of coercion. It cannot convince, it is no argument. The resort to violence is the tacit confession of imbecility, for one who employs it against someone else would no doubt convince them of their arguments if they could. They use violence because their arguments are weak. In resorting to violence, one is unconsciously agreeing that violence is the surest way of settling conflicts. It certainly is not. Violence and the threat of violence can never solve any of our basic human problems. Nothing permanent was ever solved by violence. Voluntaryist resistance is essentially a persuasive process, which maintains an epistemological bias against violence.

Violent revolution can destroy old institutions before people are ready for new ones. Voluntaryist resistance, because it rests on nonviolence, cannot do this. People will only accept nonviolent resistance as they are ready for it. Voluntaryist resistance allows people to proceed at their own pace, allows resistance to mount as educational activities enlighten people as to their “voluntary servitude.” Voluntaryist resistance builds self-confidence and is a real tool of empowerment because people realize that they can shape the course of their lives and alter long-lived institutions.

Gene Sharp defines “nonviolent action” as those methods of protest, resistance, and intervention without physical violence, in which members of the nonviolent group do or refuse to do certain things. Voluntaryist resistance may simply be described as extending the implications of the voluntaryist insight into nonviolent action.

Voluntaryist resistance, like Gandhian Satyagraha, is essentially a matter of the will. Strength does not come from physical capacity, rather it comes from an indomitable will to resist. Such purposefulness can only come from an inner conviction that one’s position is just. Voluntaryist resistance is less a matter of repelling violence than of enlightening deceived subjects. It is inculcating a mental and moral opposition to tyranny in one’s self and others.

One might argue that voluntaryist resistance requires a greater degree of courage than the resort to violence. Voluntaryist resistance is a manifestation of both inner and outer strength. Gandhi expressed this well when he wrote:

Nonviolence does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil doer, but rather the pitting of one’s whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Nonviolence is not of the weak but of the strong.[9]

The goal of voluntaryist resistance is to abolish the political power structure and

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its success or failure in obtaining that objective rests squarely on the degree to which its strategy succeeds in delegitimizing the State, and in inducing people to withdraw their support from the government. Its major strategies rest on education (which heightens public awareness of the evils of the State) and in persuading large numbers of persons to refuse to cooperate with the government. The particular tactics of voluntaryist resistance seek to create situations that crystallize public opinion - that “involve” it - and which “direct” it against the government. Voluntaryists must structure the conflict situation with the government in such a manner that the government becomes responsible for the resulting actions. Mass non-cooperation and widespread civil disobedience present a “resist or abdicate” dilemma to the government. In resisting voluntaryist demands, the government becomes responsible for its own repressive acts. In abdicating, the government not only loses face but political power.

Thus, the one key ingredient of voluntaryist resistance is the adherence to a strict policy of nonviolence, even in the face of the utmost government brutality. Governments will want to provoke nonviolent resisters to violence in order to justify their own severe repression. However, if the resisters remain true to their nonviolence, the government is faced with another dilemma, that of explaining its own violence and coercion. “This explains the tendency of all government when faced with nonviolent resistance to emphasize any violent fringes that may emerge.” Only by holding fast to nonviolence can public opinion, be brought around to the side of the voluntaryist. Voluntaryist strategy remains the same regardless of the totalitarian nature of the government it faces because it is based on fundamental insights into the nature of political power. Voluntaryist resistance seeks to rob the State of the public support and cooperation on which its power ultimately depends. It aims at attracting the sympathy and support of those third parties who tacitly support the State. It does not depend on converting members of the ruling class or the bureaucracy, nor is it dependent on the particular form or structure of political power. “The only aid a democratic framework provides, vs. a totalitarian, is to make the process easier, or at least safer for the resister.”[10]

Public opinion, particularly among libertarians, must be cultivated so that many people come to understand their own potential for undermining State power. “Even a power that a particular moment in time may seem invincible” should be viewed as vulnerable.[11] The creation of this realization must spread among large numbers of people, who in turn, engage in collective actions based on voluntaryist strategies. This in turn requires careful organization, training, and adherence to the discipline of nonviolence. Voluntaryists are dedicated to developing the educational programs, and inculcating the will and solidarity necessary for mass corporate resistance.

Group resistance overcomes the weakness of the individual when confronted by the State. Both the quality and quantity of the resisters is important. Numbers are important because it lessens the chance that any one person will be punished or singled out when they act in concert with a large group of people. Secondly, the more

resisters, the fewer available to enforce the ruler's will. Thirdly, large numbers of resisters lends credibility to one's position because it demonstrates potential power and indicates the fact that many people see the rightness of the resisters' position. There are numerous ways that corporate resistance can be focused in order to confront the State at its weakest points, but one must understand that even large numbers of resisters are no guarantee of success. Numbers are no substitute for dedication and loyalty to means and ends. Voluntaryist resistance involves danger for both the individual resister and the group because it involves tension and creative conflict. The chance always remains that one may die for one's cause. As Martin Luther King put it, "One must be prepared to die, before one can begin to live." [12]

Systemic Revolution and the Lessons of History

Voluntaryism is essentially a subversive philosophy because it recognizes that the enemy is not a few men and women in political office, but rather the whole political system. Voluntaryists realize that systemic revolution grows out of the disintegration of consent and not violence. Voluntaryist resistance serves to veto the actions of those in political power by engineering the withdrawal of support. Voluntaryists eschew the seizure of power because of the pregnant possibility of corruption, but nevertheless they do effect fundamental change. Voluntaryism is revolutionary in the sense that it brings about radical change, but it is non-revolutionary in the sense that it does not exercise power.

Voluntaryist resistance is essentially a control over power rather than a form of power; "a technique that is limited to limiting and destroying power;" not a new group of people coming into power.[13] If the State can be used to remove our fetters, then it can be used to replace them. Voluntaryist resistance is much less likely to bring about tyranny and oppression in its wake because voluntaryists do not seek power in order to reform it. They renounce power in order to abolish it and thereby attempt to harmonize the means with the end.

While past history cannot tell us for sure whether a voluntaryist movement will be successful, we do have the benefit of learning from history. It is possible that a new State may arise in the wake of a nonviolent revolution, but if history teaches us anything, it is that every revolution effected by force sooner or later ends up re-establishing the tyranny it undertook to overthrow. Every ideology that has sought to master the State through violence has in the end become its servant. Violent revolutions invariably end up increasing centralization and statism. Under any circumstances voluntaryist resistance could hardly fare worse.

From a voluntaryist perspective, a government only has the power to inflict that which we lack the strength to resist. The many centuries of experience with nonviolent resistance by the Quakers prove that even a small, but serious, group of nonviolent resisters can have an impact on their society far out of proportion to their numerical strength. The quality of their resistance and their ability to willfully oppose the system are what count.

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The question at hand is not whether our efforts actually achieve a voluntaryist society in our lifetimes, but rather how we go about trying to achieve that noble goal. Voluntaryist success must be judged by how well one adheres to the means. “If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.” In the long run, from the point of view of the individual voluntaryist, the success or failure of the movement cannot be the most important consideration. As Gandhi said, the seeker after truth must be prepared to renounce the fruit of his actions. He also added that non-cooperation with evil is a duty. Thus he argued for the performance of duty irrespective of the consequences.

How many of the Russian dissidents thought they would have any effect whatsoever on the communist system? But did that deter them from acting? As Vladimir Bukovsky, one of the dissidents, so eloquently wrote:

We had grasped the great truth that it was not rifles, not tanks, and not atom bombs that created power, nor upon them that power rested. Power depended upon public obedience, upon a willingness to submit. Therefore each individual who refused to submit to force reduced that force by one 250 millionth of its sum. ...

We weren't playing politics, we didn't compose programs for the liberation of the people, we didn't found unions. ... Our sole weapon was publicity. Not propaganda but publicity, so that no one could say afterward, “I didn't know.” The rest depended on each individual's conscience. Neither did we expect victory — there wasn't the slightest hope of achieving it. But each of us craved the right to say to our descendants: “I did all that I could. I never went against my conscience.”[14]

Endnotes

[1] Mahatma Gandhi cited by Gene Sharp, *GANDHI AS A POLITICAL STRATEGIST WITH ESSAYS ON ETHICS AND POLITICS*, (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1979), pp. 11, 33.

[2] Gene Sharp, *THE POLITICS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION*, (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973), from Part One, “Power and Struggle”, p. 64.

[3] Judith Stiehm, *NONVIOLENT POWER*, ((Lexington: D.C. Heath and Co., 1972), p. 65.

[4] Mahatma Gandhi cited by Gene Sharp, *GANDHI AS A POLITICAL STRATEGIST*, op. cit. p. 290.

[5] Ronald Duncan, *SELECTED WRITINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI*, (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1951), pp. 242-243.

[6] For an explanation of why government purposefully conflates the ideas of “law and order” see John Hasnas, “The Myth of Law and Order,” *THE*

VOLUNTARYIST, Whole No. 123, 4th Quarter 2004, p. 7, reprinted from John Hasnas, "The Myth of the Rule of Law," Vol. 1995, WISCONSIN LAW REVIEW (1995), pp. 199-233. Especially see Section XII. Excerpts from Hasnas' original article also appeared in THE VOLUNTARYIST, Whole Nos. 97 and 98 (1999). Other commentators have noted the society is able to exist without the State and government policemen. When the Roman empire finally came to an end in 476 A.D., "[t]he state disappeared, yet society continued." [Carroll Quigley, TRAGEDY AND HOPE, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1966, p. 83.] "Great part of that order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of Government. It has its origins in the principles of society and the natural constitution of man. It existed prior to Government, and would exist if the formality of Government was abolished." [Thomas Paine, RIGHTS OF MAN (1792), Ch. 1, Bk. 2.]

[7] If the current U.S. government were to suddenly disappear, "the present American slave mentality would only erect another system of slavery [read: government]." [Franklin Sanders, THE MONEYCHANGER, October 1994, pp. 3-4.] On the institutional analysis of the State, see George H. Smith, "The Ethics of Voting", THE VOLUNTARYIST, Vol. I, Nos. 1, 2, and 4. Credit is also due Alan Koontz for helping to develop these ideas.

[8] Francis Tandy, VOLUNTARY SOCIALISM, (Denver, by the author, 1896), see Chapter XIII "Methods," esp. pp. 186-188. Excerpts reprinted in Carl Watner (ed.), I MUST SPEAK OUT, San Francisco: Fox & Wilkes, 1999, pp. 57-61.

[9] Mahatma Gandhi cited by Gene Sharp, GANDHI AS A POLITICAL STRATEGIST, op. cit., p. 9, and by Duncan, SELECTED WRITINGS, op. cit., p. 60.

[10] Jerry Tinker, "The Political Power of Non-Violent Resistance: The Gandhian Technique," 24 WESTERN POLITICAL QUARTERLY (1971), pp. 775-788, see pp. 786 and 789. Reprinted as "The Power of Non-Violent Resistance," in Carl Watner (ed.), I MUST SPEAK OUT, San Francisco: Fox & Wilkes, 1999, pp. 69-78.

[11] Judith Stiehm, NONVIOLENT POWER, op. cit., p. 68. How many people ever imagined that the Soviet Union would collapse?

[12] Fred Shuttlesworth cited by Martin Luther King, Jr., WHY WE CAN'T WAIT, (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 58.

[13] Stiehm, op. cit., p. 71.

[14] Vladimir Bukovsky, TO BUILD A CASTLE - MY LIFE AS A DISSENTER, (New York: Viking Press, 1977), pp. 33, 277.

On the History of the Word “Voluntaryism”

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 130, 3rd Quarter 2006)

Voluntaryism has a long and rich historical tradition in the English-speaking world. Our first cite of modern usage is from WIKIPEDIA, THE FREE ENCYCLOPEDIA, found on the worldwide web:

voluntaryism - “in politics and economics ... the idea that human relations should be based on voluntary cooperation ..., to the exclusion of political compulsion ... A journal is published based on this idea: The Voluntaryist ... (<http://www.voluntaryist.com>).”[1]

The NEW SHORTER OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY offers the following definitions, citing usage that dates back to the 1830s:

voluntar[y]ism - “The principle that the Church or schools should be independent of the State and supported by voluntary contributions.”

voluntar[y]ist - “An advocate or adherent of voluntarism or voluntaryism.”[2]

However, voluntaryism has roots deeper than the early 19th Century. The purpose of this article is to show the connections between 21st Century voluntaryism and its intellectual heritage, which can be traced at least as far back as the Leveller movement of mid-17th century England. The Levellers can be best identified by their spokesmen John Lilburne (? 1614-1657) and Richard Overton (?1600-?1660s) who “clashed with the Presbyterian puritans, who wanted to preserve a state-church with coercive powers and to deny liberty of worship to the puritan sects.”[3] All the Leveller thinkers were nonconformist religious types who agitated for the separation of church and state.

During the late 16th and 17th Centuries, the church covenant was a common means of organizing the radical religious sects. This was sometimes an explicit congregational agreement by which those enrolling in a particular church pledged themselves to the faith. The church, to their way of thinking, was a voluntary association of equals. To both the Levellers and later thinkers, this furnished a powerful theoretical and practical model for the civil state. If it was proper for their church congregations to be based on consent, then it was proper to apply the same principle of consent to its secular counterpart. For example, the Leveller ‘large’ Petition of 1647 contained a proposal “that tythes and all other inforced maintenances, may be for ever abolished, and nothing in place thereof imposed, but that all Ministers may be paid only by those who voluntarily choose them, and

contract with them for their labours.”[4] One only need substitute “taxes” for “tythes” and “government officials” for “Ministers” to see how close the Levellers were to the idea of a voluntary state. The Levellers also held tenaciously to the idea of self-proprietaryship. As Richard Overton wrote: “No man hath power over my rights and liberties, and I over no mans [sic].”[5] They realized that it was impossible to assert one’s private right of judgment in religious matters (what we would call today, liberty of conscience) without upholding the same right for everyone else, even the unregenerate.

These ideas were embraced in Scotland by John Glas, a Dundee minister who challenged the establishment church of the Covenanters. Glas taught that there was no Scriptural warrant for a state church, that the civil magistrate should have no authority in religious matters, and that the imposition of a creed against unbelievers was not a Christian thing.[6] What appropriately became known as the Secession Church began when Glas and three other ministers left the Scottish state church, and formed the first Associate Presbytery in 1733, near Kinross. As W. B. Selbie wrote, “It [the Secession Church] was a Voluntary Church dependent on the free will offerings of the people, and independent of any State control.”[7]

In an extensive discussion of “Voluntaryism” published in CHAMBERS’S ENCYCLOPAEDIA, reference is made to the “Voluntary Controversy which sprung up in the second decade of the [19th] Century between churchmen and dissenters in Scotland.” There the voluntaryists held “that all true worship ... must be the free expression of individual minds. ... [T]herefore, religion ought to be left by civil society to mould itself spontaneously according to its own” spiritual nature and institutions. This should be done “without violence to individual freedom from any interposition of secular authority or compulsory influence.”[8] These religious voluntaryists held that the “only weapons of the Church are moral and spiritual. The weapon of the State is force.” They believed that the “Church was never so vital, so convincing, so fruitful as in the first three centuries before her alliance with the State.”[9]

Back in England, from about the mid-1840s to the mid-1860s, voluntaryism became a force to be reckoned with in another sphere. In 1843, Parliament considered legislation which would have required part-time compulsory attendance at school of those children working in factories. The effective control over these schools was to be placed in the hands of the Anglican church, the established Church of England, and the schools were to be supported largely from funds raised out of local taxation. Nonconformists, mostly Baptists and Congregationalists, were alarmed by the Factories Education Bill of 1843. They had been under the ban of the law for more than a century. At one time or another they were not permitted to be married in their own churches, were compelled to pay church rates against their will, and had to teach their children underground for fear of arrest. They became known as voluntaryists because they consistently rejected all state aid and interference in education, just as they rejected the state in the religious sphere of their lives. Three of the most notable

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voluntaryists included the young Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), who was to publish his first series of articles "The Proper Sphere of Government," beginning in 1842; Edward Baines, Jr., (1800-1890) editor and proprietor of the LEEDS MERCURY; and Edward Miall (1809-1881), Congregationalist minister, and founder-editor of THE NONCONFORMIST (1841), who wrote VIEWS OF THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLE in 1845.

The educational voluntaryists wanted free trade in education, just as they supported free trade in corn or cotton. Their concern "for liberty can scarcely be exaggerated." They believed that "government would employ education for its own ends," (teaching habits of obedience and indoctrination) and that government-controlled schools would ultimately teach children to rely on the state for all things. Baines, for example, noted that "[w]e cannot violate the principles of liberty in regard to education without furnishing at once a precedent and inducement to violate them in regard to other matters." Baines conceded that the then current system of education (both private and charitable) had deficiencies, but he argued that freedom should not be abridged on that account. Should freedom of the press be compromised because we have bad newspapers? "I maintain that Liberty is the chief cause of excellence; but it would cease to be Liberty if you proscribed everything inferior." [10] Baines embraced what he called the Voluntary system which included

all that is not Government or compulsory, - all that men do for themselves, their neighbours, or their posterity, of their own free will. It comprehends the efforts of parents, on behalf of the education of their children, - of the private schoolmaster and tutor, for their individual interest, - of religious bodies, benevolent societies, wealthy benefactors, and cooperative associations, in the support of schools, - and of those numerous auxiliaries to education, the authors and editors of educational works, lecturers, artists, and whoever devotes his talents in any way to promote the instruction of the young, without the compulsion of law or the support of the public purse. ...

[I]ts very essence is *liberty*. It offends no man's conscience, exacts from no man's purse, favors no sect or party, neither enforces nor forbids religion in the schools, is open to all improvement, denies to no person the right of teaching, and gives to none the slightest ground for complaint. It is as *just* and *impartial* as it is free. In all these important respects it differs from systems which require the support of law and taxation.[11]

Although educational voluntaryism failed to stop the movement for compulsory schools in England, voluntaryism as a political creed was revived during the 1880s by another Englishman, Auberon Herbert (1838-1906). Herbert served a two-year term in the House of Commons, but after meeting Herbert Spencer in 1874, decided not to run for re-election. He wrote "State Education: A Help or Hindrance?" in 1880, and

began publishing his journal, THE FREE LIFE (Organ of Voluntary Taxation and the Voluntary State) in 1890. Herbert advocated a single monopolistic state for every given geographic territory, but held that it was possible for state revenues to be generated by offering competitive services on the free market. Two of his essays are titled “The Principles of Voluntaryism and Free Life” (1897), and “A Plea for Voluntaryism,” (posthumously, 1908).[12]

Although the label “voluntaryist” practically died out after the death of Auberon Herbert, its use was renewed in late 1982, when George Smith, Wendy McElroy, and Carl Watner began editing THE VOLUNTARYIST. George Smith, after publishing his article “Nineteenth-Century Opponents of State Education,” suggested use of the term to identify those libertarians who believed that political action and political parties were antithetical to their ideas. In NEITHER BULLETS NOR BALLOTS: Essays on Voluntaryism, Watner, Smith, and McElroy explained that voluntaryists were advocates of non-political strategies to achieve a free society. They rejected electoral politics “in theory and practice as incompatible with libertarian goals,” and explained that political methods invariably strengthen the legitimacy of coercive governments. In concluding their “Statement of Purpose” they wrote: “Voluntaryists seek instead to delegitimize the State through education, and we advocate the withdrawal of the cooperation and tacit consent on which state power ultimately depends.”[13]

Although there was never a “voluntaryist” movement in America until the late 20th Century, earlier Americans did agitate for the disestablishment of government-supported churches in several of the original thirteen States.[14] Such people believed that the individual should not automatically become a member of the church simply by reason of being born in a given state. Their objection to taxation in support of the church was two-fold: taxation not only gave the state some right of control over the church; it also represented a way of coercing the non-member or the unbeliever into supporting the church financially. In New England, where both Massachusetts and Connecticut started out with state churches, many people believed that they needed to pay a tax for the general support of religion - for the same reasons they paid taxes to maintain the roads or the courts. It was simply inconceivable to many of them that society could long exist without state support of religion. Practically no one comprehended the idea that although governmentally-supplied goods and services might be essential to human welfare, it was not necessary that they be provided by the government.

In Connecticut, the well-known Congregational minister, Lyman Beecher, opposed disestablishment of the State church, which was finally brought about in 1818. In his autobiography, Beecher admits that this was a time of great depression and suffering for him. Beecher expected the worst from disestablishment: the floodgates of anarchy would be loosened in Connecticut. “The injury done to the cause of Christ, as we then supposed, was irreparable.” This supposition was soon challenged by a new revolutionary idea, that true religion might stand on its own

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without support from the state. “Our people thought that they should be destroyed” if the law no longer supported the churches. “But the effect, when it did come, was just the reverse of the expectation. We were thrown on God and ourselves,” and this made the church stronger. “Before we had been standing on what our Fathers had done, but now we were obliged to develop all our energy.” Beecher also noted with elation the new alignment of religious forces which was the result of disestablishment. By repealing the law that compelled everyone to pay for the support of some church, “the occasion of animosity between us and the minor sects was removed, and the infidels could no more make capital with them against us.” On the contrary, “they began themselves to feel the dangers from infidelity, and to react against it, and this laid the basis of co-operation and union of spirit.” Beecher’s final conclusion was “that the tax law had for more than twenty years really worked to weaken us” and strengthen our opponents.[15]

There is no way to know what voluntaryism might accomplish today or tomorrow, but on both moral, practical, and historical grounds we have every reason to think that our experiences would parallel that of Beecher’s. Voluntaryism has a rich past and hopefully an even brighter future.

Footnotes

[1] Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voluntarism>, July 4, 2005.

[2] Volume 2, THE NEW SHORTER OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, Oxford: Clarendon Press (1993), p. 3600.

[3] G.E. Aylmer (editor), THE LEVELLERS IN THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (1975), p. 68.

[4] *ibid.*, p. 80.

[5] *ibid.*, p. 68.

[6] W. B. Selbie, ENGLISH SECTS: A SHORT HISTORY OF NONCONFORMITY, New York: Henry Holt and Company (n.d.), p. 215.

[7] *ibid.*, p. 217.

[8] “Voluntaryism” in CHAMBERS’S ENCYCLOPAEDIA (American Revised Edition), Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. (1882), Volume X, pp. 23-24 at p. 23.

[9] William Ross, “Voluntaryism,” in James Hastings (ed.), ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons (1970), Volume XII, pp. 634-637 at p. 635.

[10] For quotes in this paragraph, see George H. Smith, “Nineteenth Century Opponents of State Education,” in Robert B. Everhart (ed.), THE PUBLIC SCHOOL MONOPOLY, Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company (1982), pp. 109-144 at pp. 121, 124, 122, and 123, respectively.

[11] Edward Baines [Jr.], EDUCATION BEST PROMOTED BY PERFECT FREEDOM NOT BY STATE ENDOWMENTS, London: John Snow, 1854, p. 28.

[12] See Eric Mack, "Auberon Herbert, Voluntaryism," *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, Whole No. 11 (November 1984), pp. 5-8. Also see Auberon Herbert, *THE RIGHT AND WRONG OF COMPULSION BY THE STATE AND OTHER ESSAYS*, edited and with an Introduction by Eric Mack, Indianapolis: Liberty Classics (1978).

[13] Carl Watner, George H. Smith, and Wendy McElroy, *NEITHER BULLETS NOR BALLOTS: ESSAYS ON VOLUNTARYISM*, Orange: Pine Tree Press (1983).

[14] See Carl Watner, "Voluntaryism in the Libertarian Tradition," in *ibid.*, for more information on the 19th Century abolitionists and non-resistants.

[15] For quotes in this paragraph see Carl Watner, "The Struggle for Religious Freedom and the Voluntaryist Tradition," *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, Whole No. 34 (October 1988), pp. 3-5 at p. 3. Henry David Thoreau mentions his contact with the state church in Massachusetts in his essay on "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience." On Thoreau's brush with the state church see Carl Watner, "Highway Tax vs. Poll Tax: Some Thoreau Tax Trivia," *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, Whole No. 71 (December 1994), p. 1. Also see Carl Watner, "For Conscience's Sake: Voluntaryism and Religious Freedom," *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, Whole No. 55 (April 1992); and James Luther Adams, "The Historical Origins of Voluntaryism," *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, Whole No. 79 (April 1996), p. 6.

The Obviousness of Anarchy

by John Hasnas

(From Issue 140, 1st Quarter 2009)

[Excerpts from Roderick Long and Tibor Machan (eds.), *ANARCHISM/MIN-ARCHISM* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008); ISBN 0 7564 6066. Found at <http://faculty.msb.edu/hasnasj/GTWebsite/AnarchyDraft.pdf>. Permission granted by Lilly Chesterman of Ashgate Publishing in email dated September 12, 2007. For other penetrating articles by John Hasnas see the Short Bibliography below.]

LOOK AROUND!

by Carl Watner

Lector, si documentum requiris, circumspice.

Sir Christopher Wren, the famous English architect, died in 1723, and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral in London, a building which he had designed. His son, Christopher Jr., memorialized his father by placing on a wall near his father's tomb, "one of the most famous of all monumental inscriptions: *Lector, si monumentum requiris, circumspice* ('Reader, if you seek a monument, look around')."

John Hasnas has done the same thing. He writes that "A wise man once told me that the best way to prove something is possible is to show that it exists." Well? If proof (*documentum*) is required, LOOK AROUND! There are countless examples of

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voluntaryism in everyday life and in American history. We know that “a stable, successful society without government can exist” because it “has, and to a large extent, still does” exist. This, in fact, is one of the ongoing purposes of THE VOLUNTARYIST and my anthology, I MUST SPEAK OUT: to document the historical instances of non-political cooperation among human beings.

The State cannot be everywhere, nor can it be all things to all people, and as John Hasnas points out there had to be a peaceful community before there was a State. As I have written before, every service provided by the State and paid for by compulsory taxation (with one major exception - world war) has been provided at one time or another in history by people. Private schools, private coins, private libraries, private charitable aid, private roads, private post offices, private arbitration and mediation, private courts, time zones, weight and measure standards, our English language - all these are examples of voluntaryism, not statism.

In an article footnoted in “The Obviousness of Anarchy,” Professor Hasnas writes that “Anglo-Saxon and early Norman England ... offers a wonderful test case of how human beings behave in the absence of central political authority.” [pp. 127-128] The result was the English system of common law, on which most of English and American jurisprudence is based. The evolution of the common law demonstrates human beings need rules and regulations to govern their interactions; but it also proves that centralized government authority is not a prerequisite to their existence. Most of the formal and informal institutional arrangements of human society reached their zenith before the advent of the modern nation-State.

This brilliant and magnificent essay directs our attention to what should be an obvious fact. Readers: LOOK AROUND! The evidence to prove that anarchism is a viable, sustainable way of life exists, if we can only recognize it.

The Obviousness of Anarchy

I am presenting an argument for anarchy in the true sense of the term - that is, a society without government, not a society without governance. There is no such thing as a society without governance. A society with no mechanism for bringing order to human existence is oxymoronic; it is not “society” at all. ...

I am arguing only that human beings can live together successfully and prosper in the absence of a centralized coercive authority. ...

There are, of course, certain rules that must apply to all people; those that provide the basic conditions that make cooperative behavior possible. Thus, rules prohibiting murder, assault, theft, and other forms of coercion must be equally binding on all members of a society. But we hardly need government to ensure that this is the case. These rules evolve first in any community; you would not even have a community if this were not the case. ...

Societies do not spring into existence complete with government police forces. Once a group of people has figured out how to reduce the level of interpersonal violence sufficiently to allow them to live together, entities that are recognizable as

government often develop and take over the policing function. Even a marauding band that imposes government on others through conquest must have first reduced internal strife sufficiently to allow it to organize itself for effective military operations. Both historically and logically, it is always peaceful coexistence first, government services second. If civil society is impossible without government police, then there are no civil societies. ...

When government begins providing services formerly provided non-politically, people soon forget that the services were ever provided non-politically and assume that only government can provide them. ... Traditionally, police services were not provided by government and, to a large extent, they still are not. Therefore, government is not necessary to provide police services. ...

If a visitor from Mars were asked to identify the least effective method for securing individuals' persons and property, he might well respond that it would be to select one group of people, give them guns, require all members of society to pay them regardless of the quality of service they render, and invest them with discretion to employ resources and determine law enforcement priorities however they see fit, subject only to the whim of their political paymasters. If asked why he thought that, he might simply point to the Los Angeles or New Orleans or any other big city police department. Are government police really necessary for a peaceful, secure society? Look around. Could a non-political, non-monopolistic system of supplying police services really do worse than its government-supplied counterpart? ...

Do you ever wonder why people believed in the divine right of kings... ? They believed in it because they were taught to believe in it and because they could imagine it was so, regardless of all evidence to the contrary. We no longer believe in such silly things as the divine right of kings. We believe that government is necessary for an orderly peaceful society and that it can be made to function according to the rule of law. We believe this because we have been taught to believe it from infancy and because we can imagine that it is so, regardless of all contrary evidence.

One should never underestimate the power of abstract concepts to shape how human beings see the world. Once one accepts the idea that government is necessary for peace and order and that it can function objectively, one's imagination will allow one to see the hand of government wherever there is law, police, and courts and render the non-political provision of these services invisible. But if you lay aside this conceptual framework long enough to ask where these services originated and where, to a large extent, they still come from, the world assumes a different aspect. If you want the strongest argument for anarchy, simply remove your self-imposed blinders and look around.

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Voluntaryism

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 141, 2nd Quarter 2009)

[The following article was posted as the entry for “Voluntaryism” at www.wikipedia.org in late March 2008.]

This article is about the philosophy of life that holds that everything that is invasive and coercive, including Government, is evil and ought to be abandoned, and that mankind ought to embrace the Voluntary system, which includes all that is nongovernmental and non-compulsory, in other words all that people do for themselves, their neighbors, and their posterity, of their own free will.

Voluntaryism is the doctrine that association among people should only be by mutual consent. It represents a means, and end, and an insight. Voluntaryism does not argue for the specific form that voluntary arrangements will take, only that force be abandoned so that individuals in society may flourish. Since voluntaryists hold that the means must be consistent with the end, the goal of an all voluntary society must be sought voluntarily. People cannot be coerced into freedom. Hence, voluntaryists advocate the use of the free market, education, persuasion, and non-violent resistance as the primary ways to change people’s ideas about the State and their behavior toward it. The voluntaryist insight that all tyranny and governments are grounded upon popular acceptance, explains why voluntary means are sufficient and, in fact, the only way to attain a voluntaryist society.

Overview

Voluntaryism is grounded on two axioms. First, the self-ownership axiom holds that each person is and ought to be in control of their own mind, body, and soul. Second, the homesteading axiom holds that each person by the application of his or her own labor to unowned resources thereby becomes its rightful and legitimate owner.

It is a commonplace observation that human action represents behavior aiming at an improvement over the current state of affairs (from the individual actor’s point of

view). Otherwise, that person would not initiate action to bring about change. Therefore, every market transaction is intended to be (and normally achieves) an improvement in satisfaction, and benefits both parties to the exchange. Thus, both parties to a trade improve their state of affairs. On the free and unhampered market this occurs millions and millions of times each day. Its cumulative effect is the prosperity and high standard of living that people experience in a free market economy. Government intervention and central planning (based on compulsion) can only force some people to do what they would otherwise not choose to do, and thereby lessens their satisfaction and impedes economic progress.

Voluntaryists argue that although certain goods and services are necessary to human survival, it is not necessary that they be provided by the government. Voluntaryists oppose the State because it uses coercive means in the collection of revenues and in outlawing would-be service providers. It is impossible to plant the seed of coercion and then reap the fruits of voluntarism. The coercionist always proposes to compel people to do something they ordinarily wouldn't do, usually by passing laws or electing people to office. These laws and officials ultimately depend upon physical violence to enforce their wills. Voluntary means, such as non-violent resistance, for example, violate no one's rights. Voluntarism does not require of people that they violently overthrow the government or use the electoral process to change it; it merely requires that they cease to support their government and obey its orders, whereupon it will fall of its own dead weight.

Voluntaryism and Anarchism

Libertarian theory, relying upon the self-ownership and homesteading axioms, condemns all invasive acts and rejects the initiation of violence. Anarchists, in particular, assert that the State acts aggressively when it engages in taxation and coercively monopolizes the provision of certain public services such as the roads, courts, police, and armed forces. It is this anarchist insight into the nature of the State - that the State is inherently and necessarily an invasive institution - which distinguishes the anarchist from other libertarians.

By this definition, voluntaryists are clearly peaceful anarchists. Many late 20th and early 21st Century voluntaryists based their thinking upon the ideas of Murray Rothbard and Robert LeFevre, who rejected the concept of "limited" government. Every government "presumes to establish a compulsory monopoly of defense (police and courts) service over some geographical area. So that individual property-owners who prefer to subscribe to another defense company within that area are not allowed to do so." Also, every government obtains its income by stealing, euphemistically labeled "taxation." "All governments, however limited they may be otherwise, commit at least these two fundamental crimes against liberty and property." [1] What especially distinguishes voluntaryists from other free-market anarchists is their stance on strategy; especially their reliance on nonviolence and nonelectoral means to achieve a free society. Like many European and American anarchists during the 19th

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and 20th Centuries, voluntaryists shun involvement with electoral politics. Rejection of the political means is premised on the insight that governments depend on the cooperation of those they rule. Etienne de la Boetie, a mid-16th Century Frenchman, who was the first to point out this voluntaryist insight, called for peaceful non-cooperation and non-violent resistance to the State. Despite the advocacy of violence by a number of anarchists throughout history, most anarchists have sought to persuade people, rather than coerce them. Le Boetie's call for peaceful resistance has been echoed by contemporary anarchists, as well as by a significant number of those who have been described as near-anarchist in their thinking, such as Thoreau, Tolstoy, and Gandhi.

Origins

Voluntaryism has a long and rich historical tradition in the English-speaking world. Its heritage can be traced at least as far back as the Leveller movement of mid-17th Century England. The Levellers can be best identified by their spokesmen John Lilburne (?1614-1657) and Richard Overton (?1600-?1660s) who "clashed with the Presbyterian puritans, who wanted to preserve a state-church with coercive powers and to deny liberty of worship to the puritan sects." [2]

The Levellers were nonconformist religious types who agitated for the separation of church and state. During the late 16th and 17th Centuries, the church covenant was a common means of organizing the radical religious sects. The church, to their way of thinking, was a voluntary association of equals. To both the Levellers and later thinkers this furnished a powerful theoretical and practical model for the civil state. If it was proper for their church congregations to be based on consent, then it was proper to apply the same principle of consent to its secular counterpart. For example, the Leveller 'large' Petition of 1647 contained a proposal "that tythes and all other inforced maintenances, may be for ever abolished, and nothing in place thereof imposed, but that all Ministers may be payd only by those who voluntarily choose them, and contract with them for their labours." [3] One only need substitute "taxes" for "tythes" and "government officials" for "Ministers" to see how close the Levellers were to the idea of a voluntary state.

The Levellers also held tenaciously to the idea of self-proprietorship. As Richard Overton wrote: "No man hath power over my rights and liberties, and I over no mans [sic]." [4] They realized that it was impossible to assert one's private right of judgment in religious matters (what we would call today, liberty of conscience) without upholding the same right for everyone else, even the unregenerate. The existence of a State church in England has caused continuous friction since the time of the Levellers because there were always those conscientious objectors who either opposed its religious doctrine and/or their forced contributions towards its support.

Voluntaryists also became involved in another controversy in England, from about the mid-1840s to the mid-1860s. In 1843, Parliament considered legislation which would require part-time compulsory attendance at school of those children

working in factories. The effective control over these schools was to be placed in the hands of the established Church of England, and the schools were to be supported largely from funds raised out of local taxation. Nonconformists, mostly Baptists and Congregationalists, became alarmed. They had been under the ban of the law for more than a century. At one time or another they could not be married in their own churches, were compelled to pay church rates against their will, and had to teach their children underground for fear of arrest. They became known as voluntaryists because they consistently rejected all state aid and interference in education, just as they rejected the state in the religious sphere of their lives. Three of the most notable voluntaryists included the young Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), who published his first series of articles “The Proper Sphere of Government,” beginning in 1842; Edward Baines, Jr., (1800-1890) editor and proprietor of the LEEDS MERCURY; and Edward Miall (1809-1881), Congregationalist minister, and founder-editor of THE NONCONFORMIST (1841), who wrote VIEWS OF THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLE (1845).

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Although educational voluntaryism failed to stop the movement for compulsory schools in England, voluntaryism as a political creed was revived during the 1880s by another Englishman, Auberon Herbert (1838-1906). Herbert served a two-year term in the House of Commons, but after meeting Herbert Spencer in 1874, decided not to run for re-election. He wrote “State Education: A Help or Hindrance?” in 1880, and began using the word “voluntaryist” to label his advocacy of “voluntary” taxation. He began publishing his journal, THE FREE LIFE (Organ of Voluntary Taxation and the Voluntary State) in 1890. Herbert was not a pure voluntaryist because, although he held that it was possible for state revenues to be generated by offering competitive services on the free market, he continued to advocate a single monopolistic state for every given geographic territory. Some of his essays are titled “The Principles of Voluntaryism and Free Life” (1897), and “A Plea for Voluntaryism,” (posthumously, 1908).

Earlier and Contemporary Usage in America

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Although there was never an explicit “voluntaryist” movement in America till the late 20th Century, earlier Americans did agitate for the disestablishment of government-supported churches in several of the original thirteen States. These conscientious objectors believed mere birth in a given geographic area did not mean that one consented to membership or automatically wished to support a State church. Their objection to taxation in support of the church was two-fold: taxation not only gave the State some right of control over the church; it also represented a way of coercing the non-member or the unbeliever into supporting the church. In New England, where both Massachusetts and Connecticut started out with state churches, many people believed that they needed to pay a tax for the general support of religion - for the same reasons they paid taxes to maintain the roads and the courts. It was simply inconceivable to many of them that society could long exist without state support of religion. Practically no one comprehended the idea that although governmentally-supplied goods and services (such as roads, or schools, or churches) might be essential to human welfare, it was not necessary that they be provided by the government.

There were at least two well-known Americans who espoused voluntaryist causes during the mid-19th Century. Henry David Thoreau’s (1817-1862) first brush with the law in his home state of Massachusetts came in 1838, when he turned twenty-one. The State demanded that he pay the one dollar ministerial tax, in support of a clergyman, “whose preaching my father attended but never I myself.”[6] When Thoreau refused to pay the tax, it was probably paid by one of his aunts. In order to avoid the ministerial tax in the future, Thoreau had to sign an affidavit attesting he was not a member of the church.

Thoreau’s famous overnight imprisonment for his failure to pay another municipal tax, the poll tax, to the town of Concord was recorded in his essay, “Resistance to Civil Government,” first published in 1849. It is often referred to as “On the Duty of Civil Disobedience,” because in it he recognized that government was dependent on the cooperation of its citizens. While he was not a thoroughly consistent voluntaryist, he did write that he wished never to “rely on the protection of the State,” and that he refused to tender it his allegiance so long as it supported slavery. He distinguished himself from “those who call[ed] themselves no-government men”: “I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government,” conveniently overlooking the fact that improving an institution does not change its essential (in this case, coercive) nature. Despite this, Thoreau opened his essay by stating his belief that “That government is best which governs not at all,” a point which all voluntaryists heartily embrace.[7]

One of those “no-government men” was William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879), famous abolitionist and publisher of THE LIBERATOR. Nearly all abolitionists identified with the self-ownership principle, that each person - as an individual - owned and should control his or her own mind and body free of outside coercive interference. The abolitionist called for the immediate and unconditional cessation of

slavery because they saw slavery as man-stealing in its most direct and worst form. Slavery reflected the theft of a person's self-ownership rights (just as taxes reflect the theft of a person's property). The slave was a chattel with no rights of its own. The abolitionists realized that each human being, man, woman, and child, was naturally invested with sovereignty over himself or herself and that no one could exercise forcible control over another without breaching the self-ownership principle. Garrison, too, was not a pure voluntaryist for he supported the federal government's war against the States from 1861 to 1865.

Probably the most consistent voluntaryist of that era was Charles Lane (1800-1870). He was friendly with Amos Bronson Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Thoreau. Between January and June 1843 a series of nine letters he penned were published in such abolitionist papers as *THE LIBERATOR* and *THE HERALD OF FREEDOM*. The title under which they were published was "A Voluntary Political Government," and in them Lane described the State in terms of institutionalized violence and referred to its "club law, its mere brigand right of a strong arm, [supported] by guns and bayonets." He saw the coercive State on par with "forced" Christianity. "Everyone can see that the church is wrong when it comes to men with the [B]ible in one hand, and the sword in the other." "Is it not equally diabolical for the State to do so?" Lane believed that governmental rule was only tolerated by public opinion because the fact was not yet recognized that all the true purposes of the State could be carried out on the voluntary principle, just as churches could be sustained voluntarily. Reliance on the voluntary principle could only come about through "kind, orderly, and moral means" that were consistent with the totally voluntary society he was advocating. "Let us have a voluntary State as well as a voluntary Church, and we may possibly then have some claim to the appellation of free men." [8]

Late 20th and early 21st Century libertarians readily appreciate the parallel between the disestablishment of State churches and the abandonment of the State itself. Although the label "voluntaryist" practically died out after the death of Auberon Herbert, its use was renewed in late 1982, when George Smith, Wendy McElroy, and Carl Watner began publishing *THE VOLUNTARYIST*. George Smith suggested use of the term to identify those libertarians who believed that political action and political parties (especially the Libertarian Party) were antithetical to their ideas. In their "Statement of Purpose" in *NEITHER BULLETS NOR BALLOTS: Essays on Voluntarism* (1983), Watner, Smith, and McElroy explained that voluntaryists were advocates of nonpolitical strategies to achieve a free society. They rejected electoral politics "in theory and practice as incompatible with libertarian goals," and explained that political methods invariably strengthen the legitimacy of coercive governments. In concluding their "Statement of Purpose" they wrote: "Voluntaryists seek instead to delegitimize the State through education, and we advocate the withdrawal of the cooperation and tacit consent on which state power ultimately depends."

THE VOLUNTARYIST newsletter, which began publication in late 1982, is one of the longest-lived libertarian publications in the world. Edited and published by Carl

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Watner since 1986, the most significant articles from the first 100 issues were anthologized in book-length form and published as *I MUST SPEAK OUT: The Best of THE VOLUNTARYIST 1982-1999* (Carl Watner, ed., San Francisco: Fox & Wilkes, 1999).

Another voluntaryist anthology buttressed the case for non-voting: Carl Watner with Wendy McElroy (eds.), *DISSENTING ELECTORATE: Those Who Refuse to Vote and the Legitimacy of Their Opposition* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2001). The masthead of *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, perhaps, best epitomizes the voluntaryist outlook: “If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.” This statement penned by Gandhi emphasizes that the world can only be changed one person at a time, and then, only if that person wills it. The only thing that the individual can do “is present society with ‘one improved unit’.” As Albert Jay Nock put it, “[A]ges of experience testify that the only way society can be improved is by the individualist method . . . , that is, the method of each ‘one’ doing his very best to improve ‘one’.” This is the quiet, peaceful, patient way of changing society because it concentrates on bettering the character of men and women as individuals. As the individual units change, the improvement of society will take care of itself. In other words, “if one take care of the means, the end will take care of itself.”[9]

Objections to Voluntaryism: Introductory and General Observations

Voluntaryists meet objections to their doctrine by examining them from both the moral and practical viewpoint. From the moral side, they ask whose property is involved, has anyone’s consent been obtained, is any property being used against the owner’s will? From the practical side, they ask how would the situation be handled in a statist society, how is it being handled now, how might it be addressed in the absence of government intervention? Voluntaryists also realize that some social ills will always be with us. Nonetheless they ask, of the two ways to organize human society, voluntarily versus coercively, which system is likely to produce less harm, be most beneficial to people, and be more consistent with our commonly accepted ethical norms?

Voluntaryists recognize that normally the most moral behavior achieves the most practical results. In certain emergency or “lifeboat” situations there may be a tension between what appears to be the moral and the practical. In such cases, some voluntaryists may choose to act contrary to their principles, while others may remain true to them and suffer the consequences. However, in both cases voluntaryists continue to recognize that self-ownership, homesteading, and non-aggression are the basis of their doctrine, and “that human freedom is a higher moral objective than the arbitrary fulfillment of certain people’s needs and desires.”[10]

Objection 1: What would happen to the poor in a voluntaryist world?

The plight of the poor in a free society focuses on many of the major objections to voluntaryism. From the practical side, who would care for them? (Anyone who wants to devote their time, energy, and resources to them.) Would they be left to

starve? (Yes, they might be if there was no one willing to help them.) What ultimately is our responsibility toward our fellow man, whether he be better off or worse off than others? (Strict justice consists in not acting invasively toward others.) Do the poor have a right to alms? (No, according to the homesteading axiom the rightfully owned property of others is to be respected, not stolen.)

The Moral Perspective

The first fact we must recognize is that nature is niggardly and that goods and services of value are scarce. Left alone on an island, how does a man care for himself? Man only survives by using his mind and body to provide himself with food, shelter, and clothing. The presence of other men makes the division of labor and specialization in production possible, but it does not essentially change the nature of the world. When man lives alone on an island, and when there is no interaction with others, the question of justice does not arise.

However, in the context of human society, justice, for the voluntarist, is a negative duty. It consists in respecting other people's bodies and property, and in doing them no physical harm. For the voluntarist, justice does not imply any special obligation of benevolence or charity. Nothing is due a man in strict justice but what is his own. Perhaps he may have an ethical duty towards helping others; either their merits or their sufferings may reasonably lead them to expect something from others which is not strictly their own. As Lysander Spooner pointed out, "Man, no doubt, owes many other ... duties to his fellow men; such as to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, But these are simply ... duties, of which each man must be his own judge, in each particular case, as to whether, and how, and how far, he can, or will, perform them." [11]

As for considering the justice of forced charity, Robert Ringer explained, "I do not believe that I or any other person has the right to force other men to be charitable. In other words, I am not against charity, but I am against the use of force." [12] The fact that someone thinks others are not contributing enough to charity or to the poor is no justification for forcing them to contribute more. If a man has legitimately earned his property, it is theft to take it from him against his will for any purpose. One man's honestly earned wealth is not another man's entitlement (nor the cause of another's impoverishment). We might not like one person being rich and another being poor, but it is not our right to take from one and give to another. If we think the poor are too poor, then we may devote more of our own resources and property to them, and we also may try to persuade others to do so. What we may not do is place someone in jail because he refuses to abide by our dictates in the matter; we may not pass a law that, in effect, does the same thing; and we may not use the plight of the poor as a justification for stealing the property of others, even if, after the fact, we give the stolen property to the poor.

The Practical Perspective

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Americans have often been referred to as the most generous people on earth. Although there has never been a true voluntaryist society, America, from its colonial roots to the early 20th Century, more closely approximated voluntaryist parameters than many other nations. What did we find happening in such circumstances?

In early America, private and community care for the poor often preceded government's assumption of those responsibilities. If Americans wanted a school, a library, an orphanage, or a hospital they simply built it for themselves. The vitality and success of American communities rested on their voluntary nature. History and theory demonstrate that a free people produce many more goods and services than their counterparts in a centrally organized economy. Thus, there is more to go around in a free society, and the poor there generally have a higher standard of living than the poor in a collectivist society. This economic largess is largely the result of the investment in tools and individual savings which are promoted by the free market economy.

Not only were there probably fewer "poor" in America, but those of the lower classes were able to better care for themselves and their poorer kin. Until the advent of State welfare in the early 20th Century, mutual aid societies, church and fraternal organizations flourished. By 1920, about 18 million Americans belonged to some type of mutual aid society or fraternal order, which often provided some form of health, disability, and death benefits to their members. With the advent of the Great Depression (which voluntaryists assert was caused by government financial policies), government welfare programs began crowding out private efforts.

The private sector in America has not only proved itself capable of producing and creating large amounts of wealth, but it has also demonstrated its willingness to contribute to community causes and helping the poor. The record of American philanthropy is so impressive that it would require several books to list its achievements. So when one asks, "What would happen to the poor in a free society?" one only has to look at American history for an answer. As James Bryce writing in 1888 observed, "In works of active beneficence, no country has surpassed, perhaps none has equaled the United States." [13]

Objection 2: The voluntaryist insight points out that the State depends on the cooperation of its citizens. Aren't these citizens showing by their actions that they are consenting to the government they have?

Answer: Yes, citizens may obey their governments, but they are no more consenting to their "voluntary" enslavement than a victim of a robbery consents to his victimization. The victim of a robbery (your money or your life) "voluntarily" hands over his wallet to prevent a worse occurrence (his own death). When governments eliminate criminal penalties for failure to file and pay taxes, we can begin looking at how much real support governments might obtain voluntarily.

Objection 3: If there were no government, what would prevent criminals from taking over control of society?

Answer: First of all, voluntaryists would point out that criminals have taken over

control of our society. It is only the fact that our criminal governors have so legitimated themselves in the eyes of most people that they are no longer considered criminal. The existence of a peaceful society depends upon the fact that the large majority of people residing therein respect other people and their property. In the absence of coercive government to “protect” these peaceful people, there would be private defense and mutual protection agencies, voluntarily funded, to protect people from would-be aggressors. Each patron would contract for the level of protection he or she desired and could afford. In such a society, sureties and insurance companies would probably provide a great deal of protection, since they would have the most to lose from destruction and theft of property and life. Sureties or bonding companies would ultimately be responsible for the good behavior of those they covered.

Objection 4: Who would pay for the roads?

Answer: Those who use them and require their existence. Although roads have been a government monopoly throughout much of history, there is much historical evidence that roads could be built and operated on a for-profit basis. Government monopolization and control of the roads has led to many inefficiencies, deaths, and environmental destruction.[14]

Objection 5: Is it right that voluntarists benefit from government services and yet do not wish to pay for them?

Answer: Voluntarists recognize that there is no such thing as a free lunch. They are not asking for government services in the first place. Governments by their coercive provision of certain services eliminate the voluntarist’s range of choice among providers. The voluntarist may need to know “what time it is,” but that doesn’t mean that the government has a right to eliminate all competitors and force the consumer to purchase from only a government agency. If a thief steals your watch, outlaws all other forms of telling time, tells you the time, and then demands that you pay him for providing you with this service, would you consider yourself obligated to pay him? Of course not. Similarly, the voluntarist holds that the government should not be providing any services in the first place (any more than the thief should have stolen your watch or outlawed would-be competitors). When government uses coercion to enforce its will, many problematic situations arise. Voluntarists try to resolve them by abandoning government, and using private services when available and affordable.

Footnotes

[1] Murray Rothbard, “Yes,” REASON Magazine, May 1973, pp. 19, 23-25, and reprinted in Carl Watner (ed.), I MUST SPEAK OUT, San Francisco: Fox & Wilkes (1999), pp. 47-48.

[2] G. E. Aylmer (ed.), THE LEVELLERS IN THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (1975), p. 68.

[3] *ibid.*, p. 80.

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[4] *ibid.*, p. 68.

[5] George H. Smith, "Nineteenth-Century Opponents of State Education," in Robert B. Everhart (ed.), *THE PUBLIC SCHOOL MONOPOLY*, Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing (1982), pp. 109-144 at pp. 121-124.

[6] Henry David Thoreau, *WALDEN, OR LIFE IN THE WOODS and ON THE DUTY OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE*, with an Afterword by Perry Miller, New York: New American Library (Twenty-first printing, 1960), p. 233.

[7] *ibid.*, pp. 222, 223, 232.

[8] Carl Watner (ed.), *A VOLUNTARY POLITICAL GOVERNMENT: LETTERS FROM CHARLES LANE*, St. Paul: Michael E. Coughlin, Publisher (1982), p. 52.

[9] Albert Jay Nock, *MEMOIRS OF A SUPERFLUOUS MAN*, New York: Harper and Brothers (1943), p. 307.

[10] Robert Ringer, *RESTORING THE AMERICAN DREAM*, New York: QED (1979), p. 135.

[11] Lysander Spooner, *NATURAL LAW; OR THE SCIENCE OF JUSTICE* (Section I), Boston: A. Williams & Co. (1882), p. 6 in Volume I, Charles Shively (ed.), *THE COLLECTED WORKS OF LYSANDER SPOONER IN SIX VOLUMES*, Weston: M & S Press (1971).

[12] Ringer, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

[13] James Bryce, Volume II, *THE AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH* (original publication date 1888), New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons (1959), p. 494. (This is found in the Capricorn Books edition, edited by Louis M. Hacker in Volume II, Part VI, Chapter 4, "The Influence of Religion," paragraph 15.) Also see Carl Watner, "The Most Generous Nation on Earth: Voluntarism and American Philanthropy," Whole Number 61, *THE VOLUNTARYIST* (April 1993).

[14] See Gabriel Roth (ed.), *STREET SMART: COMPETITION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND THE FUTURE OF ROADS*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006 on both a discussion of for-profit roads and government inefficiencies in this area.

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Eric Mack (ed.), *THE RIGHT AND WRONG OF COMPULSION BY THE STATE AND OTHER ESSAYS BY AUBERON HERBERT*, Indianapolis: Liberty Classics (1978).

Jim Payne (Count Nef), *PRINCESS NAVINA VISITS VOLUNTARIA*, Sandpoint: Lytton Publishing (2002).

Murray Rothbard, *FOR A NEW LIBERTY*, New York: The Macmillan Company (1973).

Mark Spangler (ed.), *CLICHES OF POLITICS*, Irvington-on-Hudson: Foundation for Economic Education (1996). Earlier editions were titled “Cliches of Socialism.” This anthology dispels many of the myths that justify the pleas for political solutions to our social problems.

Carl Watner with Wendy McElroy (eds.), *NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS: ESSAYS IN OPPOSITION*, Jefferson: McFarland & Company (2004).

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Part II:
**Voluntaryism as a Matter of Integrity and
Conscience**

To remain [a] spiritually free [people], [we] must live in truth. Living in truth means bearing public witness to the truth at all times and in all situations. The truth is unchanging. It cannot be destroyed by this or that decision or this or that law. The source of our captivity is that we allow lies to reign, that we do not denounce them, that we do not protest against their existence every day of our lives, that we do not confront lies with the truth but keep silent or pretend that we believe the lies. We live then in a state of hypocrisy. Courageous witness to the truth is the path that leads directly to freedom. [One] who bears witness to truth can be free, even though in a[n] [internment] camp or a prison. ... [E]xternal or political freedom would come sooner or later as a consequence of freedom of spirit and fidelity to the truth.

- Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko, Homily of October 31, 1982, in Judith Kelly, JUST CALL ME JERZY (2016), pp. 79-80.

Points of No Return

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 106, October 2000)

The impetus for this short article was a book by Bruno Bettelheim titled *THE INFORMED HEART* (New York: The Free Press, 1960). It deals with the author's experiences as a German Jew during the Nazi era. In a section subtitled "The last human freedom," on page 157, Bettelheim points out that prisoners in the concentration camps were faced with a choice:

... to survive as a man not a walking corpse, as a debased and degraded but still human being, one had first and foremost to remain informed and aware of what made up one's personal point of no return, the point beyond which one would never, under any circumstances, give in to the oppressor, even if it meant risking one's life. It meant being aware that if one survived at the price of overreaching this point one would be holding on to a life that had lost all its meaning. It would mean surviving - not with a lowered self-respect, but without any.

Even though the context of these comments is life in a concentration camp, I believe they apply equally well to those of us living in the "free world." Even in the United States today, our own government treats us like slaves. Most of our "so-called" liberties are actually privileges - controlled, regulated, licensed, and sold to us. When any group of people - or some institution they represent - can command specific performance from us without paying and/or obtaining our voluntary consent, then we are slaves. The fact that we have been conditioned to be happy with the situation, or that our masters do not seem overly brutal, or that we are given a say in choosing our masters, does not change the fact that for all practical purposes we are "owned" by them.

Several past issues of *THE VOLUNTARYIST* have dealt with the questions of what we should do when we come to understand that we are being treated as slaves. How cooperative should we be, and should we ever compromise our principles? In the October 1990 issue (No. 46), I wrote an article titled "'Voluntary' Contributions to the National Treasury: Where Does One Draw the Line?" The theme of this article was that conscientious objectors against taxation, like conscientious objectors against war or religious dissenters of times past, see a personal duty not to cooperate with evil by directly contributing to the State's coffers. The tax refusenik will not pay income tax for at least three reasons: 1) It is contrary to an ethic of life-survival to support

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one's enslaver voluntarily. 2) All taxes are compulsory and the refusenik sees behind them the initiation of force, which he believes is wrong. 3) The State spends the money unwisely and on immoral ends (that is not to imply, however, that wise spending or proper purposes would somehow justify taxation).

Another article in issue No. 68 addressed the issue of "This Far: No More!". The anonymous author explained why it is necessary to answer the questions: How far will you obey the State? and At what point will you start disobeying the State? If you don't draw a line in the sand, and say "This Far, No More" then you will do anything required of you. Unless you have a point of no return, you cannot maintain your self-respect. If you don't do what you think is right, even in the face of the greatest threats, then you sin against yourself and your conscience. As this author wrote: "There is a point at which you must say 'No,' if only to retain your own integrity as a human being. Would you kill, pillage, and steal for the State simply because you are ordered to do so?" Would you spy on your family for the State? Would you turn State's witness and lie for the State to save your skin? In his book, Bettelheim points out that every conscientious German citizen was faced with similar issues during the 1930s. From the time Hitler came to power in 1933, there was a continuous series of "tests" that every German was expected to pass. Some of these touchstones included 1) using the Hitler salute; 2) swearing oaths of allegiance to the Fuhrer; 3) reporting to the authorities the dissent of "mutterers" who made critical remarks in private about their employers or the state; and 4) obedience to the laws prohibiting the tuning in of foreign radio broadcasts, even in the privacy of one's home. Although it was no simple decision, Bettelheim recounts how thousands of Germans left their homes and their country because they had reached the point of no return. They could not stomach all or some of the required behavior. (Bettelheim does not mention refusal to pay taxes to the Nazi regime, but clearly this could have been an issue of conscience for some.)

These conscientious people were faced with the issue of whether to accept the Hitler regime or to risk starting a new life somewhere else. What it boiled down to for each of them was, as Bettelheim wrote, "How many possessions am I willing to risk to remain free, and how radical a change in the conditions of my life will I have to make to preserve [my] autonomy." [p. 268] Hanging in the balance, on one side, were homes, businesses, friends, and possessions, which is what a person would have been forced to give up had he chosen to leave Germany. On the other side of the scale hung conscience, self-respect, and personal autonomy. Staying in Germany would mean falsely swearing loyalty to Hitler, using the Hitler salute in public, voluntarily obeying the edicts of the German government and paying taxes to the regime. Which side of the scale was more important to them?

In some cases, opposition to Hitler meant the splitting apart of one's family and marriage. All of the Nazi laws were designed to place loyalty to the state higher than loyalty to one's family. It was a crime for a wife not to denounce her husband if she knew that he held Hitler in contempt. Taking a stand against the German state meant

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risking one's emotional ties with the people in one's family. It also meant being deprived of one's social status. Every German that rejected Hitler and the Nazi state had to ask "[W]ill I be able to make a go of life without what have always been my main sources of security?"

Only those who knew for sure what was essential and what was ephemeral in themselves and in life could easily afford to resist the state when the costs were so extreme. Those were the people who chose to fight or escape.[281]

How does all of this apply to us in the United States at the end of the 20th century? Are we slaves because we pay nearly 40% of our income to local, state, and federal governments? Are we slaves because we send our children to government schools, which we pay for via taxes, and then have the government call them "free public schools"? Are we slaves because we need government identification cards and government numbers for most major financial transactions? How analogous is our situation to that of the conscientious Germans during the early 1930s? In other words, how close have we come to that point of no return or have we already crossed the line?

It is getting more and more difficult to live aloof from the State. There are probably laws already on the books that make it criminal not to report certain activities which the State deems criminal. In other words, you can become a criminal by not spying on your friends and family members. Nearly all the states require a Social Security number when you apply for a driver's license. If you open a personal checking account at a bank, you must have a Social Security number. If you work, even as an independent contractor, you are required to provide your "taxpayer identification number," or else have 30% of your fees deducted and forwarded to the IRS for "backup withholding." You cannot legally homeschool your children without some contact with the State. You cannot re-enter the country from abroad without a passport or some proof of citizenship. In every major transaction of life, from birth to death you must interface with State officials or regulations.

What is to be done? In the case of those in Nazi Germany, there appeared to be an escape hatch. They could emigrate to a foreign country and start a new life, and become free of the requirements that the Nazis imposed upon them while they resided in Germany. But do we voluntarists, living in the United States today, have a similar option? There is no country that I know of that recognizes the tax refusenik's conscientious objection to the payment of taxes. Where can you go to avoid the use of government identifiers? passports? state birth and death certificates? government monopoly money? In other words, where can the voluntarist go to escape what seems to be the omnipotent hand of the State? I wish I had the answer to that question.

I would be the first to recognize that the grass usually looks greener on the other

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side of the fence. We have to remember the many blessings we have here, living in the United States. Nevertheless, a slave is a slave regardless of how high a standard of living he might have, or how gentle a master he has. If the voluntaryist is resigned to stay here in the United States, about all he or she can do is to set limits to what he or she will do or not do in obedience to government commands. Each voluntaryist will draw the line at a different point, but nonetheless a line must be drawn if one's principles are to be honored. In a recent WALL STREET JOURNAL editorial about the fall of the Berlin Wall, it was mentioned that "the refusal to lie was the most powerful means of provoking a crisis in any totalitarian state." We might have to give our life as martyrs or serve time in jail. But wherever we are, whatever our situation is, we must never forget that reality is on our side. We always retain our ability to call a spade a spade, or "speak truth to power," no matter how harsh the results.

[Author's Addendum: In conjunction with this article, readers may want to consult essays in Part IV of I MUST SPEAK OUT: The Best of THE VOLUNTARYIST 1982-1999. Especially see "The Day the World Was Lost" by Milton Mayer (reprinted from Whole No. 31).]

Just Say "No!"

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 111, 4th Quarter 2001)

In this issue I am publishing an article by Ronald Neff titled "'I'm Spartacus'." The subject of his article is the American citizen's rejection of his or her Social Security benefits, a topic that cuts close to home because it hits us right in our pocketbooks. The government steals from us and then turns around and returns tax monies to us under the guise of retirement earnings.

A number of articles in THE VOLUNTARYIST have dealt with the federal government's "Indian giving." The foremost one was titled "I Don't Want *Nothing* From *Him!*" (Issue No. 31) and was reprinted in THE VOLUNTARYIST anthology. Two points from that article will be reiterated here. First, it told the story of the mother of C. V. Myers, the Canadian investment advisor. Initially, she refused to apply for her Canadian, old age pension checks. Finally, her children "cajoled her into applying." When she died, they found each and every monthly check stacked on her shelf, uncashed. She had meant "No!" and stuck by her guns. The second point of that article was this: Regardless of how much money the government steals from you in the way of payroll taxes, it is impossible in the nature of things for the government to return your own money to you. Whatever money you receive years later is money that has been stolen from someone else. Therefore, there is no justification in saying that you are "getting your money back." You are, in fact, getting someone else's money,

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and thereby participating in and sanctioning a government program of theft. I suggest that those who are more interested in this subject consult this earlier article. Copies are available if you do not have the anthology.

A second short article on this same theme appeared in Whole No. 41 in December 1989. It was written by R.S. Jaggard, M.D., who is now deceased. "Freedom Is Available" is being reprinted in this issue because it makes the point that no one is forced to accept government money. It may hurt not to, but the government is not forcing you take its benefits. As Jaggard wrote, "Avoidance of such an ethical disaster and preservation of freedom is easy. DO NOT TAKE THE GOVERNMENT MONEY. Just say, 'No'."

In preparing Ronn Neff's article for publication, I sent it out to a number of people who subscribe to THE VOLUNTARYIST in order to get their reactions. A number of them already informally belong to the "I'm Spartacus" league of people who refuse to take money from the government. Since some of them wished to preserve their anonymity, I will repeat their remarks without attribution (except one that I found published in an anarchist/atheist magazine).

One, a farmer, wrote that:

I was taught from my youth not to accept government money. However, it is only in the last seven years since reading THE VOLUNTARYIST and other anarcho-capitalist writings that I came to see the government system as a criminal institution.

If I want something that belongs to my neighbor, there are three things standing in my way: my conscience, my honor, and the law. So I look around for an entity that knows how, and is willing to overcome all three.

I find it in the U.S. government.

Oh, but I don't want to hand myself over to them.

Once in a while we receive notices in the mail, telling us we are "eligible," and we have received checks, but we have never cashed them. We just say, "No." This way we can always say, "We never took anything from you, now leave us alone."

Surely integrity and honor are more valuable possessions than immediate gratification.

A husband of a husband-and-wife team of private school teachers wrote that both had been invited by Social Security to dip into the loot for a share, and both of us have refused. We have never thought about the profit of honor in regard to what we are doing. Our choice is based more on avoiding the self-proclaimed title of thief than in gaining a profit from it. Psychologically speaking, I like the idea that we gain another portion of honor even as we avoid a dishonor. I think it is an important point to remember. Also, I think it is important to wonder a little bit about this profit called honor which has no atomic weight nor chemical number to it, but which can infuse us with an energy nonetheless.

Fred Woodworth, editor of THE MATCH! (Box 3012, Tucson, AZ 85702), published these remarks in his Issue 94 from the Summer 1999:

I myself will never ask these criminals for anything, and if necessary will live in a

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cardboard box in the park when I'm old, rather than grant these bureaucratic assholes one particle of legitimacy. Others may apply and comply, hat in hand, but not me. I'd puke up any food bought by such means, and any roof over my head that was bought by such largess would be hateful even in the coldest howling storm. Personally, I didn't come this far only to envision a day when statist charity would seem to make sense. I don't expect anybody anywhere else to behave this way, but if I myself don't then the message of this particular project - THE MATCH - becomes susceptible of some other grinning patronizer's supercilious disdain. [p. 49]

A retired widow, now living in Texas wrote: I never approved of Social Security from its inception, though I paid into it while I was working before I was married. My dad first interested me in our country, government, taxation, education, and I became politically active, in clubs, working in the precinct, etc. Then I went to the Freedom School and when I got home I dropped all political connections, even ceasing to vote, I was very enthusiastic about my new outlook, which remains with me today, and from discussions with my husband, believed he had adopted the same views. However, the day came when he decided to take Social Security checks. He wanted to get back what what his. I pointed out to him that "his" had long since been spent, possibly on the sex life of some bug, or maybe to raise Congressional salaries, but gone, squandered; that what he would get would be taken from those paying in today. I then asked him if he really wanted to be the receiver of stolen goods. My arguments were of no avail. It was almost divorce material. The first check he got was a big one as he was a few years beyond the age of eligibility, and then monthly checks. When he passed on, I went to the Social Security office and asked them to stop sending the checks. "Oh, but you can get some of it."

"Do I have to take it?" I asked.

"No, but if you don't by a certain age, you won't be able to get it"

That age has come and gone, and I have never taken Social Security. I remember Oscar Cooley wrote in a column once that he had not taken it, but the SS people forced him to, so he gave it to charity. ...

FEE once had an ad asking people to write in if they didn't take Social Security benefits. I wrote and was "rewarded" (how funny) for not taking it with their new book publications sent from time to time. Such a nice gesture on their part. I know Hans and Mary Sennholz [in the past, at least, didn't take] SS.

I wrote the Foundation for Economic Education, but they were unable to furnish more information about their ad campaign to locate people that refused Social Security benefits. Hans Sennholz informed me that these advertisements probably reached a readership of more than 100,000 people, but that "only six lonely voices got in touch with [him]." Dr. Sennholz was also very bitter about the Medicare legislation passed during the Reagan years that "practically outlawed medical care for the elderly unless they joined the Medicare System. Physicians who treat Medicare patients [a]re fined \$2000 for every treatment of private patients."

A common response among two of my correspondents was that they understood

how Social Security benefits corrupted the mindset of American senior citizens. However, due to their personal circumstances, rather than refuse government money, they accept it and then donate it to charitable causes. Of course, I am sure they recognize that a thief is a thief even if he means well or gives his loot to a good cause. Dr. Sennholz once pointed out in an article in THE FREEMAN (June 1978, pp. 337-338), that “we must stand immune to the temptations of evil, regardless of what others are doing to us. The redistribution must stop with us. ... No matter how the transfer state may victimize [us], [we] shall seek no transfer payments, or accept any.” Bob LeFevre put it somewhat differently. There is only one way “to put government in its proper place. [It] is within the grasp of every human being. The tool is his own mind and will, his own determination NOT to rely upon the government for anything at all.” (Colorado Springs GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH, July 25, 1959).

Violence and the Lie

by Alexander Solzhenitsyn

(From Issue 127, 4th Quarter 2005)

We shall be told: what can literature possibly do against the ruthless onslaught of open violence? But let us not forget that violence does not live alone and is not capable of living alone: it is necessarily interwoven with THE LIE. Between them exists the most intimate, the deepest of natural bonds. Violence has nothing with which to cover itself except the lie, and the lie has nothing to stand on other than violence. Any man who has once acclaimed violence as his METHOD must inexorably choose the lie as his PRINCIPLE. At its birth violence acts openly and even with pride. But no sooner does it become strong, firmly established, than it senses the rarefaction of the air around it and it cannot continue to exist without descending into a fog of lies, clothing them in sweet talk. It does not always, not necessarily, openly throttle the throat, more often it demands from its subjects only an oath of allegiance to falsehood, only participation in the lie.

And the simple step of an ordinary courageous man is not to partake in falsehood, not to support THE LIE! Let the lie come into the world, even dominate the world, but not through me. But writers and artists can achieve more: they can CONQUER THE LIE! In the struggle with falsehood, art has always been victorious, always wins out, openly, irrefutably for everyone! Falsehood can hold out against much in this world, but not against art.

And as soon as the lie is dispersed, the repulsive nakedness of violence will be revealed, and violence will collapse in impotence.

That is why, my friends, I believe that we are able to help the world in its white-hot hour of trial. We must not reconcile ourselves to being defenseless and disarmed;

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we must not sink into a heedless, feckless, life - but go out to the field of battle.

Proverbs about TRUTH are well-loved in the Russian language. They express enduringly the immense folk experience, and are sometimes quite surprising:

“ONE WORD OF TRUTH OUTWEIGHS THE WHOLE WORLD.”

And it is here, on an imaginary fantasy, a breach of the principle of the conservation of mass and energy, that I base both my own activity, and my appeal to the writers of the whole world.

[Editor’s Note: The LIE is any threat or violence which causes a person to go against his or her individual conscience. In my anthology, I MUST SPEAK OUT (p. 201), Solzhenitsyn answers the question: “What does it mean, *not to lie*? ... It simply means: *not saying what you don’t think, ...*”; not supporting what you don’t really support; in other words, not giving out false appearances. These excerpts are from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, THE NOBEL LECTURE ON LITERATURE (1970), New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972. From Section 7 (Concluding Remarks), pp. 37-38; freely paraphrased and combined from the translations by Thomas P. Whitney and others found on the worldwide web. Also see Os Guinness, TIME FOR TRUTH, Grand Rapids: Hourglass Books, 2000, p. 19.]

How to Advance the Cause of Liberty

by Robert LeFevre

(From Issue 154, 3rd Quarter 2012)

How can one individual assist in maximizing human well-being by advancing the cause of liberty? His first task is to learn his true nature.

1. Each of us has the ability to think and act as he pleases.
2. Each of us controls his own energy. We do it wisely or foolishly, but we do it individually. We may act on the advice or the command of others. Or we may decide not to. Our own energies remain under our individual command and control.
3. It follows that I cannot make you free; I can earn my own freedom by controlling myself instead of trying to control others.
4. What steps do I take when I wish to be free?
5. I free myself from dependency on others when that dependency is created or maintained by force. Since there is no way that I can survive without the help of others, I will always be dependent to some degree. But I can depend upon the voluntary support others provide when they willingly buy my goods or services. If I have to compel them to buy my goods or services – either directly at the point of a gun, or indirectly through governmental

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avenues – then I am acting in a way that is counter-productive and anti-freedom.

6. Having recognized this point, I break off all relations with government.
 - a) I will make no contributions to any political campaign or political party.
 - b) I will endorse no issue and no candidate.
 - c) I will not vote.
 - d) I will de-register and refuse to participate in government sponsored proceedings of any sort.
 - e) I will not run for office, nor hold a political job even if asked.
 - f) I will patronize those persons and firms that have the least to do with government.
 - g) If a firm or individual is heavily subsidized by the government, I will have nothing to do with it; it is an arm of the State.
 - h) I will not ask for government help, guidance, advice, money, or emolument of any kind.
 - i) I will accept no government check for Social Security, welfare, injury, pension, or for any difficulty I may be in. I will solve my own problems.
 - j) I will set my own standards in such a way that I impose on no one.
 - k) I will injure no one for any reason.
 - l) I will be as generous and helpful to others as my ability makes possible.
 - m) I will live up to every contractual agreement I voluntarily enter into.
 - n) I will, therefore, take great care to only enter into those agreements that are worthy of fulfillment.
 - o) I will be true to the highest and best within me, committing no act of theft, dishonesty, or violence against any other human whatsoever.

The foregoing are the rules. How many will follow them? Predictably, very few. That is why human society is in such upheaval. What I have set forth isn't popular.

But it is factual and in harmony with the reality of man.

The fact that I do not participate in government at any level and in any way does not cause the government to cease to exist. Should you reason your way through the human morass and decide to emulate the non-participation procedure, government will surely continue.

That, in itself, should cause rejoicing. The recommendations I have set forth provide a method that will be as gradual as the dawn of intellectual integrity. That is as it should be. Any other procedure will contain a reaction, a backlash that can destroy any temporary gains.

By employing the method of logic and learning, no one is coerced into accepting an unwelcome or misunderstood objective. He advances toward freedom and a free society exactly at the speed and to the degree that he is prepared for it. That is the only way it can be done. It will not be popular because we have been nurtured on the hopes of panaceas and quick political solutions. But it is the only way that will never

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have to be repeated.

Today the world is sick with the greatest social disease of all. It isn't herpes or syphilis. It is, in fact, a pagan faith in the State. Around the world, terrorists are operating under the noses of various governments, often aided and abetted by those same governments.

We will move *toward* a free society, one by one. We will never achieve a free society in the sense that we can finalize the process. The price of freedom is eternal effort aimed at achieving self-control and self-mastery. We do not achieve this by controlling others. We move toward achievement when we learn to control and govern ourselves. Freedom is self-control, not license to impose on others.

It has taken me a lifetime to learn this. I am grateful that I have lived. I am even grateful that I have made mistakes, yet continued to live so that I could learn more. Man learns by trial and error. Few of us learn much of anything by success.

I am also grateful that some across this great country of America agree with at least some of my conclusions. They are out there now, quietly minding their own business, improving their own performance, raising their own standards and willfully imposing on none.

– A WAY TO BE FREE: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ROBERT LEFEVRE, Culver City: Pulpless.com, Inc., 1999, Vol. II, pp. 496-498. Reprinted by permission of Tom LeFevre, email dated Feb. 1, 2011.

Are Voluntaryists Hypocrites for Using the Roads?

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 155, 4th Quarter 2012)

How do you respond to the interminable rejoinder, from statist, that a voluntaryist is a hypocrite insofar as he/she cannot avoid using and benefiting from services paid for by government taxation? In other words, does using the post office or driving on the highways turn us into hypocrites?

Here is my reply.

First, one must determine the definition of hypocrisy. *Wikipedia*, *The Shorter New Oxford English Dictionary*, and *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* all introduce the elements of pretense, deception, and the false profession of belief as the key description of hypocrisy. In the words of *Wikipedia*, "an alcoholic's advocating temperance" is not "an act of hypocrisy as long as the alcoholic makes no pretense of constant sobriety." The intemperate person who supports temperance is guilty of inconsistency (his actions do not match his beliefs). However, the person who hides his cigar smoking habit from his friends, and tells them that he doesn't smoke, and that they shouldn't smoke, is a hypocrite. He is trying to pretend that he is a non-

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smoker when he really isn't. The voluntaryist is certainly not a hypocrite insofar as he openly acknowledges his use of government services. Neither is a slave a hypocrite for wanting his freedom, even though he eats the food supplied by his master.

Secondly, a critic may rightfully claim that the voluntaryist's use of the roads is inconsistent with his voluntaryist beliefs. The voluntaryist would certainly agree. The voluntaryist teaches that the most moral and practical system for satisfying human wants is that based on voluntary co-operation. A consistent voluntaryist will choose not to use State services, whenever and wherever possible. When there is a practical choice - say working for the government or working for a private employer - the consistent voluntaryist would and should always choose to maintain his integrity by working for the private employer. However, sometimes there is no reasonable alternative to using government funded services, such as the roads. Then, and only then, does the voluntaryist reluctantly use something provided by taxation.

As I pointed out in my article on "The Sin of the Intellectuals" in Issue 43 of *The Voluntaryist* (April 1990),

The behavior or misbehavior of the exponents of any particular philosophy indicates more about the psychology and personality of those advocates, than proving or disproving the philosophy itself. Ideas and theories must be judged on their own merits, otherwise we are in danger of committing the *ad hominem* fallacy, of judging the message by the messenger, rather than letting the message stand by itself. [end of emailed article]

After the appearance of my email, several other subscribers offered their opinions on this topic.

Here are a few of them:

From Dr. Henry Jones (Miss.)

We all benefit from what those who came before us have created. We use language given to us freely by generations that worked to create it. We benefit from roads and bridges that exist even though they were financed by stealing and killing. We use language, roads and inventions such as the wheel that we have not paid for ourselves.

There is no way to avoid this and it does not represent hypocrisy. We are only responsible for the decisions we make freely and without coercion. I am opposed to murder yet I am forced to pay money (taxes) to support the murderer-in-chief in Washington D.C.

From Larken Rose (Pa.)

Here is my "short" answer to the "using the roads" thing: If you steal \$100 bucks from me, and decide to give me a mediocre sandwich, am I a

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hypocrite if I complain about the theft AND eat the sandwich? No. Duh.

Slight elaboration:

The roads should have been built via voluntary means. Nonetheless, as they are now, the roads still rightfully belong to the people who were robbed to pay for them. NOTHING belongs to “government.” It has a rightful claim on NOTHING, because everything it has, is stolen from others. Ultimately, no one gets anything from “government.” Whatever anyone receives from the state was either stolen from him or stolen from someone else. I would say that if you’re accepting more than was stolen from you personally, you are indirectly cheating OTHER extortion victims (by accepting their stolen property). But it is impossible to “cheat” the “government,” because the state has never had a rightful claim to anything.

From Ned Netterville (Tn.)

Benefiting from government services??? I should send the State a bill for using their pot-holed roads and service-less post office. For all the money I pay in gasoline taxes, I get the worst imaginable roads compared to what a private road system would deliver at a fraction of the State’s graft-riven price, and USPS service stinks to high heaven compared to UPS. When I think of all the added wealth the people of America would have if government didn’t confiscate and waste their money, I’m appalled. Of what benefit is a government that incites “enemies” who want to kill me because of what its covert agents and armed forces do to people in other lands--killing and maiming innocents and using that egregious behavior to deprive me of the last vestiges of my human rights in the name of--ta, ta! ha, ha!--homeland security? Government is the ultimate, overarching example of HYPOCRISY writ large.

Further comment from the Editor:

I think it is safe to conclude that in most cases use of the roads by voluntaryists is not hypocritical according to the definition of hypocrisy. Furthermore, anyone who attempts to use this criticism as a way to defeat voluntaryism is clearly guilty of the fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi*, known as raising an “irrelevant thesis.” The truth of voluntaryism depends upon a correct analysis of government as an invasive institute, of taxation as a coercive process, and of peaceful relations among individuals as being beneficial to all the involved parties. Whether or not voluntaryists are hypocrites has absolutely nothing to do with demonstrating whether or not these assertions are true.

How We Violate the Principle of NonAggression Daily - Without Even Realizing It!

by Dr. Mary J. Ruwart

(From Issue 156, 1st Quarter 2013)

If we decided we wanted a new neighborhood park, how would we go about getting one? We could call together other individuals who want the same thing and could raise enough money to own and operate the park through donations, by selling stock in a corporation set up for that purpose, or through other voluntary means. If those who did not participate in the fundraising effort decide later to use the park, we might require them to pay an entry fee. Obviously, we would be relating voluntarily and non-aggressively with our neighbors. If George didn't want to be involved either as a contributor or a park visitor, we would honor his choice.

Of course, another way we could proceed would be to vote for a tax to purchase and maintain the park. If a large enough gang of our neighbors voted for it, George's hard-earned dollars would be used for a park he didn't want and wouldn't use. If he refused to pay what our gang dictated, law enforcement agents, acting on behalf of the winning voters, would extract the tax, at gunpoint, if necessary. If he resisted too vehemently, George might even be killed in the struggle.

Wouldn't we be using a gang called "government" to steal from George? Wouldn't we be the first ones to turn guns on a neighbor who hadn't defrauded or stolen from us? Wouldn't George eventually retaliate by getting government to turn its guns on us for projects that he prefers but we want nothing to do with? Wouldn't we alternate as victims and aggressors, as minorities and majorities? Wouldn't we just be taking turns directing the law enforcement agents toward each other?

Through taxation, pacifists are *forced at gunpoint* to pay for killing machines; vegetarians are *forced at gunpoint* to subsidize grazing land for cattle; non-smokers are *forced at gunpoint* to support both the production of tobacco and the research to counter its impact on health. These minorities are the victims, not the initiators of aggression. Their only crime is not agreeing with the priorities of the majority. Taxation appears to be more than theft; it is intolerance for the preferences and even the moral viewpoints of our neighbors. Through taxation we forcibly impose our will on others in an attempt to control their choices.

As individuals, we may not support taxation and other forms of aggression-through-government. However, the composite of our separate views, as reflected in our laws, indicates that as a nation, as a society, as a collective consciousness, we

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believe that aggression serves us. As we'll see in the next few chapters, just the opposite is true. Aggression creates poverty and strife in our city, state, and nation just as surely as it does in our neighborhood.

How could it be otherwise? Aggression could hardly produce peace and plenty simply because we use it as a gang instead of as individuals. Using the same means brings us the same ends. It's plain as the nose on our face - and just as difficult to see! Only by looking at what is reflected back to us can we observe it.

Indeed, taxation and other forms of aggression-through-government are so taken for granted in our culture that one of our most popular sayings is that "nothing is certain except death and taxes." Yet slavery was once as universal. Taxation is thought to be indispensable to civilization today, just as slavery once was. Advocates of taxation claim that since most people pay assigned taxes before the guns show up, they have implicitly agreed to it as the price of living in "society." Most slaves obeyed their masters before he got out the whip, yet we would hardly argue that this constituted agreement to their servitude. Today, we have an enlightened perspective on slavery, just as one day we will have an enlightened perspective on taxes and other forms of aggression we now think of as "the only way."

Just as our ancestors rationalized slavery, we've created the illusion that taxation is legitimate. Like the volunteers who continued to shock the victim at the insistence of the scientist, we feel our actions are justified, perhaps even noble. We believe that we can create a world of peace and plenty if we are given a free hand to force those selfish others to do things our way. We feel taxation is indispensable for certain necessities (e.g., defense, clean air and water, helping the poor, etc.). Instead, as the following chapters illustrate, aggression *in any form* only hurts others - and ourselves. *We reap as we have sown.*

[Source: Dr. Mary J. Ruwart, HEALING OUR WORLD, Kalamazoo: SunStar Press, 1992, pp. 12-14. Permission from the author in email of January 11, 2011.]

Am I An American Citizen and What Might It Mean?

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 157, 2nd Quarter 2013)

This article was prompted by thoughts of a trip abroad and my perusal of the "Application For A U.S. Passport" (Department of State Form DS-11). On page one, the applicant is asked to "declare under penalty of perjury" that "I am a citizen ... of the United States"

Can I, as a voluntaryist, make that declaration? Can you?

First of all, what does it mean to be a citizen? What are the pros and cons of citizenship? Are they of any consequence?

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The word ‘citizen’ is of Anglo-Norman and Old French origin and in the context of this article means “a member of the State.” From the perspective of the United States government, every person born within the United States has these basic duties:

- ... To serve in the military, if drafted;
- ... To pay taxes on his or her worldwide income;
- ... To serve as a juror and appear as a witness when subpoenaed by a court;
- ... To obey all the laws promulgated by local, state, and federal governments.

In return, the United States government’s primary duty towards its citizens is that of providing ‘protection’ from domestic criminals and foreign enemies. Federal, state, and local governments also provide courts, roads, postal delivery, social services, and numerous other entitlements to those living within its jurisdiction. (It generally does a poor job of providing ‘services’ and assumes no responsibility for its failures.)

The main problem with government, as voluntarists see it, is that the State is a criminal organization. It claims sovereignty over a certain geographic area. Within this zone it wants everyone to become at least partially responsible for its crimes by making them citizens. It enforces a compulsory monopoly of defense (police, law and courts, and the armed forces), such that individual property owners may not decline its services, or employ another agency to provide the defense services they would prefer. To fund these monopolies, it collects compulsory levies known as taxation and operates a fiat money system (central bank with legal tender laws). In short, the State is an invasive institution because its existence rests on the initiation of coercion. According to the government, a person may not decline to fulfill his or her obligations to the State. You will be fined, arrested, and/or jailed, and probably held in “contempt” if government agents discover that you are not satisfactorily doing what you are supposed to do in fulfilling its mandates.

One of the ‘services’ provided by the American government is that of issuing passports and providing consular protection to those traveling outside the United States. Voluntarists also object to the whole concept of government passports. To wit:

- ... They are government documents.
- ... They are generally required to leave the country.
- ... They are generally required for re-entry to the United States.
- ... They allow the government to track where you have been.
- ... They are unnecessary. For much of American history (with the exceptions of the War Between the States, and the first and Second World Wars), no passport requirements existed. It was not until 1978 that it was made “illegal [for a U.S. citizen] to enter or depart the United States without” a passport. [Wikipedia, “United States passport”]

This is not to deny that there might be travel documents issued by private organizations in a free society. Some travelers may consider passports an essential part of life, but providing them need not be a government function. As I discussed in my article, “The Exit Option,” passports at one time were issued by notaries, and even

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peddlers. Furthermore, there has never been a requirement to have a passport when traveling within the United States, for example, from the East coast to the West coast. And that being the case, why should there be such a requirement when leaving El Paso, Texas for Ciudad Juarez, Mexico or from Niagara Falls, New York to Niagara Falls, Ontario? (By extension, voluntaryist logic questions why there should be any political boundaries at all.)

The whole purpose of government passports is to help the government to exercise control over its citizens, whether within or without the United States (and to generate revenue for itself in doing so).

This leads to the next question: who might be citizens of the United States?

Since many people reading this article are native-born Americans, I will only discuss the concept of birthright citizenship. This refers to people who were born within the geographical confines of the United States, and harks back to the old English common law which held that “birth and [political] allegiance go together.” [Wikipedia, “Birthright citizenship in the United States” (sub-section: “English common law”)]. Citizenship law can be very complicated, so for simplicity’s sake, I will confine the discussion of birthright citizenship to those born within the United States of parents, who themselves, were born in the United States.

Generally, according to government interpretation, a person born within the territory of the United States is a citizen of the United States, regardless of that person’s desire. You become a citizen at birth, not when you reach adulthood, at age 18 or 21. You do not consent to become a citizen. You do not have any choice in the matter. You are simply designated a citizen! And if you wish to divest yourself of that status, you must leave the country, and formally renounce your citizenship before an American consular official outside of the United States. (And if you do this for the reason of not wanting to pay taxes to the United States government, you are still obligated to pay those taxes for another ten years from the date of your renunciation.)

Jeff Knaebel, who immolated himself in India in 2011, discovered that he could not divest himself of his American nationality without assuming Indian citizenship, a fact that disconcerted him greatly. All political governments and international law discourage statelessness, which is what one becomes when one renounces one’s birthright citizenship and refuses to assume citizenship of another country. But the fact is that all people are born stateless. They certainly have not consented to become a member of any government merely by being born. If a government can unilaterally impose citizenship, then it has already assumed arbitrary jurisdiction over bodies. Perhaps that is why the Jewish zealots said that taxation (a consequence of citizenship) was no better than an introduction to slavery. If the government can assert its control over you due to the fact that you were born in an area it claims to control, then it is simply a matter of grace - on its part - as to what it allows you to do, to earn, and to keep from your efforts.

In truth and good conscience, and as a voluntaryist, I cannot affirm that I am a citizen of the United States. Why so? I don’t want to give my sanction to the United

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States government. I do not wish to support it financially. I do not wish to participate in political elections. I object to the forced collection of taxes because taxes are a euphemism for stealing. I do not want to be responsible for any of the actions of the United States government. Is there not a link between the crimes of the United States government and the citizens who compose it, those who pay their taxes, those who vote in elections, and serve in its armed forces? This is not to say, however, that I do not want to be a vibrant participant in the voluntary sector of the community within which I live. Communities have always existed before governments, and there are many peaceful ways of providing for the demands of society in the absence of the State (private business activity, cooperative societies, religiously supported institutions, and philanthropic efforts, to name just a few).

So what does it mean to be an American citizen? Is an American citizen a slave of his government? A slave is a person who is “the property of another,” a person who is “bound to absolute obedience.” The status of a slave is not a matter of choice. A slave has the major decisions of his or her life made by his or her owner. Must a citizen fight in wars declared by the American government? Must a citizen risk his or her life to defend it? Must a citizen kill those whom the government labels “enemies”? Must a citizen support the American government by paying its tax bill(s)? Is there any limit to the amount it may demand? Must a citizen be forced against his or her will to serve as a juror or as a witness in criminal or civil legal proceedings? And finally, must a citizen obey the government’s laws, many of which are inane, insane, or simply against his or her conscience? The government’s answers to these questions are obviously “Yes,” though a person may choose to say “No,” and refuse to follow its orders. Ultimately, if enough of us speak out and say “No,” the government will lose its legitimacy.

The American government can call me anything it wants, but that does not make it so. It can label me an American citizen, but it forgets that I have a say in the matter. In my own mind and in my own person I refuse to be subservient and accept its jurisdiction over me. That is why I am not an American citizen.

Articles of Further Interest

“If This Be Treason, Make the Most of It!” *The Voluntaryist*, Issue 30, February 1988.

“The Exit Option,” *The Voluntaryist*, Issue 37, April 1989.

“Conflicts of Allegiance,” *The Voluntaryist*, Issue 37, April 1989.

“Man Without a Country,” *The Voluntaryist*, Issue 49, April 1991.

“Citizenship Papers,” by Clark Hanjian, *The Voluntaryist*, Issue 49, April 1991.

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What Is the Point of My Libertarian Anarchism?

by Robert Higgs

(From Issue 157, 2nd Quarter 2013)

In college in the 1960s I was not a political person. Although I took a keen interest in politics, especially in the war that was raging in Vietnam, I concentrated on my studies, earning a living, and chasing women. After I began work as a professor, in 1968, I gravitated quickly from my collegiate New Leftism toward classical liberalism. As I learned more about Austrian economics, political economy, public choice, and history, I became increasingly libertarian (minarchist variety). My views continued to evolve, however, and by the time the 21st century arrived, if not sooner, I had finally reached my destination as a libertarian anarchist.

Although I make no apology whatsoever for this ideological identity, I do not share the seeming expectation of some of my fellow libertarian anarchists that a revolution is now, or soon will be, occurring in the direction of my preferred political ideals. Indeed, my expectation is, if anything, the reverse: it seems to me much more likely that the USA will continue to drift and lurch toward totalitarianism, though this system will surely have a unique red, white, and blue coloration to suit the American people’s history, culture, and tastes. I do not expect a dictator with a funny little mustache and a horde of brown-shirted thugs to take power after smashing heads in the streets. I expect instead an elected dictator who looks like George W. Bush or Barack Obama and a horde of police dressed in riot-suppression gear to turn the trick, though most people will not need to have their heads smashed and will go along gladly.

If I comprehend the world in this way, what, some people wonder, am I doing by embracing libertarian anarchism? Well, I am obviously not taking this position in order to come out on the winning side. If that were my goal, I would already have found a way to make myself useful in the military-industrial-congressional complex. No, I have put myself where I am now somewhat as Martin Luther did when he announced: “Here I stand. I can do no other.”

In my case, this declaration means most of all that I am simply doing what seems to me the decent thing; that taking any other ideological position would entangle me in evils of which I want no part. Although I sincerely believe that a stateless world would be better than the present world in countless ways, such as better health, greater wealth, and enhanced material well-being, I am not a libertarian anarchist primarily on consequentialist grounds, but instead primarily because I believe it is

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wrong for anyone - including those designated the rulers and their functionaries—to engage in fraud, extortion, robbery, torture, and murder. I do not believe that I have a defensible right to engage in such acts; nor do I believe that I, or anyone else, may delegate to government officials a just right to do what it is wrong for me—or you or anyone—to do as a private person.

Still, one might ask, if I do not expect that my vision of a just world can ever be realized, why do I persist in evaluating the events of the nasty “real world” by the standards realizable only in my ideal world? The answer is that everyone must have an ideal; without one, there is no standard against which one may assess the imperfect actions and events of the actual world. Without a standard, one may only shrug his shoulders, like a character in an existentialist novel, in nonchalant indifference to the political wickedness raging on all sides. Just as a devout Christian seeks to live a Christ-like life, knowing full well that no one can live up to the standard set by Jesus, so I aim to live and to make my judgments of the events I hear about in the light of the nonaggression axiom. The initiation of violence or the threat of violence against innocent others is wrong, regardless of the noble ends that one might cite to justify such violence or threat. It is wrong for me, wrong for you, and wrong for the president of the USA and his flunkies.

Like the Christian who inevitably falls into sin, I may fall short of my ideal. I may act or speak inconsistently with it. Many public issues are complicated, and in regard to them I may fail to discern the best way to act in accordance with my ideological ideal. If you let me know about my inconsistency, I can attempt to set aside my pride, admit my error, and correct it. As new issues arise, the task of sorting out the best way to deal with the most pressing problems will present itself repeatedly. Perhaps, like St. Paul in his letters to the new churches of the ancient world, we can strive to instruct one another in the most defensible understanding and practice of libertarian anarchism. Merely shouting that the existing order is rotten, is on the verge of collapse and, once it has collapsed, will be replaced by libertarian anarchism, however, seems to me so hopelessly naïve that I am inclined to urge my ideological comrades who do such shouting to get a firmer grip on themselves. One needs to combine his moral uprightness with a solidly founded understanding of the social, political, and economic world and how it works. Otherwise, our statements and actions become hopelessly quixotic.

I do not expect to live to see a world that even approximates my ideal. In fact, I greatly fear that I shall instead live long enough to see the most obscene species of police state in the saddle in the USA - after all, there is now only a short distance to go to reach this horrible destination, and many Americans seem eager to get to it as soon as possible. Nevertheless, I am comfortable with my ideological convictions. To have embraced anything else would have been a great mistake for me. I took almost a lifetime to reach my current position; I did not come to it lightly or without extended study and thought. Of course, I may still be wrong in every regard; I am a human being, and as such I am certainly subject to running off the moral and intellectual

rails. I do not propose to be paralyzed by this universal human susceptibility to error, however. Feeling the need to take a stand of some kind as a participant in the events of my time and place, I have put myself firmly where I now stand. By the light I have been given to see the right, I can do no other.

[This originally appeared on www.badquaker.com/archives/1315.]

“My Yea Is Yea, My Nay Is Nay”: Voluntaryism, Integrity and the Question of the Oath

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 161, 2nd Quarter 2014)

In his column, “The Solitary Leaker,” about Edward Snowden, David Brooks pointed out that Snowden betrayed all “honesty and integrity, He made explicit and implicit oaths to respect the secrecy of the information with which he was entrusted. He betrayed his oaths.”[1] Others have pointed out that perhaps Snowden solicited his top-secret job with the express purpose of exposing NSA secrets. Whether this was so, or whether Snowden took the job, and then discovered the perfidious extent of government surveillance, we will assume he broke whatever oaths he had sworn.

The taking of oaths is an immemorial tradition in the western world, generally connected to the relationship between the individual citizen and his government. Two people might take marriage vows, but one partner cannot imprison the other partner if the marriage promise is broken. A man does not swear an oath to Ford Motor Company when he accepts employment (though he may sign a confidentiality agreement), but when he deals with the State, he must generally swear to the truth of the facts under discussion. Most oaths are subject to the penalty of perjury, by which the government reserves the right to prosecute a person who willfully lies. Thus, it is easy to conclude that oaths are a way of forcing the truth from the recalcitrant citizen; a way of exercising government control over the citizen. Though oaths were intended to bring about truthful testimony, they were also designed to root out dissidents. Under the English Act of 1609, justices of the peace were authorized to administer a combined oath of allegiance and supremacy to any English man or woman whom they suspected of being disloyal to the king. Refusal to take the oath subjected the recusant to the punishment of *praemunire*, which meant being put out of the king’s protection, forfeiture of one’s property to the crown, and imprisonment for life or at royal pleasure.[2]

Both Baptists and Quakers suffered at the hands of the crown. In August 1664, George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends, was imprisoned for refusing to take the oath of allegiance and supremacy. When questioned by the judge of the Lancaster Assizes, he explained, “my yea or nay was more binding to me than an oath was to

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many others.” Fox stood upon Christ’s admonition “Swear not at all” (5 Matthews 33-37), and referred to the Epistle of James (Chapter 5, Verse 12) which taught all believers to abjure oaths and “let [their] yea be yea; and [their] nay, nay.” A few years before in 1662, Francis Bampfield, a Baptist minister, was ejected from his church and imprisoned for nearly 9 years. He was later imprisoned again for his persistent refusal to swear the oath of allegiance and he eventually died in Newgate prison in 1683. In 1675, William Penn and twelve other Quakers published A TREATISE ON OATHS CONTAINING SEVERAL WEIGHTY REASONS WHY PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS REFUSE TO SWEAR. They pointed out that an oath will not deter a liar from lying, and the truthful person needs no inducement or threat to tell the truth. “God has taught us to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as plainly and readily without an oath as with an oath. ... We regard the taking of an oath as contrary to the teaching of Christ, and as setting up a double standard of truthfulness, whereas truthfulness and sincerity should be practiced in all the dealings of life.”[3]

The whole concept of treason is directly related to the oath of allegiance and obedience to the laws of state. In her study of TREASON IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, Margaret Boveri pointed out that the military loyalty oath had deep implications for members of the German army during World War I. Even before the flight of the Kaiser at the end of the war, some members of the General Staff were questioning what their oaths really meant. Were they bound by oath till the day the Kaiser died, or were they released from their promises of loyalty when he abdicated the throne? By the time the Weimar Republic morphed into the Third Reich, “the habit of unquestioning loyalty to the state was so deeply ingrained [in the psyche of the German citizens] that nothing seemed able to shake it. ... Which particular government happened to be in power was of secondary importance.”[4]

However, after Hitler came to power in 1934, he had all members of the German military take an oath which stated: “I swear by God this holy oath, that I shall give my unconditional obedience to the Fuhrer of the German people and Reich, Adolf Hitler, and that I shall be prepared to sacrifice my life as a brave soldier in keeping this oath.”[5] Civilian employees of the German state were also required to swear allegiance. In 1993, “Luitgard Wundheiler remembered how her father, a judge in Marburg, Germany weighed the matter [of taking the oath].”

In 1936, her father had just received the letter sent to all German civil servants asking him to join the Nazi Party by signing a loyalty oath. He discussed it with his wife and then called the fourteen-year-old Wundheiler into his study. He gave her the letter to read and asked her if she thought he should sign. To her, his choice was clear: he should not sign it because to do so would be a lie and he never lied. Fifty-seven years later, Wundheiler still remembered the judicial clarity with which her father presented exactly what was at stake:

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Before you say yes or no so clearly and so spontaneously, I also want you to know what the possible consequences are. I don't know what the consequences will be definitely, but there will be some consequences. Under the best of circumstances, I will lose my job. Under the worst of circumstances, you will never see me again in your whole life because they will do away with me. There are a number of possibilities in between. Maybe they will put me in a concentration camp and sometime later release me, but there will be some consequences, and I want you to know that.

As it happened, her father, who was stubbornly honest and passionately committed to justice, refused to join the Nazi Party. He was summarily dismissed from the judiciary but managed to land a job as a court messenger. For the remaining years of the Nazi rule, he and his family existed barely above the poverty level.[6]

Hitler was very astute in having the oath predicated upon his person rather than upon the German nation or constitution. As World War II progressed, some German army officers became bitterly anti-Nazi, but they would not violate their obligation to obey Hitler's orders, even if they thought them criminal or contrary to the international laws of war. Boveri relates the case of one German general in Italy who received orders which he considered wrong. "He made dispositions which were contrary, and then, with his hand still resting on the telephone, pulled his pistol from its holster and put a bullet through his brain." [7] "The most curious example of oath interpretation by a professional soldier is the case of Paul Borchardt, a General Staff officer of considerable distinction, In 1938 he was dismissed from the General Staff and forced to leave the Army and he eventually left Germany because he was half Jewish. When charged by American Intelligence with spying, in 1942, he professed to be an anti-Nazi. However, he remained a German patriot who did his duty when Germany was at war, and eventually received a prison sentence of twenty years when he refused to violate his oath and give the names of his prior military contacts in Germany." [8] Near the end of World War II, those inside the German resistance movement decided to attempt to assassinate Hitler, rather than arrest him and put him on trial, because hundreds of thousands of Germans had sworn fealty to him. [9]

So what do these brief historical comments portend for voluntaryists? What lessons are to be learned?

First, stay as far away from government as you can, so you are not involved in situations where you need to take an oath or swear allegiance. Second, refuse to swear, affirm, or answer questions posed by government agents. The burden in any criminal case is on the prosecution to prove that you are guilty. You are not required

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to prove your innocence.

Third, in my article “Am I an American Citizen and What Might It Mean?” I pointed out that people are born stateless and have citizenship imposed upon them by simply being born within the geographic area controlled by a particular government. Voluntaryists want nothing to do with any government, whether it be the one that controls the land where they are born, or otherwise. In that article, I asked whether a voluntaryist could sign an application for a U.S. passport that reads, I “declare under penalty of perjury that I am a citizen of the United States.” Not only is the voluntaryist not a citizen, but the voluntaryist objects, much like the Baptists and Quakers of old, to signing any government document, much less one that carries a penalty of perjury.

One subscriber took me to task because he argued that the declaration on the passport application was not morally binding because it was made under duress. Is this a valid argument or reason for signing a government document with which you do not agree? I think not. You cannot make a mental reservation when you take an oath or make an affirmation under penalty of perjury. One’s integrity is compromised if one makes an outward sign of submission, and then maintains an inner resolution of defiance. If integrity is a matter of being whole, of being the same on the inside as on the outside, then one cannot claim duress as a reason for being dishonest. One simply says, “No, I will not do this,” and then takes the consequences, whether it be going to jail, or fleeing and hiding from government agents, or being executed for being a voluntaryist.[10] As I explained in the conclusion to “Voluntaryism and Extreme Necessity,” a man only dies once so he must be careful and respectful of how he lives. How a man lives always trumps how long he lives. Or, as Gandhi wrote, “If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.”

Footnotes

[1] NEW YORK TIMES, June 11, 2013, p. A 21.

[2] Constance Braithwaite, CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO COMPULSIONS UNDER THE LAW, York, England: William Sessions Limited, 1995, pp. 19-20.

[3] from various Quaker tracts as quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 14-17.

[4] Margaret Boveri, TREASON IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1963 (first published 1961), p. 32.

[5] *ibid.*, p. 299. Also see entry for “Hitler Oath” in wikipedia.

[6] Eva Fogelman, COURAGE AND CONSCIENCE, New York: Doubleday Books, 1994, pp. 23-24. Also see Milton Mayer, THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE FREE (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 176-181, for information about a German who was required to take the oath of fidelity and who opposed it in conscience. This excerpt is reprinted as “The Day the World Was Lost,” in THE VOLUNTARYIST, Whole Number 31, April 1988.

[7] Boveri, op. cit., p. 301.

[8] *ibid.*, p. 34. Also see “Paul Borchardt, the Abwehr and the W.J. Harding King Letters,” at www.fjexpeditions.com/frameset/borchardt.htm.

[9] *ibid.*, p. 80.

[10] David Romtvedt, “Loyalties,” THE VOLUNTARYIST, Whole Number 62, June 1993.

“You’re Not My Master; I’m Not Your Slave”: Voluntaryism and the Story of Absolutist Objectors

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 162, 3rd Quarter 2014)

The Voluntaryist Statement of Purpose concludes by advocating the withdrawal of the cooperation and tacit consent on which State power ultimately depends. This conclusion, in turn, rests on the voluntaryist insight: the understanding that all government is necessarily grounded upon general popular acceptance. In short, the majority of the people themselves, for whatever reasons, acquiesce to the demands of their government. All governments depend upon the cooperation and compliance of those over whom they rule. Governments require the sanction of their victims.

What if, instead of complying with the law government agents are trying to enforce, a person asks, “What is the punishment for refusing to comply, for refusing to do what you say?”[1] What if the citizen says, “No!”? How does a free man react to those who might imprison him for failing to follow government rules? What does he say? How does he act toward his would-be enslavers?

In his essay on how he became a voluntaryist, Peter Ragnar observed that he became a voluntaryist the day that he fully realized that no one could force him to do anything he chose not to do. To illustrate his point, he recited the confrontation between Alexander the Great and an old Indian sage, as Alexander’s army was about to cross the Ganges River. “Alexander questioned the sage about what to expect after he crossed the river.” When he was told that his army would be defeated, Alexander threatened to decapitate the sage for his insolence. The sage was unmoved, replying Alexander could watch his head fall. Then he, the sage, would be dead.”[2] This spirit of voluntaryist resistance has been repeated many times. William Grampp in Volume I of his book on the history of economics tells the story of an ancient Stoic “who was captured and told to renounce his beliefs. He refused and was tortured. Still unable to make him recant, his captors told him he would be put to death. He answered that they could do whatever they wanted with his body, but whatever they did, they could not injure his philosophy, which was in his mind. Their authority, in its physical and moral aspect, did not extend [that far].”[3]

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What these anecdotes describe is the idea that while “physical freedom can be curtailed by force,” one’s voluntary acquiescence can never be coerced. One might be killed, but one can never be forced against one’s will.[4] This lesson is repeated over and over again as one reviews the histories of conscientious objectors to conscription and war. Peter Brock, in his book *LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE*, cites many such instances. Jonathan Whipple (1794-1875) was an 18 year old carpenter and member of the Rogerene religious sect from Mystic, Connecticut. During the War of 1812, he refused to perform any military duties or pay any fines. As he related in his diary, “Of course they could imprison me, or do what they would. But they could not make me do what I thought wrong, and wicked.”

Tilghman Vestal was a Quaker conscientious objector during the Civil War. Some time after November 1863, he was court-martialed by the Confederate army “and sentenced to be punished until he would bear arms.” He was repeatedly beaten, abused, knocked down, and then stabbed numerous times with a bayonet for his refusal to obey orders to fight. Vestal remained calm throughout his ordeal, and told his tormentors “that he was a Christian and could not fight.” Once when arguing whether his position was sustained by the Scriptures, an army chaplain told Vestal that he “wouldn’t give a cent for a religion that [wa]s opposed to his country.” Vestal replied, “I wouldn’t give a cent for a country that is opposed to my religion.” Vestal was sent to brigade headquarters, and “every effort was made to induce him to go and perform the duties of a soldier, but he was firm and as inflexible as the everlasting hills. He was told that if he persisted in his course he would be subjected to severe punishment, and would finally be shot for disobedience to orders. He replied that they had the power to kill him, but neither the Federal nor the Confederate army possessed the power to force him to abandon his principles or prove false to his religion.”[5]

Another Civil War objector was William Hackett, a North Carolina farmer who was conscripted into the Confederate army in June 1863. “He was then 36 years old. He refused to bear arms and refused to purchase exemption, although he could have afforded to do so.” The officer to whom he reported told him that if he did not comply with orders he would be shot. “I told him I would not take gun nor march in the drill, so he said, ‘Which will you choose, to be shot in the evening or in the morning?’ I told him I should choose neither, He said he had full power, without permission, to kill me if I did not comply. I told him that I did not deny that he had, so far as the power of man extended, but that there was a power above man’s, and he could not remove a hair of my head without my Heavenly Father’s notice.” The next day, June 24, 1863, Hackett was ordered to fall in line with his company to drill. He refused. As he relates, “They tried to make me, and I sat down on the ground. They reminded me of the orders to shoot me, but I told them my God said to fear them not that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul;” A firing squad was then formed and ordered to “Load; Present Arms; Aim.” The guns were pointed at Hackett, who then raised his arms and prayed, “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.” Not a shot was fired. The men of the firing squad lowered their rifles “without orders, and

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some of the men were heard to say that they ‘could not shoot such a man.’ The order was then given, ‘Ground arms.’”[6]

One of the best-known stories of conscientious objectors during World War I involves two Hutterite brothers, Joseph and Michael Hofer, of South Dakota. They were court-martialed for refusing to put on military uniforms and obey orders. Sent to a prison on Alcatraz Island in California, they “were stripped to their underwear and thrown into the dungeon where there were no sanitary facilities and sea water oozed across the bare floor on which they had to sleep. Given only a little water each day, they were manacled standing with their hands high above their heads so that their feet barely touched the floor. Beside them on the floor were soldier uniforms and they were promised relief if they would put them on and agree to obey. They persisted; and the authorities could not continue their brutality. When the Hutterites emerged from the hole, their arms were hideously swollen and they were scurvy-ridden and insect-torn. Then they were transferred to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where they again refused to wear the army uniform and to work; they were confined in solitary. In two days, Joseph Hofer was taken to [the] hospital and died of pneumonia; Michael followed Joseph a few days later. Joseph’s body was returned to the Hutterite community dressed in the military uniform which [he] had resisted to the point of death.”[7]

During World War II, there were a number of conscientious objectors who took what they described as an absolutist position against war and conscription. The consistent absolutists refused to cooperate in any way, shape, or form with the American government or its representatives. Corbett Bishop (1906-1961) was one of the most famous non-cooperators. His story is related in the book *CONSCRIPTION OF CONSCIENCE* by Sibley and Jacob in their chapter “Certain Absolutists.” Bishop registered as a religious objector under the Selective Service Act and “was inducted into the Patapsco, Maryland Friends Civilian Public Service camp on March 19, 1942.” When he realized that he would not be allowed a furlough to wind down his business affairs, and when he saw that he would be forced to work without pay, he began to fast in protest. This was on June 26, 1942. “Day after day the fast dragged on, Bishop continuing to work on the camp kitchen crew for three weeks, despite increasing physical weakness. At length he was admitted to the infirmary [and] listed as ‘Sick in Quarters.’ five weeks of fasting had now elapsed.”[8] On August 3rd, Selective Service ordered him to report for work on the camp project, but due to his condition, his crew leader listed him as unfit for work. He was persuaded to end his hunger strike on August 7th, after forty-four days of continuous fasting. The camp director took him to a Baltimore hospital where he recovered his strength.

At the end of August 1942, he was transferred to the CPS camp at West Campton, New Hampshire. There he “began the practice of attacking at mealtimes the ‘slavery’ of Civilian Public Service.” He objected to the futile work done in the camps, and he “quoted from religious leaders like E. Stanley Jones: ‘Let anyone be saturated with the thought of the Sermon on the Mount and he will not only not try to argue a man

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into slavery, but he will not rest until every man is free, including himself’.”[9] By June 1943, he had reached the conclusion that the American Friends Service Committee was conspiring with the US government to enslave him and others. At this point, the Friends Service Committee wanted nothing more to do with Bishop, and turned him back over to Selective Service, which assigned him to a government camp at Mancos, Colorado on July 7, 1943. Later he was transferred to another government camp at Germfask, Michigan, where “he took furlough days which he had accumulated.” He resolved not to return to camp voluntarily.

When he was arrested on September 9, 1944, “he announced that his spirit was free and that if the arresting officers desired his body, they would have to take it without any [as]sistance on his part. Transferred to the Milan, Michigan, federal prison to await trial, he refused to eat, stand up, or dress himself. The slightest degree of ‘servility’ or seeming acquiescence in his captivity would, he maintained, compromise his case.” He was being force fed by the end of October, by having a tube pushed up through his nose. On December 6 he was brought before federal Judge Fred M. Raymond in Grand Rapids, MI. Bishop admitted that he had refused to return to camp, “but pleaded that the whole system of alternative service was unconstitutional” and violated his moral rights as a free man.[10]

He was told to appear in court on January 17, 1945, but he ignored this order. A new court date was set for January 25th. Again he refused. He was finally arrested by three FBI agents, when they appeared at his rooming house in Philadelphia, PA, on February 20, 1945. He refused to cooperate with them. Encountering his passive resistance, they dragged him from the house and drove him to the Federal Court House, where “they had to carry his limp form into the building, deposit it in the elevator, and carry it into the room of the United States Commissioner.” There was no response when Bishop’s name was called. Finally he responded “I am here -- in body only. ... I am not going to cooperate in any way, shape or form. I was carried in here. If you hold me, you’ll have to carry me out. War is wrong. I don’t want any part of it.”[11]

Bishop was taken to Moyamensing prison where he continued his passive resistance and his refusal to feed himself. Again, prison officials resorted to forced feeding. On February 26, 1945, he was carried back into the Philadelphia court room of Federal Judge George A. Welsh. “When the judge asked whether he opposed his removal to Michigan for trial, he opened his eyes and replied: ‘What you do with me is your own responsibility.’” On March 15 he was returned to Grand Rapids, still maintaining his passive resistance and still being forcibly fed. He was sentenced to four years in prison and fined one thousand dollars. Returned to prison as a sentenced offender, he continued his strike and complete non-cooperation.” He was still being tube-fed and was becoming weaker. Finally federal officials granted him a parole with the condition that he work on the Morris Mitchell co-operative farm in Macedonia, GA. “Actually, however, Bishop had signed no papers, made no promises, and regarded himself as absolutely free. Upon release he brought to an end his passive

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resistance, which had lasted for the almost incredible period of 144 days. During that time he had done nothing to assist prison officials, even to the extent of walking or rising from his cot,” eating, or using the prison toilet facilities.[12]

In September 1945, FBI agents found him in Berea, OH where they arrested him, once again, for violating his parole. He was not supposed to leave Georgia without government permission. When asked whether he was ready to come along with them “he gave what was by now the expected reply - that he would not cooperate in any way with the government’s restraint of his body. Hearing this, the agents picked up his suddenly limp body” and drove him to the Milan, Michigan prison. There the old story repeated itself. He resumed his fasting and non-cooperation; he was force-fed and again lost weight and was weakened. Finally, the Department of Justice decided that there was no point to his continued incarceration. The publicity his case was generating was negative and the war was over. He was again paroled on March 12, 1946, and again, there were no conditions, and Bishop signed no papers.[13]

“Bishop had fasted 426 days since entering prison. [He] followed, to its logical conclusion, the proposition that man should not, in any way, cooperate with the State in the waging of war, and that persons who by reason of religious training and belief are opposed thereto should not be imprisoned.”[14] The most important idea in his philosophy was the distinction between the soul and the body. “Corbett Bishop as a person was found entirely in the soul. The government could gain complete control over the body that was known as Corbett Bishop, but couldn’t control his soul, which was the real Corbett. As soon as the government began to coerce him, he responded with non-cooperation, leaving responsibility for the ‘body’ in the hands of the government.”[15] He wouldn’t do anything: eat, walk, or go to the bathroom. Bishop realized that governments can “terrorize individuals into submitting to tyranny by grabbing the body as hostage, and thus destroying the spirit. His body was taken by the American despots to conquer his spirit. They might have his body as hostage, but as long as they have it, he repudiate[d] the body, and w[ould] have nothing to do with it. Thus his spirit remain[ed] free.”[16]

Other conscientious objectors have recognized this, too. Henri Perrin was a French Roman Catholic priest imprisoned by the Germans during World War II. In his autobiography he noted that the Nazis “could keep me locked up; they could take me to a concentration camp tomorrow, they could torture me and make me cry out with pain, but they could never touch the sanctuary where my soul watched, where I alone was master. They might deceive me, abuse me, weaken me; they might get words out of me which they could take as an admission; they could kill me. But they could never force my will, for it could never belong to them; it was between myself and God, and no one else could ever touch it.”[17]

So what does all this mean for voluntaryists, who object not only to State wars but to the very institution of the State itself? It inclines them toward thinking that total, absolute non-cooperation with one’s oppressors is the most potent method ever devised to counter the State. The State is not my master; I am not its slave. It does not

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own my body or my soul, and while I sometimes cannot prevent it from kidnapping my body, I can always counter its attempts to control my soul. As Peter Ragnar put it: “physical freedom can be curtailed by force, but coercion can never buy willing acquiescence. ... You can chop people’s fingers off so they can’t write. Then you will have to cut out their tongues so they can’t speak. But ultimately you will have to cauterize their brains so they cannot think.” Or as William Glasser wrote in his book, CHOICE THEORY, “In practice, if we are willing to suffer the alternative - almost always severe punishment or death - no one can make us do anything we don’t want to do.”[18]

“Only those who know for sure what [is] essential and what [is] ephemeral in themselves and in life” can resist in this fashion.[19] Other objectors have noted that “My will power is stronger than the bayonet, and my ideas will not be shot out of my head.”[20] Another recognized that “The power of fearlessness is astonishing. They could threaten me with anything at all and not get me, because I wasn’t afraid. This was immensely liberating to me. I could be the person I was without fearing them. They had no power over me.”[21]

Endnotes

[1] This approach, of asking those who claim authority, “what is the punishment for violating this rule, so that I may decide whether to follow it or not,” was suggested by Dave Scotese, voluntarist webmaster.

[2] Peter Ragnar, “So, What Is It About ‘No’ That You Don’t Understand ... ?” THE VOLUNTARYIST, Whole No. 125, 2nd Quarter 2005, p. 7.

[3] William Grampp, ECONOMIC LIBERALISM, (Vol. 1: “The Beginnings”), New York: Random House, 1965, pp. 11 and 26, cited in Carl Watner, “The Voluntarist Spirit,” THE VOLUNTARYIST, Whole No. 124, 1st Quarter 2005, p. 7.

[4] Peter Ragnar, op. cit.

[5] Peter Brock, LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS IN AMERICA THROUGH THE CIVIL WAR, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. For Whipple, mentioned in the previous paragraph, see pp. 78, 91; for Vestal (this paragraph) see pp. 160-163.

[6] Geoffrey Bould, CONSCIENCE BE MY GUIDE: AN ANTHOLOGY OF PRISON WRITINGS, London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1991, pp. 59-60.

[7] Yuichi Moroi, ETHICS OF CONVICTION AND CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY: CONSCIENTIOUS WAR RESISTERS IN AMERICA DURING THE WORLD WARS, Lanham: University Press of America, 2208, p. 121.

[8] Mulford Q. Sibley and Philip E. Jacob, CONSCRIPTION OF CONSCIENCE: THE AMERICAN STATE AND THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR, 1940-1947, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952, p. 402.

[9] *ibid.*, pp. 402-403.

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[10] *ibid.*, p. 405.

[11] *ibid.*, p. 406.

[12] *ibid.*, pp. 407-408.

[13] *ibid.*, p. 409.

[14] *ibid.*

[15] Letter from Brad Lyttle to Carl Watner, June 20, 1986.

[16] Julius Eichel, ed., *THE ABSOLUTIST, OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE ABSOLUTIST WAR OBJECTORS ASSOCIATION*, Volume III, No. 4, May 22, 1945, p. 2.

[17] Bould, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-128.

[18] William Glasser, *CHOICE THEORY: A NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSONAL FREEDOM*, New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1998, p. 332.

[19] Bruno Bettelheim, *THE INFORMED HEART*, New York: The Free Press, 1960, p. 281.

[20] Moroi, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

[21] Bould, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

Soul Rape

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 163, 4th Quarter 2014)

The modern nation-state is predicated upon exercising control over a certain geographical territory, and depends on revenues which it generates by means of threats and/or compulsion. The English colonists, when they emigrated to New England in the early 17th century, replicated much of the political and religious environment they had left behind. Every newborn was a British citizen, a loyal subject of the King and local colonial government; everyone was considered to be by birth a member of the local Congregational church; most white males were subject to militia duty and had to pay taxes for the support of the government and church in the parish in which they lived.

Dissenters and nonconformists, like the Baptists and Quakers who chose not to support the colonial religious establishment, founded their own churches, designated their own ministers, and paid them directly (if they were paid at all). Their refusal to sanction the Congregational establishment led to fines, confiscations of property, and often imprisonment. Many were so stubborn that “they refused to let anyone pay their taxes for them. They preferred to prove their loyalty to their principles by going to jail.” One elderly Baptist widow, Esther White, spent thirteen months in jail “because she would not pay the eight-penny tax levied on her.”[1] These resisters were not tax dodgers or cheats. They could not honestly support or attend the services of a religion

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they did not believe in. “Going to prison [wa]s a hard way to avoid paying taxes,” and they often complained that “the worst part of going to jail for refusing to pay their religious taxes was the ungodly company they had to associate with there.”[2]

Their opponents in the Congregational establishment shared “a universal assumption that the stability of the social order and the safety of the state demanded the religious solidarity of all people in one church.”[3] “The safety and welfare of [the] community rested on the morality and virtue of its citizens: Christianity was the best system of morality and religion ever revealed to man; therefore, the [community] should, for its own good and the good of its people, use its taxing power to see that the Christian religion was supported and promulgated.”[4]

The Congregationalists of New England believed that separation of church and state and religious voluntaryism would be unworkable. Men were too depraved to voluntarily support the proper number of churches and ministers. “In their view a good society justified taxes for support of religion just as it did for support of law, courts, highways, and public schools.”[5] They believed that “churches were necessary to give consolation to the grieving, moral order to the common people, and the fear of God to potential lawbreakers. ... They did not trust the common man to support religion voluntarily ... because ‘history taught’ that human nature is always guided more by self-interest, passion, and lust for power than by benevolence, charity and generosity. ‘The first want of man,’ John Adams said, ‘is his dinner, the second, his girl.’” The “most important check on human depravity was” the required preaching of “morality, piety, and fear of God taught in the churches” every Sunday.[6]

The analogy between the monopolistic religious establishment and the monopolistic political establishment was a well-recognized argument used against the dissenters. “Where would society be if everyone who disliked a law refused to obey it?”[7] The question of taxation to support religion was compared to taxation to support roads, courts, and police. All were “essential to the general welfare.”[8] Religion was so important “to the safety and well-being of society that no state could exist without it.”[9] As Chief Justice Theophilus Parsons of the Massachusetts Supreme Court wrote in 1810, “the distinction between liberty of conscience and worship and the right of appropriating money is material; the former is inalienable, the latter is surrendered as the price of protection.”[10] Freedom of conscience was quite distinct from the power to raise money for a public purpose. The argument in favor of exempting “a dissenter from his parish taxes ‘seems to mistake a man’s money for his conscience.’ A contribution to the support of the regular churches, Parsons reasoned, was a contribution to the welfare of the state, and a man had no more right to be exempt from supporting a church he could not attend than to be free from school taxes because he had no children.”[11] Religious taxes, like other taxes required for the support of government, were part of the necessary cost of maintaining a government that provided protection to life, liberty, and property.[12]

Defenders of religious freedom, such as Roger Williams and Thomas Jefferson, thought differently. Henry Robinson, a contemporary of Roger Williams, compared

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the freedom to choose one's religion to the freedom to engage in work of one's own choosing. If the government could not designate what sort of work you should choose, why should it have the right to designate what religion you chose to follow? [13] Williams repeatedly used the terms "soul rape," "soul killing," and "soul oppression" to illustrate his belief "that being forced to affirm what you do not believe," or being forced to pay for it, "can harm the soul ... deforming and weakening it." [14] This "occurs when people are forced ... to give assent to orthodoxies they don't support." [15] In her book, *LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE*, Martha Nussbaum discusses Williams' views on conscience and notes that he defined conscience as a "holy Light," a "most precious and invaluable Jewel." It is the essence of a person. Williams thought that "damage to conscience is an intrinsic wrong, a horrible desecration of what is most precious about a human life." Williams describes "Soul killing" as "the chiefest murder," and "soule or spirituall Rape" [sic] as being more abominable in the eyes of God than forcing and ravishing "the Bodies of all the Women in the World," or of blowing up Parliament or cutting the throats of kings or emperors. [16] Jefferson used the words "spiritual tyranny" to describe the violation of a person's conscience. [17] When he drafted the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom in 1777, he wrote that "...to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical; that even forcing him to support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion is depriving him of ... liberty" [18]

Although Williams, and Jefferson, and members of the Baptists and other dissenting sects saw "religious taxation" as "a crime against God" and a violation of one's religious scruples, none of them ever questioned the propriety of taxation as it applied to the secular realm. [19] They did not see that if it was wrong to force a man to pay for a minister whose service he did not attend, then (by the same reasoning) it would be wrong to force a man to pay for a teacher that did not teach his children. None of them ever attacked church rates as a violation of property rights or as a confiscation of private property. To have done so would have called into question the propriety of all taxation. None of them saw taxation as a violation of the commandment prohibiting theft. What they objected to was the violation of conscience, not realizing that one's property and conscience were intimately connected. Taxation, in their mind, was okay as long as it was used for a purpose of which they approved. It was proper to them to force someone to pay for schools or roads. They saw the provision of roads, and schools, and public order as being essential to human welfare, but they did not realize that these necessary goods and services could be supplied, voluntarily, by entities other than the government. They did not see the connection between the natural right to choose one's religion and the natural right to make uncoerced choices in all other spheres of human activity. [20]

Today, voluntaryists are forced to support a political establishment, much like the dissenters of several centuries ago, who were forced to support a religious establishment. Even if one does not accept the claim that society could exist without

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the state, one ought to see that taxation, whether for religious or political purposes, is a violation of the conscience and property rights of those who oppose the initiatory use of force in human affairs. It is soul rape to be forced to sign a government tax form when one disbelieves in political government. It is soul rape to be forced to use government identification and a government passport for travel. It is soul rape to be forced to contribute to a political institution that one opposes in conscience. To paraphrase Jefferson, it is sinful and tyrannical to be forced to pay for and participate in something in which one does not believe. It is slavery to have all or part of your life controlled by others against your will. It is just as wrong to have your property stolen from you, for whatever the alleged purpose, as it is to be forced to attend a church, whose teachings you do not believe in; or to support a preacher with whom you disagree.

“The right to seek the truth in one’s own way is one of the most important and necessary responsibilities of life.”[21] As Williams would have said, to destroy this right is to destroy the soul because one is being forced to do something that one would not have willingly chosen to do. The way a man chooses to spend his money is a reflection of his personality and his conscience. To coerce a man into paying money for something he does not want or does not agree with is to demand that he surrender his property and his conscience. The common thief says, “Your money or your life.” The government says, “Surrender your money and your conscience, or we will put you in jail.” The voluntaryist is one of the few that sees these demands as equally unjust. Whether emanating from the thief or from the government, such a demand is robbery plain and simple. To describe taxation as soul rape, soul oppression, and soul killing is to seek to delegitimize the State, and to take a step toward the withdrawal of the cooperation and tacit consent on which it ultimately depends.

Footnotes

[1] William G. McLoughlin, *SOUL LIBERTY: THE BAPTISTS’ STRUGGLE IN NEW ENGLAND, 1630-1833*, Hanover: Brown University Press, 1991, pp. 8-9 and 170.

[2] *ibid.*, p. 176 and William G. McLoughlin, *NEW ENGLAND DISSENT 1630-1833*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971, 2 vols., p. 756.

[3] Winfred E. Garrison, “Characteristics of American Organized Religion,” 25 *THE ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY* (1948), pp. 14-24 at p. 16.

[4] McLoughlin, *SOUL LIBERTY*, *op. cit.*, pp. 175 and 202.

[5] *ibid.*, p. 231.

[6] *ibid.*, pp. 231 and 294.

[7] *ibid.*, p. 170.

[8] McLoughlin, *NEW ENGLAND DISSENT*, p. 610.

[9] *ibid.*, p. 594.

[10] *ibid.*, p. 611 (*italics in the original*), as summarized by Nathan Dane in his

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abridgement of Barnes vs. Falmouth.

[11] John D. Cushing, “Notes on Disestablishment in Massachusetts, 1780-1833,” THE WILLIAM AND MARY QUARTERLY, Third Series, Vol. 26, No. 2 (April 1969), pp. 169-190 at p. 184.

[12] McLoughlin, NEW ENGLAND DISSENT, p. 611.

[13] Carl Watner, “‘For Conscience’s Sake’: Voluntaryism and Religious Freedom,” in Carl Watner, editor, I MUST SPEAK OUT, San Francisco: Fox & Wilkes, 1999, pp. 404-414 at p. 408. This article originally appeared in THE VOLUNTARYIST No. 55, April 1992. Both versions are available online at voluntaryist.com/voluntaryist.pdf and voluntaryist.com/backissues/055.pdf.

[14] Martha C. Nussbaum, LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE, New York: Basic Books, 2008, p. 54.

[15] Martha Nussbaum, “Veiled Threats,” THE NEW YORK TIMES “Opinionator,” July 11, 2010 at <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/07/11/veiled-threats> at paragraph 3. Accessed June 12, 2013.

[16] Nussbaum LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE, pp. 54-55. Also see Perry Miller, ROGER WILLIAMS: HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE AMERICAN TRADITION, Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1953, pp. 127 and 264 (footnote 10).

[17] Thomas S. Kidd, GOD OF LIBERTY: A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, New York: Basic Books, 2010, p. 54.

[18] See Wikipedia entry, “Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom,” paragraphs 5 and 6 of the actual text.

[19] McLoughlin, NEW ENGLAND DISSENT, p. 611.

[20] For more on this general theme, see Watner, op. cit.

[21] *ibid.*, p. 409.

Why I Oppose Government Enumeration

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 176, 1st Quarter 2018)

[Editor’s Note: This essay originally appeared as Chapter 17 in NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS, an anthology edited by Carl Watner with Wendy McElroy, published in 2004 by McFarland & Company, Jefferson, NC. ISBN 0-7864-1595-9.]

... as I was cold and wet I sat down at a good fire in the bar room to dry my great coat and saddlebags. ... There presently came in, one after another, half a dozen ... substantial yeomen of the neighborhood, who sitting down to the fire after lighting their pipes, began a lively

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conversation upon politics [circa 1773]. As I believed I was unknown to all of them, I sat in total silence to hear them. One said, "The people of Boston are distracted." Another answered, "No wonder the people of Boston are distracted; oppression will make wise men mad." A third said, "What would you say if a fellow should come to your house and tell you he was come to take a list of your cattle that Parliament might tax them for you for so much a head? And how should you feel if he should go out and break open your barn, to take down your oxen, cows, horses, and sheep?" "What should I say," replied the first, "I would knock him in the head." "Well," said a fourth, "if Parliament can take away Mr. Hancock's wharf and Mr. Row's wharf, they can take away your barn and my house. After much more reasoning in this style, a fifth who had as yet been silent, broke out, "Well it is high time for us to rebel. We must rebel some time or other: and we had better rebel now than at any time to come: if we put it off for ten or twenty years, and let them go on as they have begun, they will get a strong party among us, and plague us a great deal more than they can now. As yet they have but a small party on their side."

- John Adams, "Old Family Letters," p. 140 cited in David McCullough, JOHN ADAMS (New York: Simon & Schuster), 2001, pp. 74-75.

The purpose of this essay is to question the assumption that we need a government program that produces national ID (and by implication observe that resistance should be based on principle not pragmatism). From the Bible story of King David (who caused a plague by counting his people), to the Roman censors who counted Joseph, Mary and Jesus in Bethlehem, to Parliament's attempt to list colonial cattle, to today's call for national identification cards the essential purpose behind government data gathering has always been the same: to enhance government's control over its subject population. The only difference between "breaking down barn doors" to count your animals, or forcibly implanting their offspring or our newborn children with a subdermal micro-chip is the advance of technology. Government identification programs, whether they are based upon a birth certificate, a wallet card (like the Social Security card), a smart card (with a programmable microchip), an implanted micro-chip, or some other form of biometric recognition are all based upon the same principle: that the government has the right and necessity to track, monitor, and control the people and property within its geographic boundaries.(1) As one commentator has pointed out, "there is no difference in principle between being forced to carry a microchip in a plastic card in your wallet or in a little pellet in your arm."(2) The question is not whether one technology is better or worse than another; the question is whether we endorse the argument that some sort of government enumeration is necessary.

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Whether what we call “national ID” would be administered at the state or federal level, each and every person in the United States would be issued a government identification, and would be required to use it in order to participate in numerous activities. A true national identification card would necessarily be universal (if not issued to every newborn it would be issued to children upon reaching a certain age) and compulsory (it would become a crime, punishable by fine or imprisonment, to refuse to accept or use such a document). It would also be a violation of the law to have more than one card, to use the card of another person, or to hold a card in the name of an alias. In short, a national ID would act as a domestic passport. In many countries around the world, where such cards actually exist, they are needed to rent an apartment, to buy a house, apply for a job, pay one’s utility and telephone bills, withdraw books from the library, or to access health care services. They could act as a surrogate drivers license, passport, voter registration card, and hunting/fishing license. (3) With micro-chip technology, such a card would act as a complete medical, financial, tax, and travel dossier, documenting where you have been, how you got there, and how you paid for the services you purchased. In conjunction with other income data reported to the Internal Revenue Service, it could be used to generate an income tax return for you every year. The chips could be linked “directly to all government agencies so the card could be used to verify that the holder has no delinquencies on taxes or child support,” no overdue library books, no parking fines, no bounced checks, and no unpaid traffic violations. They would also “have the capability to be disabled from a central location at the discretion of any government agency, instantly rendering its holder unable to travel or function in society.”(4) In short, government identification would be a “license to live,” based on the idea that “living is a government privilege, not a right.”(5) It would be an attack on every person’s right to exist upon the surface of the earth without being seized by the authorities for violating the laws governing personal identification.

Most readers picking this book up for the first time would want to know if I am opposed to all government enumeration. “Don’t censuses and other government surveys, etc., serve many useful social purposes? Aren’t the various forms of government data gathering simply like other tools and technologies that are capable of doing both good and harm?” the reader might ask. Nonetheless, “Yes,” I am really opposed to all forms of government enumeration. My objection to government enumeration and data gathering is not to the collection and registration of information per se, but rather to the coercive nature of the institution that gathers it. If some private organization chooses to solicit information from me, I may or may not respond. However, I will suffer no criminal penalties if I refuse to cooperate. When the State demands we conform to its identification procedures or collects information about us and our affairs, there are usually fines, penalties, or imprisonment for those who do not cooperate.

There is a definite ethical question involved in justifying government data gathering. Is it morally proper to coerce those who refuse to participate in

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enumeration programs or provide information demanded by the government? Do the ends justify the means? I don't necessarily object to the ends (such as improved public health or security) but I do object to the means, and question whether improper means can bring about beneficial ends for everybody.(6) In many countries if one steadfastly refuses to cooperate (e.g., in refusing to register the birth of one's children with the government, or in refusing to carry a government ID card), one will be arrested; and if one resists arrest, one will be ultimately dragged off to jail. Or if one acts in self-defense to protect one's self from arrest one will be killed for resisting an officer of the law. By using violence or the threat of violence against the non-cooperator, governments are ultimately violating the moral commandment not to kill or molest peaceful people.

Many times throughout history, government collection of seemingly innocent data (such as tribal or ethnic or racial affiliation) has resulted in horrible and deplorable genocide. The uses (and the abuses which are ultimately inherent in government administration) of government information in identifying and locating the civilian victims of the Nazis during World War II, or of the blacks in South Africa, or of the Tutsis in Rwanda, would, by themselves, be reason enough to question and then demand the cessation of government enumeration. The numbering and internment in the United States of over 100,000 American citizens of Japanese descent during World War II should be sufficient to prove my point. But even if it could be proven that government data collection benefits society in other ways (thus using the ends to justify the means), I would still be opposed because government necessarily has to act coercively in the manner in which it collects such information. I believe this to be wrong from an ethical perspective, and believe it sets the stage for the sorts of human right abuses that we have experienced under every species of government, whether democratic or totalitarian. As Robert Nisbet once noted, "With all respect to differences among types of government, there is not, in strict theory, any difference between the powers available to the democratic and to the totalitarian State."(8)

The best example of a voluntary ID system that I can offer is that presented by the credit card companies, such as Visa, MasterCard, Discover, and American Express. These companies have managed "to make their cards acceptable in all civilized countries."(9) Although they each might like to attain a coercive monopoly over the credit card market, unlike national governments, none of these organizations has the right to compel people to use their credit cards. Compare credit cards to national identification cards: no one is forced to have a credit card; some people may have more than one credit card from the same company, or even have multiple credit cards from different companies. Most people pay their bills because they want to maintain their credit rating and want to take advantage of the benefits and conveniences derived from using credit cards. But no one is put in jail: neither those who do not use credit cards, nor those merchants who refuse to accept credit cards in their businesses. In short, the absence of coercion and the existence of a "variety of legal choices does not mean chaos." As the ruminations at the end of my essay on the

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history of the state birth certificate, and the discussion in Sunni Maravillosa's essay, "ID Without Big Brother," both point out, there are many noninvasive methods which might be used to identify people in the absence of a government monopoly.

No one can really know for sure whether the September 11th terrorist attacks would have been prevented by the existence of a national ID card, or if ways could have been found to circumvent the system. Beside the moral question, there are all sorts of pragmatic problems associated with the issuance of a national ID card. Fake identity documents are to be found in every country of the world.(10) If cards were issued to some 280 million Americans in the course of a year, that means that more than a million cards would have to be issued every work day, or at least 125,000 per hour. And more importantly, what sort of document will a citizen have to show to secure such a card? There is still no fool-proof system in existence in the United States affirming legitimate birth certificates or other proofs of identity. If you question this, then how did some 3000 dead people vote in one Florida county in the 2000 Presidential election, or why do statistics show there are many millions more drivers licenses issued nation-wide than there are adults who drive? The point is there are extreme problems with the integrity of data in existing systems, so how will a new system function effectively?(11) Certainly, national ID programs in such countries as Spain, France, and Italy have not stopped terrorists, and even if it could somehow be proved that a national ID program would have prevented the September 11th hijackings, the point is that national ID is not really an issue about technology or its practical implementation.(12)

The decision whether or not to adopt national ID is really a moral and philosophical issue that we have to face: do our rights emanate from the State or do individual rights inhere in the individual? Is everyone "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights," as the Declaration of Independence puts it, or do we need to be registered and identified by government in order to be assured that we receive whatever privileges and benefits it (the government) grants us? While there certainly are dangers living in a free world, the principle behind national ID leads straight to a totalitarian society. With national I.D. there is no logical stopping point short of totalitarian control. Do we want to embrace that prospect? As "Harvey Silverglate, a criminal defense lawyer in Boston who specializes in civil liberties issues," put it

Individuals, groups, gangs - the damage that they have done pales in significance when compared to the damage done by governments out of control. There is no example of a privately caused Holocaust in history.... I would prefer to live in a world where governments are more circumscribed than in a world that gives governments enormous, unlimited powers [such as a national ID program] to keep private terrorism circumscribed. I would rather live with a certain amount of private terrorism than with government totalitarianism.(13)

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The evidence in this book lends credence to the conclusion that national ID cards are a “trademark of totalitarianism” and that no totalitarian government operates without such a system.(14)

[Footnotes are available at <http://voluntaryist.com/uncategorized/oppose-government-enumeration/#EN>]

“I Refused to Lie”

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 191, February 2020)

You are probably asking, “Who refused to lie?” Thirty some years ago I wrote and published a book review about this person who has been described in Wikipedia as follows:

The information we have ... suggests that he is the sort of person who might be embarrassing to the authorities of any country because he seems unwilling to compromise for convenience and personal comfort, and believes in saying what he thinks in situations which he clearly knows could endanger him.[1]

Any guess as to who that might be? In his latest book, this same person highlighted text from a well-known post-World War II movie. Guess that movie from the following paragraph:

The real complaining party at the bar of this courtroom is civilization. But the tribunal does say that the men at the dock are responsible for their actions. The principle of criminal law in every civilized society has this in common: any person who sways another to commit murder, any person who furnishes the lethal weapon for the purpose of the crime, any person who is an accessory to the crime is guilty.[2]

Who is the person, what is the name of the movie, and what is the connection between them?

The person is Vladimir Bukovsky (1942-2019), one of the best-known critics of the Soviet regime; the movie is JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG (1961), a well-known courtroom drama depicting the trial of Nazi judges after World War II; and the connecting link is Bukovsky’s new book, JUDGMENT IN MOSCOW: SOVIET CRIMES AND WESTERN COMPLICITY (2019).

When the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991, Bukovsky called for a Nuremberg-

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style trial to investigate all of the crimes of the Communist Party and its functionaries. A trial of sorts was held in Moscow. It found a few high level bureaucrats guilty of unconstitutional and illegal actions, but none of them were convicted as criminals. The Communist Party was not branded as a criminal organization, nor was membership in it deemed criminal, like the Nazi Party and its membership had been at Nuremberg. As Bukovsky writes, “My idea of a Moscow Tribunal died still born. Nobody in our immense country was moved by a sense of duty – to history, to truth, to the memory of the Communist regime’s victims.”[3] While in Moscow as an expert witness for the trial, he was able to surreptitiously scan thousands of pages of top-secret documents from the Communist Party archives, which then enabled him to prove his assertions that “the outside world never fully understood the Soviet system.”[4] After reviewing the documents, even he “was amazed by the scope of the Communist Party’s murderous activity across five continents.”[5]

Bukovsky’s life as a dissenter began when he was a college student at Moscow University. He helped organize some anti-communist poetry readings and wrote a biting critique of the Komsomol, the Leninist Young Communist League. In 1963, he landed in prison as a result of his activities, and in 1966 he was incarcerated in a psychiatric hospital and labeled as schizophrenic. Altogether he spent 12 years in psychiatric hospitals, prisons, or labor camps.[6] He was finally deported from the Soviet Union in December 1976, and exchanged for the general secretary of the Communist Party of Chile. He took up residence in England, gained a master’s degree in biology from Cambridge University, and continued his activities highlighting the crimes of the Soviets. He wrote *TO BUILD A CASTLE: MY LIFE AS A DISSENTER* in 1978, and *TO CHOOSE FREEDOM* in 1981.

He was one of the first to accuse the Soviets of engaging in psychiatric repression of dissidents. In 1974, Bukovsky and Semyon Gluzman released their *GUIDE TO PSYCHIATRY FOR DISSIDENTS*. Bukovsky was diagnosed with the “slow onset of schizophrenia,” and later charged with “active participation in collective actions that disturb the public order.”[7] The regime was able to continue with their imprisonment of dissidents under the guise of mental illness until Bukovsky and others in the outside world brought public pressure to bear against the World Psychiatric Association which finally condemned the Soviets in 1977.[8]

According to Bukovsky there were some six thousand people in the post-Stalin era that the Soviets “failed to break.”[9] These included not only the dissidents (citizens who criticized the practices or the authority of the Communist Party), but refuseniks (mostly Soviet Jews who were denied exit visas), and other true believers, such as the Russian Orthodox faithful. Where did the opponents of the communist system come from? The Soviets had only two possible answers: either subversive ideas must have been imported from abroad by the imperialists, or else the opponents of the regime were mentally ill. Soviet doctors defined “dissent as being a manifestation of pathological processes in the psyche.”[10] Of course, these were not the answers. Those who could not be broken had conscience enough to recognize that

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the communist system was inherently inhumane, resting on a blend of ideology and coercion.

Bukovsky's stances against the Soviet government have much to recommend him to a voluntaryist audience. He remained an advocate of non-violence for all his adult life. However, he did consider running for Mayor of Moscow in 1992, and for President of Russia in 1996. Nor did he ever mention the debate over whether socialist planners could calculate economically, started by von Mises in the 1920s. Mises believed that socialism must crumble from within because of its inability to generate market prices. However, before he died Bukovsky came to the realization that either the Party must manage the economy or else the market does. "There is no possible third way," as he put it. He also observed that Russia is a fabulously rich country, and that, even after nearly a century of communist rule, it is still immensely wealthy with oil, gas, coal, ores, gold, diamonds, timber, etc. "The laziest ruler could have ruled over it without a care in the world and with no crises." Bukovsky argued that Russia required the communist "idea" to bring about its economic collapse.[11]

One wonders whether Bukovsky would have agreed with Robert Nisbet's observation that: "With all due respect to differences among types of government, there is not, in strict theory, any difference between the powers available to the democratic and to the totalitarian state." [12] However, Bukovsky was certainly aware of how much every political system depends on legitimacy. As he wrote in *TO BUILD A CASTLE*:

... It was not atom bombs that created power, nor upon them that power rested. Power depended upon public obedience, upon a willingness to submit... [C]itizens ... fed up with terror and coercion should simply refuse to acknowledge them. The point about dealing with the Communists is that to acknowledge the reality of life they have created and to assent to their notions means *ipso facto* to become bandits, informers, hangmen, or silent accomplices. Power rests on nothing other than people's consent to submit, and each person who refuses to submit to tyranny reduces it by one two-hundred-and-fifty-millionth, whereas each who compromises only increases it.[13]

Bukovsky clearly saw the Soviet system as an evil, but he focused on his personal responsibility. Critics of Bukovsky and the dissidents said there were never enough of them to influence the regime or the outside world. But Bukovsky said, "that didn't matter. If even one of our critics had joined us, that would have been one more. The issue was not one of numbers or even practical results, but [rather] the principle of inner freedom and [the] moral responsibility of man." [14] His call to action was simple: "I refused to lie." [15] "Do what you can to preserve your own self-respect." [16] To him, silence in the face of crimes was a form of collaboration with the criminals. [17] He not only called attention to the crimes and treacheries of the

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Communist Party, but he inspired others with his integrity. As he wrote in 2014, the Soviet dissidents were not a political movement, “We were a moral movement. Our basic impulse was not to transform Russia, but simply not to be a participant in crime.”[18] “Our movement ... was not in fact political – it was *moral*. Our main stimulus was ... a refusal of complicity in its crimes.”[19] But how did such crimes happen?

[T]he inevitable conclusion was that part of the blame lay on everyone, for practically everybody, voluntarily or involuntarily, passively or actively, was an *accomplice*. Not only those who tortured and executed but all those who raised their hands at meetings and ‘unanimously approved’ the massacres, not only those who issued orders, but those who remained obediently silent. ... Like our German contemporaries we had to remember that neither the opinion of the surrounding majority, nor orders from superiors, nor even the threat to one’s life relieved us of the responsibility for our choice. ... It was better not to think of what it [a maximum term in prison] would mean for you personally. ... You just had to do as much as you could to serve your sentence with a clear conscience. With time this is how victory came to be seen – as the right to tell your descendants, *I did everything I could*. [20]

How do Bukovsky’s ideas apply to us in the United States as the third decade of the 21st Century begins? Certainly voluntaryists must continually point out that taxation is theft. We must attack the coercive monopolization of public services, the violations of property rights that take place all around us. Voluntaryists must be heard and must not close their eyes. They must refuse to lie. A fraud is a fraud; a crime is a crime even if committed by government agents. This might be costly, as the dissidents found out, but every person with a well-formed conscience must be prepared to not only exercise it, but suffer the consequences if necessary.

Could those of voluntaryist persuasion ever be labeled mentally ill? In this era of political-correctness I certainly think so. As John Hasnas explains in “The Myth of Law and Order,” “most people ... cannot even conceive of the idea of legal services apart from the government. The very notion of a free market in” all sectors of the economy, including police, law and courts, is so strange and bizarre as to be unthinkable. “The identification of order with law eliminates from public consciousness the very concept of decentralized provision of order. With regard to legal services, it renders the classical liberal idea of a market-generated, spontaneous order incomprehensible.” This example of Orwellian newspeak is “the process by which words are redefined to render certain thoughts unthinkable.”[21] If you have those “unthinkable thoughts” in your head, then there must be something wrong with you according to the critics.

This scenario has already begun to happen in the world in which we live. It is up

to voluntarists and other independent thinkers to be able to tell their descendants *I did everything I could* to prevent a 1984-style Orwellian world from descending upon us.[22]

End Notes

- [1] “Post-Soviet Union Activities,” in “Vladimir Bukovsky,” at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Bukovsky
- [2] Vladimir Bukovsky, *JUDGMENT IN MOSCOW* (n.p.: Ninth of November Press, 2019), p. 57.
- [3] Vladimir Bukovsky, “Night of the Looters (1996)” in The Bukovsky Archives, “Communism on Trial,” at <https://bukovsky-archive.com/2-night-of-the-looters/>.
- [4] Edward Lucas, “Introduction” in Bukovsky, *JUDGMENT*, op. cit., p. xi.
- [5] Bukovsky, *JUDGMENT*, op. cit., p. 37.
- [6] Paul Boutin, “A Dissident’s Legacy,” November 15, 2019 at https://www.realclearbooks.com/articles/2019/11/15/a_dissidents_legacy_78395.html.
- [7] “From the Gulag to Brexit,” at <https://meduza.io/en/slides/from-the-gulag-to-brexit>, October 29, 2019.
- [8] “The Campaign Against the Abuse of Psychiatry,” in “Vladimir Bukovsky,” op. cit.
- [9] Bukovsky, *JUDGMENT*, op. cit., p. 124.
- [10] Vladimir Bukovsky, “Punitive Psychiatry (1977),” in the Bukovsky Archives, “Communism on Trial,” at <https://bukovsky-archive.com/2018/04/20/punitive-psychiatry-1977/>.
- [11] Bukovsky, *JUDGMENT*, pp. 483-484.
- [12] Robert Nisbet, “The State,” in D.J. Enright (ed.), *FAIR OF SPEECH* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 186.
- [13] Vladimir Bukovsky, *TO BUILD A CASTLE* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), pp. 33 and 240.
- [14] Bukovsky, *JUDGMENT*, op. cit. p. 120.
- [15] *ibid.*, p. 277.
- [16] Boutin, op. cit.
- [17] Vladimir Bukovsky, *TO CHOOSE FREEDOM* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), p. 87.
- [18] Boutin, op. cit.
- [19] Bukovsky, *JUDGMENT*, op. cit., p. 141.
- [20] *ibid.*, pp. 141-142.
- [21] John Hasnas, “The Myth of Law and Order, Whole Number 123, *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, 4th Quarter 2004, p. 8, reprinted from “The Myth of the Rule of Law,” 1995 *WISCONSIN LAW REVIEW* pp. 199-233 at Section XII. (Reprinted in Whole Number 98, *THE VOLUNTARYIST* [June 1999] p. 3.) Also see Bukovsky’s

comments in JUDGMENT, op. cit. p. 202: “The [communist] ideology spurned everything that was common to mankind, including the meaning of words”
[22] Bukovsky, JUDGMENT, p. 142.

The Creed of All Freedom-Loving Men: The Voluntarist Spirit & Stoicism[1]

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 186, 3rd Quarter 2020)

As readers of THE VOLUNTARYIST know, I have helped popularize the word “voluntarist” among libertarians. But what they probably don’t know is that, if there is one other label that I would identify with my philosophy, it would be the term “stoic.” Now, why would that be? What is the relationship between the 2000+ year old philosophy of Stoicism and that of voluntarism? Is every Stoic necessarily a voluntarist? Is every voluntarist necessarily a Stoic? Certainly not in either case. For example, many current day advocates of Stoicism, such as Ryan Holiday of THE DAILY STOIC, disagree with the basic conclusions of voluntarism. “Pay your taxes; vote; be a good, obedient citizen!” he says. What is the relationship between these two philosophies?[2]

The purpose of this article is to describe the Stoic philosophy of life, outline the relationship between voluntarism and Stoicism, and to show how the latter dovetails with my voluntarist outlook on life. In researching this article, I have come to the conclusion that both voluntarism and Stoicism are philosophies which, while running on different tracks and dealing with different facets of life, can be, and in fact are, embraced by people such as myself, and may be worthy of consideration by others.

Zeno of Citium (c. 334 - c. 262 BC), a merchant of Phoenician descent, is the acknowledged founder of the Stoic school of philosophy which he began teaching in Athens around 300 BC. Since then it has had many adherents and advocates, and among them we can find many differences and disagreements. Nevertheless, over the centuries there has been a core of ideas shared by people who call themselves ‘Stoics,’ “irrespective of the differences of opinions that have existed among them.”[3] A fair but simplistic summary of the key elements of Stoicism was offered in The Daily Stoic of January 9, 2019: “Focus on what you can control. Be a good person. Manage your emotions.”

Other commentators have focused on the Stoic perception of reality. As Ludwig Edelstein put it, to the Stoics “the world is a brute fact.”[4] A is A. What does this conception of reality mean to the Stoic? It means the Stoic must recognize what is in his control and what is not. The Stoic is not insulted or disturbed by the facts. Stoics

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have always recognized that what is, is. Describing a fact of nature as evil does nothing to change its impact upon us. The law of gravity is not evil because it does not allow men to fly. It is simply an inherent part of the world. The Stoic “must endure whatever comes,” good or bad, pain or joy, suffering or happiness.[5] The Stoic is an individual whose uncompromising acceptance of reality allows that person to remain undisturbed and unperturbed by even the most tumultuous or life-threatening events.

The Stoic recognizes that most things are beyond his control. The Stoic loves whatever happens “and faces it with unfailing cheerfulness. He tells himself: this is what I have got to do or put up with. I might as well be happy about it – I can’t change it. ... Cheerfulness in all situations, especially the bad ones.”[6] As Epictetus, one of the early Stoics put it, “Bear and forbear!”[7] According to Epictetus, the real Stoic was “one ‘who is sick, yet happy; in danger, and yet happy; exiled, and yet happy; disgraced, and yet happy’.”[8] Based on this description of Stoicism, it is certainly correct to identify one of its most important features as “the conception of the free individual as a thinking, responsible, and courageous being.” Stoics have always had the courage to face the facts and act accordingly. The power and attractiveness of Stoicism lies in “the internalization of the basic truth that each individual controls his or her own behavior but not the outcome.” The Stoic realizes that he can neither control how other people behave or what their behavior brings about. The Stoic can only control himself or herself and calmly accept the consequences.[9]

One might define the goal of Stoic philosophy as living a life shaped by excellence and wisdom.[10] According to Epictetus, it is human excellence that makes a human being beautiful.[11] With other ancient philosophers, the Stoics believed in the importance of integrity, of demonstrating the harmony between their words and deeds, as illustrated by the manner in which they lived. Thus, Stoics place great emphasis on the crucial tasks of improving their character and maintaining their own integrity, regardless of the circumstances in which they find themselves. The Stoics would argue that if you want a better world, then improve yourself, for this is entirely within your control. To paraphrase Marcus Aurelius: Don’t talk about what a good person should be like. Be that person - because this is in your control. Or as Epictetus put it, action speaks louder than words. Their philosophy was no intellectual hobby, “but rather a way of life that transformed one’s character and soul” that would show in how one lived, day to day.[12]

Historically, there have been four related character traits associated with the Stoic way of life. The four cardinal virtues of the Stoic are:

Practical wisdom or Prudence which allows them to make decisions that improve their ethically good life. This includes exercising excellent deliberation, good judgment, perspective, and common sense.

Courage or Fortitude can be physical, but more broadly refers to the moral aspect of acting well under challenging circumstances. This includes perseverance, honesty and confidence.

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Self-Discipline or Temperance makes it possible for them to control their desires and actions so that they don't yield to excess. This includes orderliness, self-control, forgiveness, and humility.

Justice or Fairness refers to the practice of treating other human beings with dignity, benevolence, fair dealing, and according to the Golden Rule.[13]

So to summarize and condense what has been said about Stoicism, here are nine statements, that in the eyes of Jonas Salzgeber, author of THE LITTLE BOOK OF STOICISM, describe the Stoic personality.

1. The Stoic is serene and confident no matter what you throw at him.
2. The Stoic acts out of reason, not emotion.
3. The Stoic focuses on what he can control and does not worry about what he cannot control.
4. The Stoic accepts fate graciously and tries to make the best of it.
5. The Stoic appreciates what he has and never complains.
6. The Stoic is kind, generous, and forgiving towards others.
7. The Stoic's actions are prudent and the Stoic takes full responsibility for his behavior.
8. The Stoic is calm and is not attached to external things.
9. The Stoic possesses practical wisdom, courage, and practices self-discipline, benevolence, and justice.[14]

So much for Stoicism, but what about voluntaryism? Most readers of this article will already be familiar with the basic tenets of voluntaryism, but for those who might need a refresher, let me quote from my article, "The Voluntaryist Spirit." This article was originally written in 1983, but not published until 2004. It can be found in Issue 124 of THE VOLUNTARYIST, and unfortunately was not included in my anthology, I MUST SPEAK OUT. I mention these facts because I will be extensively quoting from this essay as the article you are now reading progresses. In that essay of 1983, I wrote:

Voluntaryism is a dual doctrine, having both a positive and a negative side. As a brand of anarchism it is the doctrine that all coercive government (what most people would refer to as "the State") should be voluntarily abandoned; that all invasions of individual self-ownership rights should cease. This is its negative side. Its positive side is that all the affairs of people should be conducted on a voluntary basis. It does not argue for the specific form that voluntary arrangements will take; only that the sovereignty of the individual must remain intact, except where the individual coerced has already aggressed upon the sovereignty of another non-aggressive individual.

To voluntaryists, this dual doctrine represents a means, an end, and an insight. The end, predicated upon a theory of self-ownership and just property titles, is a peaceful anarchy, an all voluntary society. All the

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affairs of people, both public and private, should be carried out by individuals or their voluntary associations. The means to reach such an end state must be consistent with the goal sought. As shall be demonstrated, it is in fact the means that determine the end. So only voluntary methods of persuasion, education, and nonviolent resistance to State criminality may be used to bring about voluntaryist goals. People cannot be coerced into freedom. Finally, voluntaryism is a realization about the nature of political society, viz., that all States are grounded upon popular acceptance and require the cooperation of their victims.

These three aspects of voluntaryism mutually reinforce each other. The very goal of an all voluntary society suggests its own means. The attempt to use governmental or political processes to reform or abolish the evils of coercion is not a voluntaryist means because they rest on coercion. The distinguishing marks of voluntaryism - that it is at once both nonviolent and non-electoral in its efforts to convince people to voluntarily abandon the State - set it apart from all other methods of social change. The voluntaryist insight into the nature of political power does not permit people to violently overthrow their government or even use the electoral process to change it, but rather points out that if they shall withdraw their cooperation from the system, it will no longer be able to function or enforce its will.

The voluntaryist spirit is thus an attitude of mind or a sense of life, if you will, which animates those engaged in the struggle for the recognition of self-ownership rights and the demise of the State. It is the passionate, disinterested love of justice for its own sake, regardless of the consequences that the struggle brings to one personally. It is a knowledge that if one takes care of the means the end will take care of itself. It is an understanding that the morality and principles of voluntary interaction with other self-owners is the only practical manner of living life upon this earth. It is an epistemological rejection of violence, a knowledge that coercion can never rationally convince. Come what will, wherever the chips may fall, voluntaryism seeks the perfect way but it differs from other philosophies of life in seeking it with utter disinterestedness. Right means are an end in themselves, their own reward.

How does this relate to Stoicism? In answering this question, I should like to refer to another essay that I wrote in 1995, titled "Vice Are Not Crimes," which was published in Issue 77. That particular article dealt with Walter Block's differentiation between 'libertarianism' and 'libertinism.' Libertarianism, says Walter, is the advocacy that "all non-aggressive behavior should be legal; people and their legitimately held private property should be sacrosanct." Proponents of libertinism, on the other hand, advocate "the morality of all sorts of perverse acts. This does not

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mean that non-aggressive acts such as drug selling, prostitution, etc., are good, nice or moral activities. In [Walter's] view, they are not. It means only that the forces of law and order should not incarcerate people for indulging in them.”[15] In my commentary on Walter's article, I explained why it is necessary to formulate and elaborate a personal code of ethics to explain why these perverted activities are vicious and morally wrong.

We need to be able to explain to our children why they should refrain from these pernicious activities, yet at the same time we defend the right of these people to be “the scum of the earth.” Everyone needs to understand why these perverts have rights, and why they are not admirable or to be emulated.

Walter has made a good beginning in this direction. Any successful ethical code has to be life-oriented, and focused upon personal and family survival. None of these perverted activities build strong character, independence, self-control, or teach moderation. Intemperance, promiscuous sex and taking drugs lead to self-destruction of both the mind and body, and hence are to be avoided and shunned. These vices will undoubtedly exist in a stateless world, as they do in a statist environment. Thus, we must teach our children that it takes morally strong individuals to resist both the lure of the State and the seemingly attractive snares of libertinism. They must learn that if they cannot govern themselves then someone else will try to rule them. Only self-controlled individuals can earn freedom and liberty. People must be good and virtuous to be free in mind, body, and spirit.

Proper discipline of a child teaches him how to be a self-governor. This in turn leads to success in the disciplines of life. Self-discipline is critical to success in every realm of life. If you can teach him correct principles, ultimately you'll be teaching him to govern himself. This in turn leads to a freer society. This recalls the words of Albert Jay Nock, who wrote that the only thing that the individual can do “is to present society with ‘one improved unit’.” A person who practices all sorts of vices is not an “improved” or improving person. “It is easy to prescribe improvement of others,... to pass laws,” But the voluntaryist method is “the method of each ‘one’ doing his best to improve” himself. This is the “quiet” or “patient” way of changing society because it concentrates upon bettering the character of men and women as individuals. As the individual units change, the improvement of society will take care of itself. In other words, “If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.”[16]

As I mentioned, these words were written in 1995, and obviously Stoicism is not

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mentioned even once. Yet as you can see, the whole message is imbued with the Stoic outlook on the world, namely that each person is ultimately responsible for his own life and his own decisions. A person must always take responsibility for himself or herself, and can never blame external circumstances for the choices that person makes. Even when the voluntaryist or Stoic is threatened with violence or death, that person is still responsible for how he or she acts in the face of coercion. Will there be resistance, forgiveness, or acquiescence? This question was discussed in my “Fundamentals of Voluntaryism,” which was written in the early 1980s. “It is a fact of human nature that the only person who can think with your brain is you. Neither can a person be compelled to do anything against his or her will, for each person is ultimately responsible for his or her own actions. Governments try to terrorize individuals into submitting to tyranny by grabbing their bodies as hostages and trying to destroy their spirits. This strategy is not successful against the person who harbors the Stoic attitude toward life, and who refuses to allow pain to disturb the equanimity of his or her own mind, and the exercise of reason.”[17]

As I wrote in “The Voluntaryist Spirit,” voluntaryists have a clear understanding of the nature of power (what they call “the voluntaryist insight”) - that all governments and human institutions depend on the consent and cooperation of its participants. A person who harbors the voluntaryist spirit understands that he or she cannot be compelled to do anything against his or her will. Such a person may suffer the consequences of holding to his or her belief, but as Corbett Bishop, a World War II conscientious objector who fasted for over 400 days in government prisons and hospitals, pointed out: Governments know that they can terrorize individuals into submitting to tyranny by grabbing the body as hostage and thus hoping to destroy the spirit (of conscience and resistance within the individual). But if one repudiates the body and will have nothing to do with it, the spirit remains free. This is the essence of total non-cooperation with one’s oppressors. The voluntaryist spirit also reminds us of the Stoics “who were different from others” in refusing to allow pain to disturb the equanimity of their minds and the exercise of their reason. As William Grampp relates in Volume I of *ECONOMIC LIBERALISM* (1965):

There is the story of a Stoic who was captured and told to renounce his beliefs. He refused and was tortured. Still unable to make him recant, his captors told him he would be put to death. He answered they could do whatever they wanted with his body but whatever they did could not injure his philosophy. That was in his mind and their authority, in its physical and moral aspect, did not extend [that far].

Grampp concludes this story by pointing out that “Stoicism was unique in that its martyrs did not go to death believing their ideas would change the world.”[18] They went to death because their integrity was worth more to them than their existence. For life, if the courage to die be lacking, is slavery. The man who is afraid

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to die cannot possibly live up to his vision of the truth because he fears for both his person and property. Thus the only favorable course to those who uphold voluntarism is “to remain loyal to one’s own integrity. For man, as a moral agent, has an obligation to value truth for its own sake, not for any supposed benefits it might bring as a by-product.”[19]

This story is particularly graphic because it exemplifies the importance that the Stoic places on integrity and conscience. “In the centuries after Stoicism [took root in Western civilization] men sought to apply the test of reason to their conduct and their institutions As they did this they were following a course laid out by the [early] Stoics. One may conjecture that the idea of intellectual integrity [and behavior consistent with one’s principles] came from Stoicism.”[20] The Stoics recognized that the soul of man was beyond the reach of tyrants and jailers. Of death, the Stoic had no fear because it was recognized as part of the course of nature.[21]

In his discussion of the Stoics, Grampp also pointed out that according to the Stoic view of reality nothing could be right by legislative enactment if it was not already right by nature. A coercive government cannot change the laws of nature. As Grampp concluded, Epictetus, the Stoic, urged men to defy tyrants in such a way as to cast doubt on the necessity of government itself. “If the government directed them to do something that their reason opposed, they were to defy the government. If it told them to do what their reason would have told them to do anyway, they did not need a government.”[22] Although not all contemporary Stoics would agree, voluntarists assert that just as we do not require the government to dictate what is right or wrong in growing food, manufacturing textiles, or in steel-making, we do not need a government to dictate standards and procedures in any field of endeavor.[23]

Stoicism has had a major impact on the western world because its ideas about human nature are so true and powerful. Perhaps, then, it is not so remarkable that many of their early works have survived and are still in print today. To the Stoics all men were brothers. They were true cosmopolitans and would never have said, “My country right or wrong.” They always believed that there were things so terrible and shameful that the wise man would not do them, even to save his country. Stoics have often been accused “of not participating in politics and of withdrawing from the pressing duties of the day.” But, “these critics forget that for the Stoics political life was not the only life in which morality realizes itself. ... [T]hey did not regard citizenship as the highest obligation of man.”[24] The Stoics have always acted upon the belief that “the first step in transforming society into one in which people live a good life is to teach people how to make their happiness depend as little as possible upon external circumstances. The Stoics understood that if we fail to transform ourselves, then no matter how much we [attempt to] transform the society in which we live, we are unlikely to have a good life.”[25]

To the Stoics, the sage was the wise man who was able to remain completely calm in the face of adversity. The image of such a person served as a definitive ideal, but whether there ever really was such a sage is beside the point. For the Stoics, the

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reason for developing the concept of the sage was to point to the sage as a way for us to become better human beings ourselves.[26] The kernel of Stoic living was to be found in “the self-sufficiency of the virtuous man. The wise man alone was free of the domination of his passions; free because he did right voluntarily, and because he could not be compelled to do wrong against his conscience.[27] Seneca pointed out the importance of integrity to the sage:

Philosophy teaches us to act, not to speak (*facere docet philosophia, non dicere*); it exacts of every man that he should live according to his own standards, that his life should not be out of harmony with his words (*ne orationi vita dissentiat*), and that, further, his inner life should be of one hue and not out of harmony with all his activities. This, I say, is the highest duty and the highest proof of wisdom – that deed and word should be in accord (*ut verbis opera concordent*), that a man should be equal to himself under all conditions, and always the same.[28]

Although voluntaryism and Stoicism seemingly deal with two different realms of life, the political and the social, they are intertwined. Sometimes, because of inherited genes or outside influences or simply their own common sense, there are people whose personalities are uniquely suited to both voluntaryism and Stoicism. Even if no one formally introduces these individuals to these two philosophies they will figure them out on their own.[29] And if they happen to read this article, they will come to realize why Stoicism is the creed of all freedom-loving men.

End Notes

[1] The expression “the creed of all freedom-loving men” is attributed to Mathew Arnold (1822-1888), the English poet and cultural critic, by Ludwig Edelstein, *THE MEANING OF STOICISM*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966, p. 98.

[2] On voting, see *THE DAILY STOIC*, November 6, 2018 (“Each of Us Has A Duty”). On taxes, see *THE DAILY STOIC*, April 17, 2018 (“The Taxes of Life”).

[3] Rene Brouwer, *THE STOIC SAGE*, Cambridge: University Press, 2014, p. 4.

[4] Edelstein, op. cit. p. 33.

[5] Whitney J. Oates, “Introduction,” to *THE STOIC AND EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHERS*, New York: The Modern Library, 1940, p. xxi.

[6] Ryan Holiday, *THE OBSTACLE IS THE WAY*, New York: Portfolio/Penguin, December 2, 2013, pp. 152 and 153.

[7] Massimo Pigliucci, *HOW TO BE A STOIC*, New York: Basic Books, 2017, p. 176.

[8] John Sellars, *THE ART OF LIVING*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003, pp. 20-21.

[9] William D. Grampp, Volume I *ECONOMIC LIBERALISM*, New York:

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Random House, 1965, p. xi. Also see Pigliucci, op. cit., pp. 24 and 39.

[10] Sellars, op. cit., pp. 61 and 63.

[11] See Epictetus, *THE DISCOURSES*, Book Three for a reference to “the excellence of a man.” This was pointed out by Jonas Salzgeber, author of *THE LITTLE BOOK OF STOICISM* (2019). Also see the commentary on the disinterested pursuit of excellence by Hanford Henderson, “The Aristocratic Spirit,” *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, March 1920 and reprinted at www.voluntaryist.com.

[12] These are constant themes embraced in *The Daily Stoic*. Also see John Sellars, op. cit., pp. 15 and 23.

[13] Paraphrased from Pigliucci, op. cit., p. 99.

[14] The original ten-point list has been paraphrased from www.njlifehacks.com/what-is-stoicism-overview-definition-10-stoic-principles/#tab-con-15.

[15] Walter Block, “Libertarianism and Libertinism,” Whole Number 77, *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, December 1995, p. 4.

[16] Carl Watner, “Vices Are Not Crimes,” Whole Number 77, *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, December 1995, pp. 1 and 3.

[17] Grampp, op. cit., p. 11. For “The Fundamentals of Voluntaryism” see www.voluntaryist.com.

[18] *ibid.*

[19] Carl Watner, “The Voluntaryist Spirit,” Whole Number 124 *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, 1st Quarter 2005, p. 7.

[20] Grampp, op. cit., p. 46.

[21] E. Vernon Arnold, *ROMAN STOICISM*, Cambridge: at the University Press, 1911, p. 308.

[22] Grampp, op. cit., p. 26.

[23] op. cit., “The Fundamentals of Voluntaryism.”

[24] See Oates, op. cit., p. xxiv and Edelstein, op. cit., pp. 85 and 87.

[25] William B. Irvine, *A GUIDE TO THE GOOD LIFE*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 220-221.

[26] Pigliucci, op. cit., p. 137.

[27] F. H. Colson, “Introduction,” *Philo of Alexandria*, *PHILO*, Volume 9 (of 10 volumes), Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941.

[28] Seneca, *EPISTLES*, 20.2 quoted by Sellars, op. cit., p. 30.

[29] Irvine, op. cit., p. 246.

**Part III:
Money, A Voluntaryist
Perspective**

The power [of coining money] itself is a frivolous one, of little or no utility; for the weighing and assaying of metals is a thing so easily done, and can be done by so many different persons, that there is certainly no necessity for it being done at all by a government,. And it would undoubtedly have been far better if all coins - whether coined by governments or individuals - had all been made into pieces bearing simply the names of pounds, ounces, pennyweights, etc., and containing just the amounts of pure metal described by those weights. The coins would have then been regarded as only so much metal; and as having only the same value as the same amount of metal in any other form. Men would then have known exactly how much of certain metals they were buying, selling, and promising to pay. And all the jugglery, cheating, and robbery that governments have practiced, and licensed individuals to practice - by coining pieces bearing the same names, but having different amounts of metal - would have been avoided.

- Lysander Spooner, A LETTER TO GROVER
CLEVELAND, Sec.XXII (1886).

Hardly ever do the advocates of free capitalism realize how utterly their ideal was frustrated at the moment the state assumed control of the monetary system. . . . Yet without [free, uncontrolled competition among banks in the creation of money,] the ideal of the state-free economy collapses. A “free” capitalism with governmental responsibility for money and credit has lost its innocence. From that point on it is no longer a matter of principle but one of expediency how far one wishes or permits governmental interference to go. Money control is the supreme and most comprehensive of all governmental controls short of expropriation.

- Gustav Stolper, THIS AGE OF FABLE (1942), p.
59.

A Comparison of Monies

by Carl Watner and Dave Scotese¹

From Issue 174 – 3rd Quarter 2017, and revised March, 2020

	Real Money	Counterfeit Note²	Federal Reserve Note	Bitcoin
What is it?	Coins of gold or silver	Piece of paper	Piece of paper	Generated by computer software
What is its essence?	A specific weight and purity of precious metal	Paper with ink	Paper with ink sanctioned by government	A cryptographic credit for protecting transaction data
How is it made?	Made from a metallic element found in nature	Fabricated from a man-made product without government sanction	Fabricated from a man-made product at government-approved printing facilities	Generated by computer algorithms within predetermined limits
What non-monetary uses does it have?	Industrial and ornamental uses make it valuable to people	Has no use except as paper	Has no use except as paper	None
How do multiples compare to the original unit?	Multiples have proportionally greater weight than originals	Multiples have different numbers printed on the same amount of paper	Multiples have different numbers printed on the same amount of paper	Multiples are generated by the same method as originals
Is acceptance forced or voluntary?	Voluntary: historically a medium of exchange for at least 5,000 years	Functions as a medium of exchange until its false nature is discovered	Functions as a medium of exchange by government edict (legal tender laws)	Voluntary: trading began in 2009 after the creation of the computer software

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On what does its exchange value depend?	Exchange value depends on supply – as determined by the amount mined, and demand. Its exchange value has exhibited a remarkable stability over centuries.	Presumed exchange value decreases with amounts created at the whim of the counterfeiter	Presumed exchange value decreases with amounts created by the Federal Reserve	Exchange value is determined by the market participants with reliance on the creation schedule of its finite supply
What special requirements must be met to use or accept it?	Accepted by many millions of people all over the world, generally without hesitation	Accepted until its counterfeit nature is discovered	Accepted until confidence in the issuing government evaporates	Must have appropriate internet connection and computer software or trust someone who does
Is there risk of counterfeit?	Yes, but harder to counterfeit than paper notes. See footnote 2.	100% risk	Cannot be distinguished from a perfect counterfeit	Computer authentication makes it impossible to spend attempted counterfeits
What are the security risks?	Location must be accessible. Must be protected against theft, but is not destroyed by fire, water, or wind.	Same risks as Fed Res Note and will be seized and forfeited to the government if discovered.	Location must be accessible and be protected against theft, fire, water, and wind.	Private keys must be protected from disclosure. Computer communications with others necessary to execute transactions.

¹An expansion of “A Comparison,” first published in Issue 115 (4th Quarter 2002), page 8.

²This comparison only includes counterfeit paper notes, not attempted fakes of metallic coins. During the heyday of real money, numerous devices, described as counterfeit or fake money detectors, existed. In the United States the “Gold Prohibition Act of 1934 calling for the confiscation of all gold coins, except those considered ‘rare,’ marked the disappearance of the fake coin detector.” Their modern counterpart is available through Fisch Instruments. See www.thefisch.com and THE FISCH PRECIOUS METAL BUYERS GUIDE, 6th Edition, July 2012, page 5.

“Value Me As You Please”

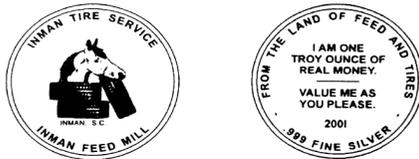
by Carl Watner

(From Issue 110, 3rd Quarter 2001)

While reviewing the NORFED operation (see my article about NORFED in this issue), my ambition to privately mint a one ounce silver coin of my own was re-kindled. Back in 1992, when THE VOLUNTARYIST completed its tenth year, I investigated the possibility of commissioning a coin commemorating its tenth anniversary. At that time, I was deterred by the expense of engraving dies, and the seeming lack of a broad enough market to make the coin economically viable. However, after meeting with the NORFED representative, Bernard von NotHaus, who carried one of NORFED’s silver Liberty coins in his pocket, I was prompted to reconsider my earlier rejection of the idea.

I started carrying a silver round (a generic, one ounce silver coin) in my pocket, along with my U.S. government coins. As I made change during the day in my retail store, customers would question me about that strange-looking coin. It became an opportunity to discuss the merits of “hard” money and offer the piece for sale. It soon became apparent that I could sell some of the bullion pieces in my store, so I shifted my thinking toward using a privately-minted one ounce silver coin to promote my two businesses, Inman Feed Mill and Inman Tire Service. I once again investigated the costs of such a project, and realized that if NORFED could market their coins for \$10, when the market price of silver was \$5 an ounce, then surely I could give my own coins a try.

Hence, my newly designed coins. The obverse and reverse of the coin appear as follows:



One of the earliest American private coins is referred to in R. S. Yeoman’s A GUIDE BOOK OF UNITED STATES COINS (50th Anniversary Edition, 1997) as the “Higley or Granby Coppers.” They are described in the GUIDE BOOK as being made by Dr. Samuel Higley, and his brother, John, of Granby, Connecticut, but their coins were never officially authorized. “All the tokens were of pure copper. ... The

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first issue, in 1737, bore the legend THE VALUE OF THREEPENCE. After a time the quantity exceeded the local demand, and a protest arose against the value of the piece. Higley, a resourceful individual, promptly created a new design, still with the Roman numeral III, but with the inscription VALUE ME AS YOU PLEASE. On the reverse appeared the words I AM GOOD COPPER.”[p. 27] My thanks to the Higleys for providing me with the idea for my design.

Paper: No Substitute for Gold!

by Robert R. Prechter, Jr.

(From Issue 110, 3rd Quarter 2001)

The only sound monetary system is a voluntary one. The free market always chooses the best possible form, or forms, of money. To date, the market’s choice throughout the centuries, wherever a free market for money has existed, has been and remains gold and currency redeemable in gold (and occasionally silver). This preference will undoubtedly remain until a better form of money is discovered and chosen. Until then, prices should be denominated not in state fictions, such as dollars or yen or francs, but in grams [or ounces] of gold [and silver]. Anyone might issue promissory notes as currency, but the acceptance of such certificates would then be an individual decision, and risk of loss through imprudence or dishonesty would be borne only by a few individuals by their own conscious choice after considering the risks. Critical to the understanding of such a system is the knowledge that private issuers of paper against gold have every long run incentive to provide a sound product, just as do producers of any product. As a result, risks would be minimal, as the market would provide its own policing. Thievery and imprudence will not disappear among men, but at least such tendencies in a free market for money would not have the potential to be institutionalized, as they are when a state controls the currency. From a macroeconomic viewpoint, occasional losses resulting from dishonesty or imprudence would be extremely limited in scope, as opposed to the nationwide disasters that state controlled paper money has facilitated throughout history, which have in turn had global repercussions. As ELLIOTT WAVE PRINCIPLE put it, “That paper is no substitute for gold as a store of value is probably another of nature’s laws.”

From *AT THE CREST OF THE TIDAL WAVE*, New Classics Library, Gainesville, GA 30503-1618. Published 1995, p. 359.

How Would Money Be Produced In a Free Society?

by Jorg Guido Hulsmann

(From Issue 145, 2nd Quarter 2010)

Who has the right to modify the quantity of money? ... [I]n a free society, the obvious answer is: all producers of money have the right to produce more money, and all the owners of money have the right to use their property as they see fit. In a truly free society, the production of money is a matter of private initiative. Money is produced and sold just as any other commodity or service. And this means, in particular, that in a free society the production of money is competitive. It is a matter of mining precious metals and of minting coins, and both mining and minting are subject to the competition emanating from all other market participants. In selling his product, the money producer competes with all other people who own money and seek to buy the same goods that he desires. And in buying factors of production, the money producer competes with the producers of chairs, theater performances, telephones, carpets, cars and so on. In a word, in a free society the production of money is constrained within fairly narrow limits, limits that are determined by the willingness of other members of society to cooperate with our money producers rather than with someone else.

– DEFLATION AND LIBERTY Auburn: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2008, pp. 29-30.

Freedom to Choose Your Own Money

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 156, 1st Quarter 2013)

- 1). *Should the Federal Reserve System be abolished?*
- 2). *If so, what monetary system should take its place?*

My answers to these questions are:

(1) No, the Federal Reserve System should not be abolished. If some people want to continue to use Federal Reserve notes as money they should be able to do so. However, they should not be able to impose their choice on others.

(2) The only monetary system to take the place of Federal Reserve notes, if they were to fall into disuse, should be a voluntary one; a

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monetary system in which people freely choose what they use for money.

These may seem surprising and even contradictory responses, so please read on to understand my reasons for answering this way.

Money is a commodity people use to facilitate their exchanges with other people. Economists refer to money as a commonly used medium of exchange. For long periods of history, money has usually been characterized by having a large value relative to its bulk and weight; by being homogeneous (one part being just like every other part); by being easily divisible into smaller parts (with each smaller unit retaining its proportional value to the whole); by being durable (not easily destroyed); and by generally maintaining its exchange value relative to other desirable things.

In a free society, the production of money would be a matter left to private enterprise. Money producers would compete with one another to offer the best product at the lowest cost. Such a system would be devoid of State coercion and government interference. The law of natural displacement (the best money will be used by traders and will displace less suitable ones) would minimize useless innovations because people would only accept new forms of money if they saw value in the improvements offered. Monetary freedom means that whatever is chosen for money must be able to survive on its own merits. A money that people must be forced to use has already lost its credibility. If the money the government wants people to use and accept had any inherent advantages over other monies, then there would be no reason to pass laws that force them to use it.

Just as there is more than one kind of credit card and payment system, e.g., Visa, MasterCard, PayPal, etc., there could be more than one kind of money, each touting its advantages to the end user. No one can tell in advance what form these monies might take because no one can know for sure what choices individuals would make or what new technologies might be discovered. Laws forcing people to use the Federal Reserve System money have frozen monetary developments at a certain stage. There is no way to determine the advances that might have occurred due to the government's discouragement of competition. Just imagine if Congress had protected the Post Office by passing laws that would have prevented people from communicating via the internet. We would never have experienced the marvels of e-mail. What we do know, however, is that ever since the Civil War between the States, the federal government has successfully prosecuted competing providers of money. As recently as 2011, the principal of NORFED, the National Organization for the Repeal of the Federal Reserve, was convicted of violating the provisions of 18 United States Code, Sections 2, 371, 485, 486 and 1341, which prohibit the creation of "private coin or currency systems [designed] to compete with the official coinage and currency of the United States" government. At the conclusion of the trial, the United States Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina, Anne T. Tompkins, issued a press release (March 18, 2011), reiterating the government's harsh attitude in suppressing potential competition:

Attempts to undermine the legitimate currency of this country are simply a unique form of domestic terrorism. While these forms of anti-government activities do not involve violence, they are every bit as insidious and represent a clear and present danger to the economic stability of this country.

Despite the government's claims to the contrary, it is not necessary that money be provided by government or that there be only one monetary system in place. Gold and silver were commonly used media of exchange for centuries. No person or institution has the right to prevent people from using their property and exchanging it in a peaceful manner. The history of private gold coinage in the United States shows what happened when the government was not there to force people to trade with a certain type of money. It was a natural right of the miner to pan or dig for gold. He could coin whatever precious metals he found so long as he did not counterfeit or imitate the coin of the United States government. Congress, at the time, did not believe it had the power to prohibit him from weighing and assaying his pieces of gold, marking upon them their weight and fineness, and exchanging them for whatever other people were willing to give for them. In Rutherfordton, North Carolina members of the Bechtler family coined over \$2 million of gold between 1831 and 1840; in Denver, Colorado the Clark & Gruber mint produced over \$500,000 of gold coins between 1859 and 1863, and in California immediately after the 1849 Gold Rush there were numerous private issues of coin and ingots. During this time, the common law right of the private coiner to issue gold coins was fully recognized by both the public which used them and the government that tolerated them.

When exchanges take place they are either voluntary or coerced. No voluntary exchange takes place unless both parties expect to better themselves. When people are forced to trade, it is obvious that their best interests (as they define them) are not being served. Coerced exchanges only benefit one party at the expense of the other. This, in fact, is just what happens when people are forced to use Federal Reserve notes in their daily transactions. But because they are so accustomed to this form of government intervention in their lives, very few people recognize the government's threat of violence or the economic disutility arising from the use of force. Political controls and struggles over money and credit have continually disrupted our society from its very inception and have made economic calculation increasingly difficult. As Gustav Stolper pointed out in his 1942 book, *THIS AGE OF FABLE*, "A 'free' capitalism with government responsibility for money and credit has lost its innocence. From that point on it is no longer a matter of principle but one of expediency how far one wishes or permits governmental interference to go. Money control is the supreme and most comprehensive of all governmental controls short of expropriation."

Now all this has been offered by way of showing why we should not have a governmental system of money. But why argue that the Federal Reserve System

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should not be abolished? Because if a voluntary monetary system is to be achieved it must be brought about in a peaceful, voluntary way. If most people are wedded to a money produced and operated by a quasi-government institution with powers to enforce coercive legal tender laws and a government monopoly over the production of money, then to “demolish, destroy, or put an end” to that system against their wishes would only result in the erection of another similar system in its place. A voluntary money system cannot be forced upon people. It must come about naturally, over time, as the result of millions of freely-made individual choices and exchanges.

The Federal Reserve System will only be replaced permanently if people come to understand the morality and practicality of a voluntary system. When a sufficient number of them recognize its merits, then instead of abolishing the Federal Reserve System, they will simply abandon it in favor of using better money. At that point, laws supporting the Federal Reserve would be rendered ineffective by people’s refusal to obey them. In such a situation, it would become nearly impossible for the government to prosecute, convict, and imprison all those who refuse to handle Federal Reserve notes.

Not only is it inconsistent to force men to be free, but people who have been forced to be free do not understand why they should accept personal responsibility for their own lives. Button-pushing (as in pushing the button to abolish the Federal Reserve System) would probably result in chaos because most people would still be looking to government to produce the money they use. To abolish is to resort to compulsion, and the free man does not force others to be free. The free man controls himself. He decides what he shall use for money. He recognizes the right of others to choose how they will live. This includes their freedom to choose what they will use for money.

The Noose Continues to Tighten But No Government Lasts Forever

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 157, 2nd Quarter 2013)

Voluntaryists have a unique outlook on government. They view the State as an invasive institution. It imposes a coercive monopoly over defense services and collects its revenues via compulsory taxation. Theodore Lowi, a professor of political science at Cornell University in the early 1980s authored a book, *INCOMPLETE CONQUEST* (1981), in which he observed:

Every action and every agency of contemporary government must contribute to the fulfillment of its fundamental purpose, which is to

maintain conquest. Conquest manifests itself in various forms of control, but in all those forms it is the common factor tying together in one system the behavior of courts and cops, sanitation workers and senators, bureaucrats and technocrats, generals and attorney generals, pressure groups and presidents. [p. 13]

Two of the most basic “forms of control” exercised by any government are that of demanding enrollment in its armed forces, and in collecting taxes based on one’s income and/or accumulated wealth. Perhaps conscription is the State’s most direct control over your life, but its ability to tax ultimately destroys the principle of private ownership. Everything you think you “own” is really held subject to its pleasure. It is as though you are a slave and your master allows you to retain certain perks.

In my article, “The Chickens Come Home to Roost - The Master Plan for ‘Tightening the Noose’” (Issue 48, February 1991), I referred to the late Fred Rowe, who wrote an article for his House of Onyx publication entitled “The IRS Electronic Monster.” Rowe set forth his predictions about the future state of economic freedoms in these United States. He described what he called an IRS “master plan” under which the United States government would push toward the creation of a cashless society. Electronic money would take the place of banknotes, and all financial transactions would be recorded via computers, which in turn would be connected to those of the IRS. The tax bureaucracy would then take this information and render every citizen and resident of the United States a tax return. Withholding on all income from your labor, and on all major financial transactions, such as the sale of real estate and investments, would enable the government to collect taxes on a mostly “pay-as-you-go” basis. Such computer transparency would also make it very difficult for tax resisters to escape the government’s clutching hand.

Whether or not such a conspiratorial master plan was ever hatched by government bureaucrats, the unceasing efforts of government to take control of its citizens’ property have continued unabated. Some of the steps in this never-ending battle for conquest and control have been:

- ...requirements that most people born in the United States have government-issued birth certificates;
- ...passage of the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution authorizing Congress to tax income;
- ...requirements that a government social security number be used in conjunction with all large financial transactions and in filing tax returns;
- ...reporting all domestic cash transactions of \$3,000 or more to the U.S. Treasury; ...attempting to require that payments to individuals of \$600 or more be reported via 1099 Forms to the Internal Revenue Service;
- ...requirements to report to the U.S. Treasury; and/or U.S. Customs movements of more than \$10,000 cash and certain other negotiable instruments to and from the U.S.;

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...requirement that applicants provide a social security number on passport applications, and upon refusal being fined \$500 by the Internal Revenue Service;

...requirements to report the existence of foreign-held bank accounts and foreign-held assets;

...requirement that anyone renouncing their U.S. citizenship for reasons of avoiding U.S. taxes be liable for U.S. taxes for the 10 years following their renunciation;

...requirement that all employers within the United States verify the eligibility of prospective hires, who, of course, must have a government social security number; [See “Countdown to Extinction,” THE VOLUNTARYIST No. 68, June 1994, page 3 for further information.]

Now the government is working out some new regulations that affect both our property and our bodies. The Obama care healthcare legislation mandates that most people in the United States purchase health insurance or pay a penalty. Its constitutionality has been argued before the Supreme Court. Increasingly, doctors are no longer able to abide by the Hippocratic Oath because third-party payers (mostly the government through Medicare and Medicaid, but also insurance companies) make health decisions for their patients. It is no longer between the doctor and patient to determine what is the best treatment. The decision is up to the party paying for that treatment. Furthermore, physicians have been ordered “to adopt electronic health records or face economic sanctions from Medicare.” The Federal Commission for the Coordination of Comparative Effectiveness Research will determine the “most-cost effective way of allocating a fixed amount of resources among” the U.S. population. [See “Notable & Quotable,” THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, March 17-18, 2012, p. A13.]

The government is also tightening the regulations surrounding the ownership of foreign bank accounts and the reporting of assets held abroad. For all practical purposes there has never been any financial or banking privacy in the United States. Currently the governments of the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom have joined together in cooperation to intensify their efforts to combat international tax evasion. On March 10, 2010, the United States enacted the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA). This legislation introduced reporting requirements for foreign financial institutions (FFIs). Many banks headquartered abroad are required to identify U.S. account holders, report certain information to the IRS about their accounts, and assess a 30% withholding tax on certain payments of U.S. source income to recalcitrant account holders or non-participating FFIs that are unwilling to provide the necessary information. In short, great pressure is being brought to bear on banks that are not subject to U.S. jurisdiction to subjugate them to IRS regulations. Some foreign banks, particularly those in Switzerland, have decided to terminate their account relationships with U.S. citizens so as to avoid these entanglements with U.S. Law:

All this is reminiscent of what Nazi Germany did to its citizens in the years before World War II. Consider these National Socialist laws: The decisive sign that the Nazis had turned their sights on the assets of Germans abroad was the law against economic sabotage enacted in December 1936. In part this was aimed at enticing Germans to repatriate their foreign nest-eggs: those prepared to admit they had assets abroad could keep a third of them after they handed over the remaining two-thirds to the Reichsbank, ... ‘Any German national who knowingly and having as a motive acts against the law in transferring assets abroad or keeps them abroad and thereby damages the German economy is punished with death’. [Nicholas Faith, SAFETY IN NUMBERS: THE MYSTERIOUS WORLD OF SWISS BANKING, New York: The Viking Press, 1982, pp. 83-84]

[P]ursuant to the Decree on the Registration of the Property of the Jews of April 26, 1938, all Jews were required to value all their assets (foreign and domestic) and register them if their value was in excess of RM 5,000. [“Expropriation (Aryanization) of Jewish Property,” General, www.edwardvictor.com/Holocaust/expropriation.htm]

As reported in THE WALL STREET JOURNAL on April 6, 2012 [p. A9], “hiding money in [tax] havens isn’t as easy as it used to be.” The U.S. Congress has “passed laws imposing draconian penalties on people hiding foreign financial assets.” How do the following U.S. government regulations compare to those of Nazi Germany?

A person who holds a foreign financial account may have a reporting obligation even though the account produces no taxable income. ... The FBAR (Report of Foreign Bank and financial Accounts) is not filed with the filer’s federal income tax return. [From IRS.gov: Report of Foreign Bank and financial Accounts (FBAR) page on the internet]

The principal purpose for collecting the information [required by Department of the Treasury Form TD F 90-22.1 - “Report of Foreign Bank and financial Accounts”] is to assure maintenance of reports where such reports or records have a high degree of usefulness in criminal, tax, or regulatory investigations or proceedings. ... Disclosure of this information is mandatory. Civil and criminal penalties, including in certain circumstances a fine of not more than \$500,000 and imprisonment of not more than five years, are provided for failure to file a report, supply information, and for filing a false or fraudulent report. Disclosure of the Social Security number is mandatory. [From TD F 90-22.1, 2nd paragraph of the “Privacy Act and Paperwork Reduction Act Note.”]

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The Internal Revenue Service also has other reporting requirements to be found in Part III (Foreign Accounts and Trusts) of Schedule B, Form 1040, as well as on Form 8938, Statement of Specified Foreign financial Assets. A Bloomberg.com news report of August 3, 2011 demonstrates that the IRS means business. Robert E. Greely, who “pleaded guilty to filing a false U.S. tax return that concealed more than \$13 million in two Swiss” bank accounts, “agreed to pay a civil penalty of \$6.8 million for failing to file a Report of Foreign Bank and financial Account form.” [“Former UBS Client Greely Admits to Hiding More than \$13 Million From IRS” by David Voreacos; citing U.S. v. Greely, 11-cr-374, U.S. District Court, Northern District of California (San Francisco).]

Why exactly are such assets of concern to the federal government, and why is the “failure to report” foreign assets a crime if it is not illegal to own them? The answer is to be found in the invasive nature of government. Governments demand obedience to their rules and regulations, whatever they may be. Governments also have an insatiable appetite for tax revenues. And furthermore, many governments have a record of confiscating the known assets of their citizens. Although the United States government has never required surrender of assets held abroad, it did confiscate all gold coins and gold bullion in 1933, and outlawed the ownership of gold by American citizens regardless of where it was located. But why would a citizen break the laws of the United States? An American might have several reasons. A person might be a conscientious objector against taxation. A citizen might think that foreign assets would be safe from seizure by the American government because they are outside its domestic jurisdiction. The citizen might also think that having assets abroad would provide a nest egg in case of the need to live abroad. Having foreign assets might provide a means to escape from government agents. During the Nazi era, how many German dissidents or German Jews would have been grateful to have had money outside of Germany, and how much easier would it have then been to leave Germany and escape the Gestapo?

There have been numerous books and articles comparing Nazi Germany and the United States of America. Leonard Peikoff’s 1982 book, *THE OMINOUS PARALLELS*, was subtitled “the end of freedom in America.” Naomi Wolf’s more recent publication, *THE END OF AMERICA* (2007) highlighted “the ten key steps that would-be despots take” when they assume control of a country. These include many that have already occurred in the United States:

- ...invoking the threat of internal and/or external dangers;
- ...establishing secret prisons where torture takes place;
- ...building paramilitary forces; ...creating a surveillance apparatus aimed at ordinary citizens;
- ...infiltrating citizen groups and organizations in an effort to disrupt their activities;
- ...arbitrarily arresting and detaining citizens and aliens;

- ...targeting key individuals who criticize the government and destroying their reputations;
- ...censoring and restricting the press;
- ...disparaging criticism of the government as “espionage” and dissent as “treason;”
- ...subverting the rule of law by ignoring constitutional provisions and due process.

No one can foretell how far these trends will affect the future, but they seem to reflect Carroll Quigley’s 1966 prediction: Man’s “freedom and choice will be controlled within very narrow alternatives by the fact that he will be numbered from birth and followed, as a number, through his educational training, his required military or other public service, his tax contributions, his health and medical requirements, and his final retirement and death benefits.” [p. 866] That is the tragic part of the prediction in his book’s title, TRAGEDY AND HOPE.

The hopeful part is reflected in what we can observe from history. No government lasts forever. The Nazi 1000 Year Reich was gone in less than two decades. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics lasted less than 100 years. In western Europe, after the Roman empire disappeared, Quigley observes that by 900 A.D. there was clearly a period “when there was no empire, no state, and no public authority. ... The state disappeared, yet society continued. ... It was discovered that man can live without a state; It was discovered that economic life, religious life, law, and private property can all exist and function effectively without a state.” [p. 83] Every generation faces natural and political challenges. Despite the tightening of the political noose, our own times are not unique. Some problems are more daunting than others, but life goes on. As Robert LeFevre used to say, the free man will find a way to be free.

Free Market Money

by Robert LeFevre

(From Issue 171, 4th Quarter 2016)

[Editor’s Note: This is taken from “Money,” (Colorado Springs: Pine Tree Press), August 1963, pp. 13-16.]

If government were to be banned from having anything to do with money at all, including all the various forms that money can take, the best of all possible systems would result, we believe.

The system would not be perfect, for men are not perfect. But errors would be restricted to local soft spots in the market; losses would have the benefit of teaching others the areas where losses occur; and best of all, political purposes could not be

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employed in the money field to advance political objectives. Instead, the natural forces within the market would control and discipline exchanges relating to money.

If this general theory were to be adopted, we believe that experience and history indicate there would be a universal demand for gold as the common medium of exchange. Gold, for a number of reasons, is an ideal medium for this purpose. It is relatively rare and relatively difficult to produce. Although new gold strikes could occur at any time, the likelihood of sufficient gold mining increases to create a disruption in the market is remote.

There is always some attrition in any money supply. Coins are lost or wear away. But new gold production would fairly well tend to offset those losses, making likely about as stable a supply of money in circulation as could possibly be managed.

This is important. For the truth of the market is contained in the fact that values, even the value of money, cannot be permanently fixed. What is desirable is a kind of money wherein greatest stability occurs. Gold appears to offer this. And if the government were barred, even though gold would be deposited and checks or notes written against it, the ratio of such writing would tend toward a relationship which the market would deem to be the most useful in its manifold trade and banking activities.

There is a general belief, often stated, that gold would not offer itself as a particularly useful metal for money because of its recognized scarcity. It is said that there aren't enough gold dollars in the whole world to take care of the enormous amount of exchanges which occur daily, both nationally and in world trade.

This belief is false. It rests upon the idea that there is some fixed relationship between goods in the market and money that could be exchanged for those goods. There is no fixed relationship. If politicians could be prevented from getting into the money business, then it would follow that a trend could develop which would result in a gradual appreciation of the value of money. This is to say that if the market place decided gold was the proper substance to use, then, even though the supply of gold so used didn't increase, the value of each gold dollar would increase.

If money is permitted to increase in value, the result would be a fall in prices. More people would be able to buy more goods with less money.

The trouble with getting this to happen relates primarily to the beliefs many people have about money. For people continue to be fooled about money. They like to think and compete in an area where dollars are used, not only as a medium of exchange but as a measure of value.

So, in spite of the fact that dollars do not measure value, but only facilitate exchanges, most persons act as though an increase in the number of dollars they possess automatically means that they are wealthier and will be able to buy more things. The reverse could be, and often is true.

Therefore, what is needed is a money system as freed from political pressure and ambition as possible. A system in which the users of money were free to select their own media of exchange would probably offer the best results. This would be a natural system in which the customer, the user of money, would be king.

Golden Disobedience

by Sandy Sandfort

(From Issue 174, 3rd Quarter 2017)

Back on April 5, 1933, His Majesty, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), had a pen and a telephone. So he issued Executive Order 6102, which made it a federal crime for Americans to own or trade gold anywhere in the world. There were some minor exceptions for some jewelry, industrial uses, collectors' coins, and dental gold, but the vast majority of the gold had to be turned in.

My father instantly understood what was going on and he didn't like it. "They're going to devalue the dollar!" he predicted.

Roosevelt didn't give much time to comply either. The deadline was May 1. And if Americans did not comply, they faced criminal prosecution under the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917. Scofflaws were looking at a fine of up to \$10,000 (1933 dollars, about a third of a million dollars today) and up to ten years in prison.

My parents made the conscious decision to become outlaws.

At every possible opportunity for the next three weeks (and substantially longer), my parents followed Gresham's law ("Bad money drives out good."), not federal law. They spent paper and collected gold. My father was a dentist, so he could own some dental gold, but that wasn't enough. He wanted to convert as much paper into gold as possible. So he gave his patients discounts for payment in gold. "Sam," a neighbor who was a banker, also helped collect gold for himself and my parents. They would repay his help later when they periodically 'laundered' gold for him and themselves.

Even after the deadline, gold still kept coming in. Mostly it was from people who didn't have the time or the inclination to turn in their gold to the government. However, many feared prosecution and were happy to deal with my parents instead of FDR. Plus they got a better deal.

So where did they launder their tidy little nest egg? Why, "South of the Border, Down Mexico Way," of course. Mexico had no Executive Order 6102.

My mother was born in the mountains above Albuquerque, New Mexico, and spoke fluent Spanish. She and my father loved traveling though the backwaters of Mexico. At first, they traveled alone, and later, after my brother and I came along, the whole family (including the dog) would go exploring in the land of mañana. (Somewhere there is a picture of me, age one, sitting on a portable potty, experiencing my first-ever bout with "Montezuma's revenge.")

My parents carried whatever gold they intended to sell, stashed in the car or on their person. The usual routine was to go to the section of town where casas de

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cambio were found. (Think of it as the “Street of the Money Changers.”) My mother – all 5’1” of her – would go down the street and show a gold double eagle to every money changer at every kiosk and storefront. In Spanish, she would ask, “How much will you pay for these?” When she found the best price, she would give my father the high sign. He would join her and they would conclude the deal. Sometimes the gold was theirs, sometimes, Sam’s. Sometimes they got pesos and sometimes dollars, depending on what they needed at the time.

So, the ‘illicit’ gold paid for a fun trip and got converted to ‘clean’ funds for themselves and Sam. What’s the crime in that?

And the Beat Goes On...

[This article first appeared in Paul Rosenberg’s FREEMAN’S PERSPECTIVE, Nov. 24, 2015.]

Titles in Search of Property: Should Fractional-Reserve Banking Come to an End?

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 112, 1st Quarter 2002)

In my article, “Free Banking and Fractional Reserves” in Issue 29 of THE VOLUNTARYIST (December 1987), I conceded that “fractional reserves do not constitute a breach of contract when and where that practice is specified” between the banker and his customer. After reading Hans-Hermann Hoppe’s 1998 article on “Fiduciary Media” (Volume 1, Number 1 of THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF AUSTRIAN ECONOMICS, pp. 19-50, with Jorg Guido Hulsmann and Walter Block), I want to reconsider this concession. Is a voluntary fractional reserve contract between consenting parties legitimate, or should a public consensus be reached that fractional reserve banking is contrary to the general legal principles of a libertarian society? The purpose of this brief article is to examine these questions, and to consider their ramifications.

The first of Hoppe’s points that I would like to review is his reference to the “tragedy of the commons.” In the conclusion to footnote 6, on page 23 of Hoppe’s original article, he explains that “every issue of fiduciary media - to titles in search of property - sets in motion a rush always starting with the bank and its clients, to fill these empty tickets with existing property; and in the course of this rush, invariably the firstcomers will physically enrich themselves (through the appropriation of existing quantities of property) at the expense of a corresponding impoverishment of latecomers, whose quantity of existing property is physically diminished while they have been left with a larger number of property tickets.” In other words, when customers of a fractional reserve bank make a “run on the bank”, the firstcomers get

the money, while the latecomers are left holding the proverbial bag with nothing in it. Or, as Murray Rothbard wrote in *WHAT HAS GOVERNMENT DONE TO OUR MONEY?*:

The issue of warehouse receipts for non-existent goods, identical with genuine receipts, is fraud upon those who possess claims to nonexistent property. ... *Which* particular receipts are fraudulent can only be discovered *after* a run on the bank has occurred (since all the receipts look alike), and the latecoming claimants are left high and dry. [p. 24, fn 17]

At the peak of the silver market in early 1980, the Hunt brothers and other speculators were “squeezing” the market. They did this by owning an enormous stockpile of silver bullion and owning future contracts under which they were entitled to purchase even more silver. The Hunts were “long” in the market, hoping for further price appreciation; while the “shorts,” or people who had sold silver they didn’t own, were hoping that the price would decline. Then they could profit from buying silver at a lower price in order to fulfill their selling contracts which were at a higher price. Every “squeeze” or attempt to “corner” the market usually involves a situation similar to the “tragedy of the commons,” or one similar to a “run” on the bank. If no one sold property they didn’t own, there would be considerably less danger of market speculations between the bears and the bulls. Queries: Should the sale and purchase of naked futures contracts and short stock sales be abandoned in a free market? Should speculators be able to buy and sell contracts to non-existent quantities of things which they promise to deliver in the future - or to commodities which they don’t properly have title to - and then be able to satisfy these contracts by offset rather than actual physical delivery? What parallel exists between fractional-reserve banking and short sales on the stock market and commodity speculation via the futures market?

While I am not prepared to answer these questions in this article, the question of promising to buy and sell property which one does not own and does not have on hand was astutely discussed by W. Stanley Jevons in his book *MONEY AND THE MECHANISM OF EXCHANGE* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1919). In Chapter XVII, “The Nature and Varieties of Promissory Notes,” Jevons made the following observations:

He who issues a representative or promissory document, engaging to give a certain quantity of a defined commodity in return for the document when presented, may really make any one of three distinct engagements:

1. He may promise to keep a certain identical article in his possession until it is called for.
2. He may engage to have in his possession a certain amount of commodity ready to meet the promissory notes, without distinguishing between portion and portion of a similar substance.
3. The undertaking may merely be to the effect that the required commodity

shall be forthcoming when the note is presented, no covenant being made as to the quantity to be held in stock for the purpose.

Specific Deposit Warrant

The most satisfactory kind of promissory document is the first, which is represented by bills of lading, pawn-tickets, dock-warrants, or certificates which establish ownership to a definite object. ... The important point concerning such promissory notes is, that they cannot possibly be issued in excess of the goods actually deposited, unless by distinct fraud. ...

General Deposit Warrant

We pass to the case in which the issuer of a promissory document engages to keep on hand goods exactly equivalent in quantity and quality to what are specified thereon, without taking note of individual parcels. ... The difference [between a specific deposit warrant and a general one] seems to be slight, but it is really very important, as opening the way to a lax fulfillment of the contract. ...

Difference between a Special and a General Promise

He who has made a special promise to give definite parcels of goods in return for particular individual papers, cannot issue any such promissory papers without holding corresponding goods. If he does so, he will continually be liable to be convicted of fraud or default by the presentation of a particular document.

If the promises made by him, however, are only general ones, any promissory document can be met by any portion of the commodity of the proper quality, and it will be necessary to present most or all of the documents in order to disclose the default. The way is thus opened for the speculative issue of promissory notes. ...

Moreover, it now becomes possible to create a fictitious supply of a commodity, that is, to make people believe that a supply exists which does not exist. ... [emphasis added] It might be urged, indeed, that there is a natural right belonging to all persons to make promises, if they can thereby benefit themselves. ... [But] it used to be held as a general rule of law, that any present grant or assignment of goods not in existence is without operation. Though the rule seems to be generally disregarded, there are many cases in which it might be advantageously enforced.[pp. 201-206]

Another topic related to the “natural right to make promises” regards the enforceability of voluntary slavery contracts in a free society. Should an individual be able to make a contract promising that he or she will become a slave? What happens if the promisor willingly becomes a slave, and then changes his or her mind? Murray Rothbard in *THE ETHICS OF LIBERTY* examines these questions. He concludes that voluntary slavery contracts should be unenforceable because “there is no transfer of title” when Smith promises to abide by the wishes of Jones for the rest of his life. “Smith’s control over his own body and will are *inalienable*. Since that control

cannot be alienated, the agreement was not a valid contract, and therefore should not be enforceable. Smith's agreement was a *mere* promise, which it might be held he is morally obligated to keep, but which should not be legally obligatory." [p. 135]

Rothbard also notes that the very concept of "voluntary slavery" is a contradictory one: "for so long as a laborer remains totally subservient to his master's will voluntarily, he is not yet a slave since his submission is voluntary; whereas, if he later changed his mind and the master enforced his slavery by violence, the slavery would not then be voluntary." In short, Rothbard concludes that we are limited by "the facts of the human condition [and] by the nature of man and his world." [pp. 40-41] In his consideration of slave contracts, Rothbard takes a position very analogous to Hoppe's position on the illegality of fractional-reserve bank notes. Hoppe observes that it is the nature of reality that "two individuals cannot be the exclusive owner of one and the same thing at the same time" and that no contract or promise can invalidate this fact of nature. If a contract tries to make simultaneous ownership by two different people of the same property occur then such a contract "is objectively false and thus fraudulent." [p.22]

This is one of Hoppe's main reasons for arguing that the practice of fractional-reserve banking should be outlawed: it contradicts reality and denies the nature of things. A fractional-reserve contract "is from the outset - a priori - invalid." Hoppe bases his argument on the fact that "the theory of property must precede the treatment of contracts ... inasmuch as contracts are constrained by property and property theory. Thus, agreements regarding perpetual motion machines are invalid, ... and from the outset false and fraudulent. ... A fractional-reserve banking agreement implies no lesser an impossibility and fraud than that involved in the trade of flying elephants or squared circles. ... [T]he bank and its customers may agree to make money substitutes debts instead of warehouse receipts, but just as they may say that triangles are squares, their saying so does not make objective reality conform to their desires and agreements." [pp. 25-26] Just because some people might prefer fractional-reserve banking agreements is no reason that such contracts "are ethically permissible or socially beneficial." [p. 31] Some people prefer to confiscate the goods and services of others, but the agreements they make with their cohorts over how to share the spoils are not enforceable. No one urges that this is a restriction on their freedom to contract as they please. Similarly, Hoppe argues that "no one may operate a fractional reserve bank for the same reason that no one, in any other line of business, may engage in counterfeiting, that is, the production and sale of titles or copies to non-existing property or originals." [p. 33] To prohibit fractional-reserve banks "is not a restriction on freedom of contract in the market for banking services, but the requirement of ... [honest] money and banking." [p. 34]

Now what does it mean when someone urges that murder, or fraud, or fractional-reserve banking be outlawed or prohibited in a free society. Who should establish the prohibition? Who should define 'murder' or 'fraud' or 'fractional-reserve' banking? In statist societies, it is usually the government and government judges that answer such

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questions. But on the contrary, in a free society, each and every person must answer these questions. As Ayn Rand put it, “Who is the final authority ... ? Any man who cares to acquire the appropriate knowledge and to judge, at and for his own risk.” Who defines what is proper usage in the English language? - not a monopolistic organization of force but rather the sanction of custom and good sense. So when Rothbard writes in “THE CASE FOR A 100 PER CENT GOLD DOLLAR” that since “fractional-reserve banking is fraudulent, then it could be outlawed not as a form of administrative government intervention in the monetary system, but rather as part of the general legal prohibition of force and fraud,” [p. 119] the implication is that in a free society there must be a generally accepted legal code. In FOR A NEW LIBERTY, Rothbard explicitly concludes that such a code must be “consistent with libertarian principles.” It is necessary

to lay down precise guidelines for the private courts. If, for example, Court A decides that all redheads are inherently evil and must be punished, it is clear that such decisions are the reverse of libertarian [principles, and] that such a [decision] would constitute an invasion of the rights of redheads. Hence, any such decision would be *illegal* in terms of libertarian principle, and could not be upheld by the rest of society. It then becomes necessary to have a legal code which would be generally accepted, and which the courts would pledge themselves to follow. The legal code, simply, would insist on the libertarian principle of no aggression [or fraud] against person or property, define property rights in accordance with libertarian principle, set up rules of evidence (such as currently apply) in deciding who are the wrongdoers in any dispute, and set up a code of maximum punishment for any particular crime, ...[pp. 234 - 235]

[I]n the ... libertarian society, the basic legal code ... would have to be established on the basis of acknowledged libertarian principle, of nonaggression against the person or property of others; in short, on the basis of reason rather than on mere tradition, however sound its general outlines. [But inasmuch as we already have a historical] body of common law principles to draw on ... the task of ... correcting and amending the common law would be far easier than trying to construct a body of systematic legal principles *de novo* out of the thin air.[p. 239]

In an article in REASON defending this position, Rothbard wrote that, “In my view, the entire libertarian system includes: not only the abolition of the State, but also the general adoption of a libertarian law code. ... [I]n my view ‘libertarianism’ includes agreeing to a libertarian law code. If most people believe in outlawing nudism, then there is very little we can do about it; but this simply means that most people have not yet become libertarians.”[May 1973, p. 24] This reasoning applies

just as readily to slavery, as it does to fractional-reserve banking. In a culture where the ownership of one person by another is considered evil, slave owners are considered inhumane and repulsive. Yet in the antebellum South, where slavery was widespread and accepted, slave owners were an elite class. Thus, everything depends on public opinion. In a society where fractional-reserve banking is recognized for what it is: a fictitious increase in the supply of money substitutes, such a practice will be considered fraudulent and hence reprehensible. The only difference between slavery and fractional-reserve banking is that the former is now considered immoral, while the latter has been protected by the government (much as the government courts protected slavery before the Civil War).

Yet doesn't fractional-reserve banking amount to counterfeiting, and isn't counterfeiting considered impermissible, as Hoppe would put it? If fractional-reserve banking does differ from counterfeiting, how does it differ in any essential? Both "*create money out of thin air*": one by printing fraudulent notes; the other by resorting to fractional-reserve loans. Both "extract resources from the public, from the people who have genuinely earned their money." The only difference is that counterfeiting is recognized as an outlawed practice, while fractional-reserve banking is embraced by the government and the banking establishment.[Rothbard, *THE MYSTERY OF BANKING*, p. 98]

So where does this conclusion leave us? People must be educated to understand that counterfeiting *and* fractional-reserve banking both undermine "the moral and property rights foundation that lies at the base of any free-market economy." Both distort "the economic system, and amount to stealthy and insidious robbery and expropriation of all legitimate property- owners in society." [Rothbard, *THE CASE AGAINST THE FED*, pp. 26-27] Once people are convinced of the violation of property rights that fractional-reserve banking engages in, they will disavow the practice as dishonest and fraudulent. Until that time comes, public sentiment will prevail in letting the practice flourish. Or as Abraham Lincoln is reputed to have said about slavery:

With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions.

Or as I would add: We do not require statutes or court decisions to prohibit fractional-reserve banking. We simply need to educate the public as to why fractional-reserve banking is a rights-violating practice, and then urge them to abandon patronage of fractional-reserve banks.

[Author's Addendum: After writing this article, it occurred to me that there was one other important point to be made regarding the effects of fractional-reserve banking. George Selgin, Lawrence White, and others who support the contractual right of banks to engage in fractionalizing reserves seem to be oblivious to a very

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basic insight of Austrian economics - namely -

that, apart from the industrial or consumption uses of gold, an increase in the supply of money confers no social benefit whatsoever. ... [A]n increase in the supply of money... will not increase production. ... [T]he great attraction of “inflation” (an increase in the quantity of money) is *precisely* that not everyone gets the new money at once and in the same degree; instead the government and its favored recipients of purchases or subsidies are the first to receive the new money. *Their* income increases before prices have gone up; while those unfortunate members of society who receive the new money at the end of the chain ... lose because the prices of the things they buy go up before they can enjoy an increased income.[Rothbard, THE ESSENTIAL VON MISES, pp. 23-24]

In short, an increase in the supply of money causes political changes in the distribution of wealth in favor of those who receive the new “fictitious” money first.

Since only the favored few receive the new money earliest, shouldn't the majority of the consuming public be in favor of abandoning the process of artificially increasing the money supply?]

Since, both B [the bank] as well as A [the depositor], count the same quantity of money simultaneously among their own assets, they have in effect conspired to represent themselves in their financial accounts as owning a larger quantity of money than they actually own: that is, they have become financial impostors,[pp. 26-27]... Fractional reserve banking does not increase the quantity of existing property (money or otherwise), nor does it transfer existing property from one party to another. Rather, it involves the production and sale of an increased quantity of titles to an unchanged stock of property (gold); that is, the supply of and the demand for counterfeit money and illegitimate appropriation.[Hoppe, et. al., p. 33]

[F]iduciary media represent new and additional titles to or claims on an existing and unchanged stock of property. ... They represent an additional supply of property titles, while the supply of property has remained constant. It is precisely in this sense that it can be said of fiduciary media that they are created out of thin air. They are property-less titles in search of property. This, in and of itself, constitutes fraud, Each issuer and buyer of a fiduciary note (a title to money uncovered by money), regardless of what he may believe, is in fact - objectively - engaged in misrepresentation for the purpose of personal gain.[Hoppe, et. al., p. 22]

[Why do fractional reserve banks dominate the money market?] The answer is that the courts deciding these matters everywhere are state courts. Only if a single court possesses a territorial monopoly of jurisdiction is it possible that the dispute at hand [the legitimacy of creating fractional-reserves] could be settled once and for all. And that it has been uniformly settled in the way that it was, by permitting rather than prohibiting fractional reserve banking, follows from the interest of every court and judge qua state court and state judge. The owners and agents of the state recognize fully as much as the bankers the potentials of money counterfeiting as a source of income. In permitting bankers to issue fiduciary media (rather than prohibiting the practice as counterfeiting), banks are made existentially dependent upon the state. They can only operate because the state, due to its territorial monopoly of jurisdiction, shields them from counterfeiting suits; and the state does so only under the provision that banks will share with it the extra revenue and credit derived from legalized counterfeiting. Hence, by permitting fractional reserve ... banking the state actually creates the first and preliminary form of a joint-bank-state-counterfeiting cartel under its own ultimate control.[Hoppe, et. al., p. 35]

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Part IV: Insurance and Protection

“It does not follow from the right and need for the protection of person and property that protection should rightfully or effectively can be provided by a monopolist of jurisdiction and taxation. To the contrary, it can be demonstrated that any such institution is incompatible with the rightful and effective protection of property.”

Hans-Hermann Hoppe, DEMOCRACY—THE GOD THAT FAILED, (2001), p. 226.

“A tax-funded protection agency is a contradiction in terms,”

Hans-Hermann Hoppe, DEMOCRACY—THE GOD THAT FAILED, (2001), pp. 230, 246.

Protection

by Robert LeFevre

(From Issue 175, 4th Quarter 2017)

[Editor's Note: The following two editorials appeared in the Colorado Springs GAZETTE TELEGRAPH, page 11, on September 6, 1957. They were penned by Robert LeFevre. Although Gustave de Molinari's article in 1849, "The Production of Security," is probably the earliest description of competing defense agencies providing protective services, these sister editorials may be the earliest expression of the idea that free market insurance companies could be the major providers of defense services in a stateless society.]

Two Kinds of Protection

Protection is one of man's basic requirements. From earliest days man has been interested in preparing against assault, whether the attack he anticipated might come from weather, beasts or other men. Man's ability to protect himself against any and all of his enemies is responsible for his survival.

At best, this is an unfriendly world, and one must prepare in peace and calm for the storm and strife which surely will come.

In very ancient times men turned for their protection to the strong. They looked about for a bandit chieftain, mighty and resourceful, on whom they could depend for safety. They knew when they did so, that the bandit was a villain. But they hoped, by paying him in taxes or in tribute, to make him their villain. It was wise, men reasoned, to have a powerful and unscrupulous leader on their side. Such a leader could be counted on, they felt, to offset the fury of some other bandit leader against whom they would be powerless.

The search for protection among the ranks of the bandit chiefs provided men with government. And so long as a particular bandit remained loyal to his own people, men felt secure. They reasoned that it was better to pay a known and limited amount of plunder to their own bandit chieftain than to be compelled in suddenness to surrender everything they had in the dark of night to some other bandit not in their own pay.

The trouble has always been that a bandit is still a bandit, however he is paid. And bandits, like their fellows, are ambitious. Hence, with dreadful regularity, bandit leaders turn upon their own people time after time. They become dissatisfied with the tribute rendered to them voluntarily for protection. They begin by raising the amounts of that tribute according to their own selfish desires of supremacy and vainglory. They end by preying upon their own supporters in a manner not unlike the conduct of the very bandits they have been hired to combat.

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When such a practice rises to its zenith, the people who pay become dissatisfied. They deem it disastrous to keep a particular bandit in power. They look back upon the good old days when their particular bandit was tractable and satisfied with smaller sums. And in the end they change their patronage.

Which is to say that by elections or revolutions they overwhelm the bandit chief of the moment to replace him by another bandit chief who gives promise of more moderate ways. But moderation is not a strong point with bandits. And so the endless story is repeated, over and over again. People rise up and do away with one particular bandit, and fly to the arms of another for protection.

Such changes in the long run provide little in the way of actual change. Only the names are different. The practice of banditry is still the general rule. And it should be noted that this reliance upon banditry is a reliance upon physical force and violence, however friendly such force and violence can be made to appear at a given moment.

In relatively recent years, a new mode of protection has made its appearance, in the market place. Foregoing force and violence, the insurance idea was born. It was and is the contention of insurance experts, that men can secure protection by translating the protection desired into terms of money. Insurance men know that people cannot be protected against the inevitable. Fire, flood, storm, drought, accident and even death are always with us. The insurance idea is that the possible amount of damage can be calculated in advance in terms of money. The person desiring insurance can pay to the insurer a sum of money which in toto will be but a fraction of the loss he might experience if one of these dread enemies should strike. Then, although he is still subject to disaster, he can indemnify himself against the frightful financial loss such disaster might represent.

This is a free market idea. The growth of insurance companies since the first marine coverage to the present time, is ample evidence that the idea of protection is marketable on a voluntary basis. Unlike the bandit chieftains, the insurer does not make his coverage mandatory. He indemnifies only those who patronize him. Those who wish to be covered, pay in advance. Those who do not wish to be covered, pay nothing.

But there is a notable difference in the manner in which each of these protection agencies functions. Surpluses collected by bandit chiefs are spent in a vast and lordly fashion on all sorts of silly and irresponsible projects. Surpluses collected by insurers are invested in free enterprise, thus enhancing the market place, increasing financial responsibility and otherwise strengthening freedom and voluntarism. The bandit chiefs still rely on force. The insurers rely upon arithmetic and logic and use no force. Yet, both sell protection. To us the voluntarism of insurance is vastly superior to any kind of banditry.

Superior Protection

In the preceding editorial we have discussed two types of protection: that provided by bandits who make their protection mandatory once they have been hired and that provided by insurance companies which use voluntary, free market practices

and protect only those who wish to be protected. And we have commented that to us the voluntarism of the insurance idea is superior to the involuntarism of banditry.

We might also show that with the passing of the last half century, the bandit idea, while sustained in most minds, has resulted in a mammoth debt of such magnitude that serious students are wondering if the sum can ever be repaid, whereas the insurance idea, while not universally adopted has resulted in such surplus that insurance companies are now among the largest repositories of funds throughout the world. Bandits, relying on physical force, have constantly betrayed their own payees. Insurers, relying on nothing but honesty and the voluntary way, have met their obligations cheerfully and promptly. This provides a curious contrast.

It is clear that insurance is a successful and worthy enterprise. Grave questions have still to be answered as to the success and the worth of universal plunder even when such plundering is sponsored by our political friends.

So, in very recent times, the bandits have recognized the value of the insurance idea. And, having recognized it, they have turned to it to practice it. But in so turning they have retained their basic character. Thus nowadays, certain of our group of world bandits have sought to employ the insurance idea as their own. But they cannot rid themselves of the curse of compulsion. Thus, when our own group of political thugs undertook the largest and most expansive program of insurance in world history the Social Security scheme they brought to it their own ideas of banditry and made Social Security a matter of compulsion. Most were not asked if they wanted such government insurance. Instead, at the point of the tax gun, they were compelled to take it. And the money collected by our bandits was used just as any other money they collected. It was poured into any number of the numerous rat holes of political expediency maintained by the bureaucracy of banditry, so that our bandit insurance is naturally dependent upon its income from banditry and not at all upon its investments, which are nil.

Thus we see that a merger of an insurance idea with banditry is of little merit. But such a merger gives rise to the thought that it might be possible for the insurance idea, maintained without banditry, to be expanded into the areas now presumably protected by bandits. In other words, might we not ask if it is ... possible that some of the vaunted protection we are still paying for from bandits could ... be purchased in a voluntary manner from insurers?

If protection against fire, flood, accident and death can be purchased by those who wish such protection; why cannot those who wish it, purchase protection from the thief, the liar and the cheat? Perhaps, if we put our minds to it, we might even devise a type of protection which could be purchased from an insurer against banditry itself. Here is a thought to conjure with.

Perhaps it would not be so difficult an accomplishment as it now seems. If the protection furnished us by our bandit friends were to be placed on a voluntary basis, with each person paying for exactly the type and amount of such protection he deemed useful and wise, then the insurance idea would have, in large measure,

supplanted the bandit idea. And what would be wrong with that?

It seems to us that civilization itself is a voluntary association. Barbarism is involuntary association. Civilization begins with the first voluntary action. If it ends, it will end with the last voluntary action. And if we wish civilization to expand as well as continue had we not best be advised to study ways and means of supplanting compulsion with voluntarism?

Perhaps there are areas of protection open to us thru voluntary means which we as yet have not explored. Surely, it would pay us to commence the exploration. In the end, if necessary, we can always go back to the bandits. Why not try a superior way first? You know, it might work.

The Private Production of Defense

by Hans-Hermann Hoppe

(From Issue 120, 1st Quarter 2004)

Among the most popular and consequential beliefs of our age is the belief in collective security. Nothing less significant than the legitimacy of the modern state rests on this belief. I will demonstrate that the idea of collective security is a myth that provides no justification for the modern state, and that all security is and must be private. ...

The Case For Private Security

Rothbard, building on the pathbreaking analysis of the French-Belgian economist Gustave de Molinari, has given us a sketch of the workings of a free-market system of protection and defense. As well, we owe Morris and Linda Tannehill for their brilliant insights and analyses in this regard. Following their lead, I will proceed deeper in my analysis and provide a more *comprehensive* view of the alternative non-statist system of security production and its ability to handle attacks, not just by individuals or gangs but in particular also by *states*.

There exists widespread agreement - among libertarians such as Molinari, Rothbard, and the Tannehills as well as most other commentators on the matter - that defense is a form of insurance, and defense expenditures represent a sort of insurance premium (price). Accordingly, as Rothbard and the Tannehills in particular would emphasize, within the framework of a complex modern economy based on a worldwide division of labor the most likely candidates for offering protection and defense services are insurance agencies. The better the protection of insured property, the lower are the damage claims and hence an insurer's costs. Thus, to provide efficient protection appears to be in every insurer's own financial interest; and in fact even now, although restricted and hampered by the state, insurance agencies provide wide-ranging services of protection and indemnification (compensation) to injured

private parties. Insurance companies fulfill a second essential requirement. Obviously, anyone offering protection services must appear able to deliver on his promises in order to find clients.

That is, he must possess the economic means - the manpower as well as the physical resources - necessary to accomplish the task of dealing with the dangers, actual or imagined, of the real world. On this count insurance agencies appear to be perfect candidates, too. They operate on a nationwide and even international scale, and they own large property holdings dispersed over wide territories and beyond single state boundaries.

Accordingly, they have a manifest self-interest in effective protection, and are big and economically powerful. Furthermore, all insurance companies are connected through a network of contractual agreements of mutual assistance and arbitration as well as a system of international reinsurance agencies, representing a combined economic power which dwarfs that of most if not all existing governments. ...

Protection becomes an insurable good only if and insofar as an insurance agent contractually restricts the actions of the insured so as to exclude every possible provocation on their part. Various insurance companies may differ with respect to the specific definition of provocation, but there can be no difference between insurers with regard to the principle that each must systematically exclude (prohibit) all provocative and aggressive action among its own clients.

As elementary as this first insight into the essentially defensive - non-aggressive and non-provocative - nature of protection-insurance may seem, it is of fundamental importance. For one, it implies that any known aggressor and provocateur would be unable to find an insurer, and hence, would be economically isolated, weak, and vulnerable.

On the other hand, it implies that anyone wanting more protection than that afforded by self-reliant self-defense could do so only if and insofar as he submitted himself to specified norms of non-aggressive, civilized conduct. Furthermore, the greater the number of insured people - and in a modern exchange economy most people want more than just self-defense for their protection - the greater would be the economic pressure on the remaining uninsured to adopt the same or similar standards of non-aggressive social conduct. Moreover, as the result of competition between insurers for voluntarily paying clients, a tendency toward falling prices per insured property values would come about. At the same time, a tendency toward the standardization and unification of property and contract law would be set in motion. Protection contracts with standardized property and product descriptions would come into existence; and out of the steady cooperation between different insurers in mutual arbitration proceedings, a tendency toward the standardization and unification of the rules of procedure, evidence, and conflict resolution (including compensation, restitution, punishment, and retribution), and steadily increasing legal certainty would result. Everyone, by virtue of buying protection insurance, would be tied into a global competitive enterprise of striving to minimize aggression (and thus maximize

defensive protection), and every single conflict and damage claim, regardless of where and by or against whom, would fall into the jurisdiction of exactly one or more enumerable and specific insurance agencies and their mutually defined arbitration procedures. ...

Political Borders And Insurance

Let me first contrast defense-protection insurance with that against natural disasters. Frequently an analogy between the two is drawn, and it is instructive to examine if or to what extent it holds. The analogy is that just as every individual within certain geographical regions is threatened by the same risk of earthquakes, floods, or hurricanes, so does every inhabitant within the territory of the U.S. or Germany, for instance, face the same risk of being victimized by a foreign attack. Some superficial similarity - to which I shall come shortly - notwithstanding, it is easy to recognize two fundamental shortcomings in the analogy. For one, the borders of earthquake, flood, or hurricane regions are established and drawn according to objective physical criteria and hence can be referred to as natural. In distinct contrast, political boundaries are artificial boundaries. The borders of the U.S. changed throughout the entire 19th century, and Germany did not exist as such until 1871, but was composed of nearly 50 separate countries. Surely, no one would want to claim that this redrawing of the U.S. or German borders was the outcome of the discovery that the security risk of every American or German within the greater U.S. or Germany was, contrary to the previously held opposite belief, homogeneous (identical).

There is a second obvious shortcoming. Nature - earthquakes, floods, hurricanes - is blind in its destruction. It does not discriminate between more and less valuable locations and objects, but attacks indiscriminately. In distinct contrast, an aggressor-invader can and does discriminate. He does not attack or invade worthless locations and things, like the Sahara Desert, but targets locations and things that are valuable. Other things being equal, the more valuable a location and an object, the more likely it will be the target of an invasion. This raises the crucial next question. If political borders are arbitrary and attacks are in any case never indiscriminate but directed specifically toward valuable places and things, are there any non-arbitrary borders separating different security risk (attack) zones? The answer is yes. Such non-arbitrary borders are those of private property. Private property is the result of the appropriation and/or production of particular physical objects or effects by specific individuals at specific locations. Every appropriator-producer (owner) demonstrates with his actions that he regards the appropriated and produced things as valuable (goods), otherwise he would not have appropriated or produced them. The borders of everyone's property are objective and inter-subjectively ascertainable. They are simply determined by the extension and dimension of the things appropriated and/or produced by any one particular individual. And the borders of all valuable places and things are coextensive with the borders of all property. At any given point in time,

every valuable place and thing is owned by someone; only worthless places and things are owned by no one.

Surrounded by other men, every appropriator and producer can also become the object of an attack or invasion. Every property - in contrast to things (matter) - is necessarily valuable; hence, every property owner becomes a possible target of other men's aggressive desires. Consequently, every owner's choice of the location and form of his property will, among countless other considerations, also be influenced by security concerns. Other things being equal, everyone will prefer safer locations and forms of property to locations and forms which are less safe. Yet, regardless of where an owner and his property are located and whatever the property's physical form, every owner, by virtue of not abandoning his property even in view of potential aggression, demonstrates his personal willingness to protect and defend these possessions.

However, if the borders of private property are the only non-arbitrary borders standing in systematic relation to the risk of aggression, then it follows that as many different security zones as there are separately owned property holdings exist, and that these zones are no larger than the extension of these holdings. That is, even more so than in the case of industrial accidents, the insurance of property against aggression would seem to be an example of individual rather than group (mutual) protection.

Whereas the accident-risk of an individual production process is typically independent of its location - such that if the process were replicated by the same producer at different locations his margin of error would remain the same - the risk of aggression against private property - the production plant - is different from one location to another. By its very nature, as privately appropriated and produced goods, property is always separate and distinct. Every property is located at a different place and under the control of a different individual, and each location faces a unique security risk. It can make a difference for my security, for instance, if I reside in the countryside or the city, on a hill or in a valley, or near or far from a river, ocean, harbor, railroad or street. In fact, even contiguous locations do not face the same risk. It can make a difference, for instance, if I reside higher or lower on the mountain than my neighbor, upstream or downstream, closer to or more distant from the ocean, or simply north, south, west, or east of him. Moreover, every property, wherever it is located, can be shaped and transformed by its owner so as to increase its safety and reduce the likelihood of an aggression. I may acquire a gun or safe-deposit box, for instance, or I may be able to shoot down an attacking plane from my backyard or own a laser gun that can kill an aggressor thousands of miles away. Thus, no location and no property are like any other. Every owner will have to be insured individually, and to do so every aggression-insurer must hold sufficient capital reserves.

The Democratic State And Total War

The analogy typically drawn between insurance against natural disasters and external, aggression is fundamentally flawed. As aggression is never indiscriminate

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but selective and targeted, so is defense. Everyone has different locations and things to defend, and no one's security risk is the same as anyone else's. And yet the analogy also contains a kernel of truth. However, any similarity between natural disasters and external aggression is due not to the nature of aggression and defense but to the rather specific nature of *state*-aggression and defense (interstate warfare). As explained above, a state is an agency that exercises a compulsory territorial monopoly of protection and the power to tax, and any such agency will be comparatively more aggressive because it can externalize the costs of such behavior onto its subjects. However, the existence of a state does not just increase the frequency of aggression; it changes its entire character. The existence of states, and especially of democratic states, implies that aggression and defense - war - will tend to be transformed into total, indiscriminating, war.

Consider for a moment a completely stateless world. Most property owners would be individually insured by large, often multinational insurance companies endowed with huge capital reserves. Most if not all aggressors, being bad risks, would be left without any insurance whatever. In this situation, every aggressor or group of aggressors would want to limit their targets, preferably to uninsured property, and avoid all "collateral damage," as they would otherwise find themselves confronted with one or many economically powerful professional defense agencies. Likewise, all defensive violence would be highly selective and targeted. All aggressors would be specific individuals or groups, located at specific places and equipped with specific resources. In response to attacks on their clients, insurance agencies would specifically target these locations and resources for retaliation, and they would want to avoid any collateral damage as they would otherwise become entangled with and liable to other insurers.

All of this fundamentally changes in a statist world with interstate warfare. For one, if a state, the U.S., attacks another, for instance Iraq, this is not just an attack by a limited number of people, equipped with limited resources and located at a clearly identifiable place. Rather, it is an attack by all Americans and with all of their resources. Every American supposedly pays taxes to the U.S. government and is thus *de facto*, whether he wishes to be or not, implicated in every government aggression. Hence, while it is obviously false to claim that every American faces an equal risk of being attacked by Iraq, (low or nonexistent as such a risk is, it is certainly higher in New York City than in Wichita, Kansas, for instance) every American is rendered equal with respect to his own active, if not always voluntary, participation in each of his government's aggressions.

Second, just as the attacker is a state, so is the attacked, Iraq. As its U.S. counterpart, the Iraqi government has the power to tax its population or draft it into its armed forces. As taxpayer or draftee, every Iraqi is implicated in his government's defense just as every American is drawn into the U.S. government's attack. Thus, the war becomes a war of all Americans against all Iraqis, i.e., total war. The strategy of both the attacker and the defender state will be changed accordingly. While the

attacker still must be selective regarding the targets of his attack, if for no other reason than that even taxing agencies (states) are ultimately constrained by scarcity, the aggressor has little or no incentive to avoid or minimize collateral damage. To the contrary, since the entire population and national wealth is involved in the defensive effort, collateral damage, whether of lives or property, is even desirable. No clear distinction between combatants and non-combatants exists. Everyone is an enemy, and all property provides support for the attacked government. Hence, everyone and everything becomes fair game. Likewise, the defender state will be little concerned about collateral damage resulting from its own retaliation against the attacker. Every citizen of the attacker state and all of their property is a foe and enemy property and thus becomes a possible target of retaliation. Moreover, every state, in accordance with this character of interstate war, will develop and employ more weapons of mass destruction, such as atomic bombs, rather than long-range precision weapons, such as my imaginary laser gun.

Thus, the similarity between war and natural catastrophes - their seemingly indiscriminate destruction and devastation - is exclusively a feature of a statist world.

Insurance And Incentives

This brings on the last problem. We have seen that just as all property is private, all defense must be insured individually by capitalized insurance agencies, very much like industrial accident insurance. Yet, we have also seen that both forms of insurance differ in one fundamental respect. In the case of defense insurance, the location of the insured property matters. The premium per insured value will be different at different locations. Furthermore, aggressors can move around, their arsenal of weapons may change, and their entire character of aggression can alter with the presence of states. Thus, even given an initial property location, the price per insured value can alter with changes in the social environment or surroundings of this location. How would a system of competitive insurance agencies respond to this challenge? In particular, how would it deal with the existence of states and state aggression?

In answering these questions it is essential to recall some elementary economic insights. Other things being equal, private property owners generally, and business owners in particular, prefer locations with low protection costs (insurance premiums) and rising property values to those with high protection costs and falling property values. Consequently, there is a tendency toward the migration of people and goods from high risk and falling property value areas into low risk and increasing property value areas. Furthermore, protection costs and property values are directly related. Other things being equal, higher protection costs (greater attack risks) imply lower or falling property values, and lower protection costs imply higher or increasing property values. These laws and tendencies shape the operation of a competitive system of insurance protection agencies.

First, whereas a tax-funded monopolist will manifest a tendency to raise the cost and price of protection, private profit-loss insurance agencies strive to reduce the cost

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of protection and thus bring about falling prices. At the same time insurance agencies are more interested than anyone else in rising property values, because this implies not only that their own property holdings appreciate but in particular that there will also be more of other people's property for them to insure. In contrast, if the risk of aggression increases and property values fall, there is less value to be insured while the cost of protection and price of insurance rises, implying poor business conditions for an insurer. Consequently, insurance companies would be under permanent economic pressure to promote the former favorable and avert the latter unfavorable condition.

This incentive structure has a fundamental impact on the operation of insurers. For one, as for the seemingly easier case of the protection against common crime and criminals, a system of competitive insurers would lead to a dramatic change in current crime policy. To recognize the extent of this change, it is instructive to look first at the present and thus familiar statist crime policy. While it is in the interest of state agents to combat common private crime (if only so that there is more property left for them to tax), as tax-funded agents they have little or no interest in being particularly effective at the task of preventing it, or else, if it has occurred, at compensating its victims and apprehending and punishing the offenders. Moreover, under democratic conditions, insult will be added to injury. For if everyone - aggressors as well as non-aggressors and residents of high crime locations as well as those of low crime location - can vote and be elected to government office, a systematic redistribution of property rights from non-aggressors to aggressors and the residents of low crime areas to those of high crime areas comes into effect and crime will actually be promoted. Accordingly, crime, and consequently the demand for private security services of all kinds are currently at an all-time high. Even more scandalously, instead of compensating the victims of crimes it did not prevent (as it should have), the government forces victims to pay again as taxpayers for the cost of the apprehension, imprisonment, rehabilitation, and/or entertainment of their aggressors. And rather than requiring higher protection prices in high crime locations and lower ones in low crime locations, as insurers would, the government does the exact opposite. It taxes more in low crime-and high property value areas than in high crime and low property value ones, or it even subsidizes the residents of the latter locations - the slums - at the expense of those of the former and thus erodes the social conditions unfavorable to crime while promoting those favorable to it. The operation of competitive insurers would be in striking contrast. For one, if an insurer could not prevent a crime, it would have to indemnify the victim. Thus, above all insurers would want to be effective in crime prevention. And if they still could not prevent it, they would want to be efficient in the detection, apprehension, and punishment of criminal offenders, because in finding and arresting an offender, the insurer could force the criminal - rather than the victim and its insurer - to pay for the damages and cost of indemnification.

More specifically, just as insurance companies currently maintain and continually

update a detailed local inventory of property values so they would then maintain and continually update a detailed local inventory of crimes and criminals. Other things being equal, the risk of aggression against any private property location increases with the proximity and the number and resources of potential aggressors. Thus, insurers would be interested in gathering information on actual crimes and known criminals and their locations, and it would be in their mutual interest of minimizing property damage to share this information with each other (just as banks now share information on bad credit risks with each other). Furthermore, insurers would also be particularly interested in gathering information on potential (not yet committed and known) crimes and aggressors, and this would lead to a fundamental overhaul of and improvement in current—statist—crime statistics. In order to predict the future incidence of crime and thus calculate its current price (premium), insurers would correlate the frequency, description, and character of crimes and criminals with the social surroundings in which they occur and operate, and develop and under competitive pressure continually refine an elaborate system of demographic and sociological crime indicators. That is, every neighborhood would be described, and its risk assessed, in terms and in light of a multitude of crime indicators, such as the composition of sexes, age groups, races, nationalities, ethnicities, religions, languages, professions, and incomes.

Consequently, and in distinct contrast to the present situation, all interlocal, regional, racial, national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic income, and wealth redistribution would disappear, and a constant source of social conflict would be removed permanently. Instead, the emerging price (premium) structure would tend to accurately reflect the risk of each location and its particular social surrounding, such that no one would be forced to pay for the insurance risk of anyone but his own and that associated with his particular neighborhood. More importantly, based on its continually updated and refined system of statistics on crime and property values and further motivated by the noted migration tendency from high-risk-low-value (henceforth “bad”) to low-risk- high-value (henceforth “good”) locations, a system of competitive aggression insurers would promote a tendency toward civilizational progress (rather than decivilization).

Governments - and democratic governments in particular erode “good” and promote “bad” neighborhoods through their tax and transfer policy. They do so also, and with possibly an even more damaging effect, through their policy of forced integration. This policy has two aspects. On the one hand, for the owners and residents in “good” locations and neighborhoods who are faced with an immigration problem, forced integration means that they must accept, without discrimination, every domestic immigrant, as transient or tourist on public roads, as customer, client, resident, or neighbor. They are prohibited by their government from excluding anyone, including anyone they consider an undesirable potential risk, from immigration. On the other hand, for the owners and residents in “bad” locations and neighborhoods, who experience emigration rather than immigration, forced

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integration means that they are prevented from effective self-protection. Rather than being allowed to rid themselves of crime through the expulsion of known criminals from their neighborhood, they are forced by their government to live in permanent association with their aggressors.

The results of a system of private protection insurers would be in striking contrast to these all too familiar decivilizing effects and tendencies of statist crime protection. To be sure, insurers would be unable to eliminate the differences between “good” and “bad” neighborhoods. In fact, these differences might even become more pronounced. However, driven by their interest in rising property values and falling protection costs, insurers would promote a tendency to improve by uplifting and cultivating both “good” and “bad” neighborhoods. Thus, in “good” neighborhoods insurers would adopt a policy of selective immigration. Unlike states, they could not and would not want to disregard the discriminating inclinations among the insured toward immigrants. To the contrary, even more so than any one of their clients, insurers would be interested in discrimination: in admitting only those immigrants whose presence adds to a lower crime risk and increased property values and in excluding those whose presence leads to a higher risk and lower property values. That is, rather than eliminating discrimination, insurers would rationalize and perfect its practice. Based on their statistics on crime and property values, and in order to reduce the cost of protection and raise property values, insurers would formulate and continually refine various restrictive (exclusionary) rules and procedures relating to immigration and immigrants and thus give quantitative precision - in the form of prices and price differentials - to the value of discrimination (and the cost of non-discrimination) between potential immigrants (as high or low risk and value-productive).

Similarly, in “bad” neighborhoods the interests of the insurers and the insured would coincide. Insurers would not want to suppress the expulsionist inclinations among the insured toward known criminals. They would rationalize such tendencies by offering selective price cuts (contingent on specific clean-up operations). Indeed, in cooperation with one another, insurers would want to expel known criminals not just from their immediate neighborhood, but from civilization altogether, into the wilderness or open frontier of the Amazon jungle, the Sahara, or the polar regions.

Insuring Against State Aggression

Yet what about defense against a state? How would insurers protect us from state aggression?

First, it is essential to remember that governments qua compulsory, tax-funded monopolies are inherently wasteful and inefficient in whatever they do. This is also true for weapons technology and production, military intelligence and strategy, especially in our age of high technology. Accordingly, states would not be able to compete within the same territory against voluntarily financed insurance agencies. Moreover, most important and general among the restrictive rules relating to immigration and designed by insurers to lower protection cost and increase property

values would be one concerning government agents. States are inherently aggressive and pose a permanent danger to every insurer and insured. Thus, insurers in particular would want to exclude or severely restrict - as a potential security risk - the immigration (territorial entry) of all known government agents, and they would induce the insured, either as a condition of insurance or of a lower premium, to exclude or strictly limit any direct contact with any known government agent, be it as visitor, customer, client, resident, or neighbor. That is, wherever insurance companies operated - in all free territories - state agents would be treated as undesirable outcasts, potentially more dangerous than any common criminal. Accordingly, states and their personnel would be able to operate and reside only in territorial separation from, and on the fringes of, free territories. Furthermore, owing to the comparatively lower economic productivity of statist territories, governments would be continually weakened by the emigration of their most value productive residents.

Now, what if such a government should decide to attack or invade a free territory? This would be easier said than done! Who and what would one attack? There would be no state opponent. Only private property owners and their private insurance agencies would exist. No one, least of all the insurers, would have presumably engaged in aggression or even provocation. If there were any aggression or provocation against the state at all, this would be the action of a particular person, and in this case the interest of the state and insurance agencies would fully coincide. Both would want to see the attacker punished and held accountable for all damages caused. But without any aggressor-enemy, how could the state justify an attack and even more so any indiscriminate attack? And surely it would have to justify it! For the power of every government, even the most despotic one, rests ultimately on opinion and consent, as La Boetie, Hume, Mises and Rothbard have explained. Kings and presidents can issue an order to attack, of course. But there must be scores of other men willing to execute their order to put it into effect. There must be generals receiving and following the order, soldiers willing to march, kill, and be killed, and domestic producers willing to continue producing to fund the war. If this consensual willingness were absent because the orders of the state rulers were considered illegitimate, even the seemingly most powerful government would be rendered ineffectual and collapse, as the recent examples of the Shah of Iran and the Soviet Union have illustrated. Hence, from the viewpoint of the leaders of the state an attack on free territories would have to be considered extremely risky. No propaganda effort, however elaborate, would make the public believe that its attack were anything but an aggression against innocent victims. In this situation, the rulers of the state would be happy to maintain monopolistic control over their present territory rather than running the risk of losing legitimacy and all of their power in an attempt at territorial expansion.

However, as unlikely as this may be, what would happen if a state still attacked and/or invaded a neighboring free territory? In this case the aggressor would not encounter an unarmed population. Only in statist territories is the civilian population

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characteristically unarmed. States everywhere aim to disarm their own citizenry so as to be better able to tax and expropriate it. In contrast, insurers in free territories would not want to disarm the insured. Nor could they. For who would want to be protected by someone who required him as a first step to give up his ultimate means of self-defense? To the contrary, insurance agencies would encourage the ownership of weapons among their insured by means of selective price cuts.

Moreover, apart from the opposition of an armed private citizenry, the aggressor state would run into the resistance of not only one but in all likelihood several insurance and reinsurance agencies. In the case of a successful attack and invasion, these insurers would be faced with massive indemnification payments. Unlike the aggressing state, however, these insurers would be efficient and competitive firms. Other things being equal, the risk of an attack—and hence the price of defense insurance—would be higher in locations adjacent or in close proximity to state territories than in places, far away from any state. To justify this higher price, insurers would have to demonstrate defensive readiness vis-à-vis any possible state aggression to their clients, in the form of intelligence services, the ownership of suitable weapons and materials, and military personnel and training. In other words, the insurers would be prepared - effectively equipped and trained - for the contingency of a state attack and ready to respond with a two-fold defense strategy. On the one hand, insofar as their operations in free territories are concerned insurers would be ready to expel, capture, or kill every invader while at the same time trying to avoid or minimize all collateral damage. On the other hand, insofar as their operations on state territory are concerned insurers would be prepared to target the aggressor- the state - for retaliation. That is, insurers would be ready to counterattack and kill, whether with long-range precision weapons or assassination commandos, state agents from the top of the government hierarchy of king, president, or prime minister on downward while at the same time seeking to avoid or minimize all collateral damage to the property of innocent civilians (non-state agents), and they would thereby encourage internal resistance against the aggressor government, promote its delegitimization, and possibly incite the liberation and transformation of the state territory into a free country.

Regaining Our Right To Self-defense

I have thus come full circle with my argument. First, I have shown that the idea of a protective state and state protection of private property is based on a fundamental theoretical error, and that this error has had disastrous consequences: the destruction and insecurity of all private property and perpetual war. Second, I have shown that the correct answer to the question of who is to defend private property owners from aggression is the same as for the production of every other good or service: private property owners, cooperation based on the division of labor, and market competition. Third, I have explained how a system of private profit-loss insurers would effectively minimize aggression, whether by private criminals or states, and promote a tendency

toward civilization and perpetual peace. The only task outstanding, then, is to implement these insights: to withdraw one's consent and willing cooperation from the state and to promote its delegitimization in public opinion so as to persuade others to do the same. Without the erroneous public perception and judgment of the state as just and necessary and without the public's voluntary cooperation, even the seemingly most powerful government would implode and its powers evaporate. Thus liberated, we would regain our right to self-defense and be able to turn to freed and unregulated insurance agencies for efficient professional assistance in all matters of protection and conflict resolution.

[The full text of this essay is at www.mises.org/journals/scholar/Hoppe.pdf. Permission to use excerpts given by Judy Thommesen by email of October 28,2002. Copyright by the Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1998.]

Voluntary Government as a Marketable Service: Reminiscences on the History of an Idea

by Alvin Lowi[1]

(From Issue 167, 4th Quarter 2015)

Back in 1954, when he was at the Foundation for Economic Education at Irvington-on-Hudson, New York, economist Baldy Harper called the idea of voluntary government a most radical one.[2] At that time, Harper said he could count on the fingers of one hand all the people he knew in the world who entertained the notion of a "total alternative" to tax-funded government. Spencer Heath, Spencer MacCallum, Robert LeFevre, and Murray Rothbard were the only ones who came to his mind.[3] Today, given the Internet, there are probably tens of thousands, maybe even millions, who entertain this notion, at least furtively. Yet, the history of the idea, its inception and spread, is sketchy and tentative.

My encounter with this idea began when my friend and colleague, Andrew J. Galambos, introduced me to Spencer Heath.[4] At the time, 1961, I was associated with Galambos and his Free Enterprise Institute. There, I was privileged to observe and participate in the development and exposition of such ideas. I had always known this was a unique opportunity, but until recently had not thought to memorialize the experience. I was prompted to do so when I recently discovered a reprint of J. Huston McCulloch's 1977 translation from the French of a remarkable essay entitled THE PRODUCTION OF SECURITY.[5] I found the essay, written in 1849, a most compelling read in itself, and the inspiring introduction by Murray Rothbard made it virtually irresistible to put down. It brought to mind some of the experiences I had almost forgotten.

The author of the essay was an obscure laissez-faire economist from Belgium

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named Gustave de Molinari (1819-1912), a contemporary and intellectual kin of the better known French liberal political economist, Frederic Bastiat. Born in Belgium and educated there in the new academic field of economics, Molinari was associated with the French *économistes*, a group of laissez-faire liberals recognizable nowadays as a rare breed: pro-capitalist, non-political libertarians. Throughout his long life (he was 92 when he died), Molinari argued for peace, free trade, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and liberty in all its forms.

Molinari was unique among economists in his conviction that the economy did not need the slightest vestige of political protection, not even as represented by constitutionally limited, representative republican government. He was apparently the first person to realize that the market economy contained the means for its own protection and to advance a theory of a society entirely devoid of political regimentation, which is to say, a society without a state.

Molinari envisioned a stable and humane social paradigm. He took individual human liberty to the limit to see if it could stand on its own legs. Libertarians nowadays call this position individualist anarchy, market anarchism, or anarcho-capitalism. Society without political statecraft has also been referred to variously as economic government, voluntary government, or government via market-delivered property protection services.

The Free Enterprise Institute

My colleague Galambos came to think like Molinari about a century later . He did so apparently without a prompt from Molinari - but not without some prompting from his students. Even so, this was a remarkable transition for Galambos, who had no academic preparation in the humanities. He was an astronomer and astrophysicist who left the government-dominated defense industry in 1959, during the height of the Cold War, to return to academia to make the world safe for astrophysicists. In 1960, while still a tenured physics professor, he launched his campaign, "Capitalism, The Key to Survival." This was a short-lived seminar at Whittier College where he taught, but it was soon transformed into a profit-seeking educational enterprise in Los Angeles under the banner of The Free Enterprise Institute (FEI) and continued for several decades. Galambos died in 1997 after a long illness. In 1999, some of his taped FEI lectures were transcribed and published in a volume entitled SIC ITUR AD ASTRA.

On founding FEI, Galambos embraced the limited government framework of classical liberalism. He was an enthusiastic promoter of the writings of Mises, Read, Hazlitt, Harper, Hayek, and Rothbard. In the early 1960s, he brought Read, Mises, and Harper to Southern California for well-attended seminars. Galambos was obsessed with American constitutionalism. He had a strong sentimental attachment to the American Revolution as fomented by Thomas Paine, which represented for him the break with old-world political despotism and elitism and especially the breakthrough in social technology that resulted, enabling the liberation and growth of

humanity. He subscribed to the thesis of Alexis de Tocqueville and other admirers of this “American phenomenon.”[6]

Galambos approached the subject of government as an exercise in constitutionalism. This exercise he played as an intellectual game with organizational structures and political contrivances for limiting the scope of monopoly political government in keeping with the sentiments of the Declaration of Independence and other classical liberal arguments. However, no matter how liberal, creative, or ingenious were his schemes for controlling the political Leviathan, they were inevitably political and therefore authoritarian and collectivistic. The implications were not lost on Galambos’ students. And curiously, it was just such implications in Ayn Rand’s so-called “objective law,” republicanism, and Leonard Read’s libertarian GOVERNMENT: AN IDEAL CONCEPT, that later alienated Galambos from those otherwise congenial social movements.[7]

Galambos defended his approach to constitutional political government with the claim that adherence to scientific method could be relied upon to avert the usual political outcomes. The physicist cum economist would see to it, so he dreamed. He made the separation of economy and state a central feature of his scheme, which was an intriguing beginning. But the clincher would call for a lot more authentic social science not immediately in evidence and perhaps never forthcoming - at least to the extent that force could ever be justified.

Reading Molinari’s essay reminded me of the debates among Galambos’ students in those early days. Logical extrapolations of his teachings had begun to reveal inconsistencies in the classical liberal treatment of society in the tradition of John Locke, which called for a modicum of political government to maintain a legal framework of order based on private property protection. But such protection, predicated on a monopoly of institutionalized coercion, required an authority that was intrinsically superior to the market and the individual humans comprising it. More specifically, it called for a political state, a supernatural authority, which is alien to individual humans. The dilemma arose - how could mere humans delegate to a committee of other humans, authority they never possessed in the first place? In America, “The Constitution” replaced the king as the symbol of this supernatural authority, invoking as it did the myth of the omniscient and omnipotent majority.

About 1963, Robert LeFevre came onto the Free Enterprise Institute scene. His arguments reduced all political proceedings to absurdity.[8] They had been heard already by some of Galambos’ students who went to Colorado to attend LeFevre’s lectures at the Freedom School. Afterwards, these students introduced LeFevre’s arguments into the discussions at FEI class meetings. Galambos’ constitutionalism was severely tested.

But Galambos’ conception of government was fundamentally nothing more than the collection of services devoted to the protection of private property.[9] It should not have been such a huge leap of faith to dump the political paradigm altogether in favor of property protection services rendered volitionally for profit in the

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marketplace by competitive private enterprise, based on the authority of proprietorship. Yet, Galambos was not the first to leap. This idea began to catch on first among his students. The awakening began soon after the first offering of his Course 100 in which he had sanctioned limited political government. A sequence of discoveries occurred soon thereafter somewhat as follows.

Spencer Heath, author of *CITADEL, MARKET AND ALTAR* (1956) had already begun espousing government by proprietary administration, based on maintaining the integrity of private property by contract. His grandson, anthropologist Spencer Heath MacCallum gave a guest course for FEI in 1963 in which he introduced the idea of the proprietary community.[10] His approach followed the work of his grandfather, who would have presented the concept to Galambos' students a year earlier but for the intervention of a health crisis that ended his long life.[11] MacCallum also introduced other provocative ideas of voluntary social organization to the FEI market, particularly those of E.C. Riegel, who suggested that laissez-faire competition in the marketplace is necessary and sufficient government.[12] Riegel was also the first to call for the complete separation of money and state and develop a concept of private enterprise money.[13]

In his FEI guest lectures that same year, F.A. Harper introduced Molinari's vision of an unregimented society to Galambos' market. He was able to offer the attendees of his seminar some rare copies of Molinari's only book in English at the time, entitled *SOCIETY OF TOMORROW*. [14] Harper billed Molinari's proposal as a "total alternative" to the status quo - an emergent "grand alternative" to political government.

The Insurance Industry

Out of this general exploration of the idea of a free market for government services there rapidly developed various private-enterprise extrapolations into community service and property protection. First, to my knowledge, was "the insurance industry as government" proposition of physicist-mathematician, entrepreneur-businessman and FEI contractor Piet (Peter) B. Bos.[15] Electrical engineer, entrepreneur, and FEI contractor Charles R. Estes next offered his vision of competing companies providing arbitration, dispute resolution, patrol, security technology, and bounty hunting services for fee or subscription. Estes also proposed various private enterprise money and property restitution ventures.[16] Electrical engineer and FEI lecturer Richard A. Nesbit described a private-enterprise primary school system venture which he and several partners and their wives had set up in Southern California and were now operating as a business.

The following year, 1964, some FEI contractors teamed up with me and FEI to bring Robert LeFevre back to Los Angeles to give his freedom seminar.[17] By this time, many of Galambos' students had already shunned political government, even as a transient lesser evil. Preferring to take their chances with self-government in the marketplace, they were enjoying a bonanza of leisure time liberated from the tedium of political participation in the Republican effort to elect Goldwater that year.

Galambos, himself, finally abandoned all political artifice. All constitutional games with incipient political despotism were demolished, as was any inclination to participate in politics. By the end of 1964, he was espousing purely free-market social organization in which government was defined as follows:

A government is a person or an organization that offers for sale products or services designed to protect property, to which the owner of that property may voluntarily subscribe.[18]

Galambos called attention to his use of the article “a” in this definition - “a” government, not “the” government, emphasizing the absence of monopoly as an essential attribute. Then Galambos came out with his Course V-201 - “The Nature and Protection of Primary Property,” which he came to call his most important - out of the dozens developed in the years afterward. The course was controversial with existing students because of a new strict non-disclosure requirement. Here he brought out his concept of the pure contractual corporation operating a clearinghouse for businesses utilizing intellectual property for profit. This invention was to supersede coercive patent and copyright privileges issued by political governments, which his for-profit corporations would displace forever. In 2001, FEI contractor Robert Klassen published his treatise, *ECONOMIC GOVERNMENT*, showing in one of his chapters how Galambos’ royalty-clearinghouse business might be implemented with the aid of new computer technology.[19]

Up to the time of McCulloch’s translation of Molinari’s essay (1977), Galambos and Rothbard had been ideologically and intellectually congenial in most respects, but they became estranged over the fundamental question of politics and its place in the liberty movement. Their differences came into focus in the light of Molinari’s “two ways of considering society.” Molinari saw politics and society (force versus voluntary exchange) as worlds apart. That is where they belonged, according to Galambos, who was aligned on this point with his predecessor, Spencer Heath.[20] Galambos had developed similar notions to Heath’s nonpolitical methodology in his business of promoting freedom.[21] Rothbard, on the contrary, had turned to politics for social salvation. He was influential in the formation of the Libertarian Party.[22].

While Rothbard and his libertarian colleagues were preoccupied with their political projects, Galambos was building a business developing ideological momentum for his non-political “natural republic” (a name which I had suggested). He described the “natural republic” as the societal condition comprised of voluntary entrepreneurial behavior based on economic and ethical knowledge developed via an authentic social science (dubbed “volitional science” by Jay S. Snelson, the Senior Lecturer at FEI for many years). Galambos believed his society of the future would be a technological achievement, one that would result in a wholly voluntary society in which every person would have 100% control over his or her own property, a condition which he defined as freedom.

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Galambos envisioned society as an evolutionary process of voluntary human action developing entrepreneurially-delivered property protection services that would gradually supersede all coercive political institutions. The “natural republic” would be built in a step-by-step process according to a design rendered beforehand, much as an architect would build a skyscraper - an analogy Galambos attributed to his architect father, Joseph B. Galambos.[23] The builders of this social architecture would come to the task by way of an ideological program offered by the architect as a proprietary product, which as I have mentioned, Robert Klassen subsequently labeled “economic government.”

Although the nature of man and his government is a long-studied subject in the human curriculum, only a few original thinkers have contributed to Molinari’s blockbuster discovery that political government must be abandoned in favor of private enterprise property protection for a free society to prevail. Galambos was one of few thinkers who conceived of private, profit-seeking businesses providing comprehensive property protection services as the keystone of human society. His reliance on competitive private enterprise to deliver protective services - for a profit - is a monumental idea. While the practice is yet to come to fruition on a large scale, we now know that it is the only reliable method of obtaining property protection consistent with liberty. Since Galambos is no longer with us, it is up to us to pass along his ideas and manner of thinking to the next generation.

End Notes

[1] Alvin Lowi is a mechanical engineer and thermodynamicist in private practice in Rancho Palos Verdes, CA. This article was originally prepared in October 2014, and revised with help from Richard Boren and Carl Watner. Alvin Lowi has written many articles on free-market subjects. He was a friend, colleague, and business associate of Andrew J. Galambos for many years and lectured for Galambos’ Free Enterprise Institute in Los Angeles from 1961 to 1969. He taught Galambos’ original course “Capitalism, the Key to Survival” from 1961 through its final offering in 1965. That course was superseded by Galambos’ and Snelson’s more familiar Courses V-50 and V-201.

[2] F. A. “Baldy” Harper was professor of marketing at Cornell University and the first staff economist with the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). He founded the Institute for Humane Studies, a community of libertarian scholars originally located in Menlo Park, California, now at George Mason University in Virginia.

[3] Spencer H. MacCallum, in a personal communication, wrote that he was present when Harper made this statement. Acknowledging the difficulty of tracing the propagation of ideas back to their source, Harper thought this perspective had come to him from a typescript of Heath’s CITADEL, MARKET AND ALTAR that John Chamberlain had sent him. He said the idea ruminated in his mind a full year before it

became clearly planted. So the chain of custody may have been from Heath to Baldy and thence to LeFevre and Rothbard. Baldy suggested MacCallum ask Rothbard whether he thought the idea had come to him from Baldy, but MacCallum never did.

[4] Alvin Lowi, "The Legacy of Spencer Heath: A Former Student Remembers the Man and Offers Some Observations on the Scientific Orientation of His Work," January 3, 2001. Available from alow@earthlink.net.

[5] "Weekend Read," [MisesDailyArticle.org](http://mises.org), March 25, 2006. The complete essay in English is at <http://mises.org/story/2088#6>.

[6] Alexis de Tocqueville, *DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA*, Vintage Books, 1945.

[7] Leonard Read, *GOVERNMENT - AN IDEAL CONCEPT*, New York: The Foundation for Economic Education, 1954.

[8] Robert LeFevre, "Must We Depend on Political Protection? - 'Yes,' Edmund A. Opitz; 'No,' Robert LeFevre," *STUDIES IN HUMAN ACTION*, Vol. II, No. 1, Colorado Springs: The Freedom School, Pine Tree Press, 1962.

[9] Andrew J. Galambos, *SIC ITUR AD ASTRA*, San Diego, CA: Universal Scientific Publishing Co., 1999, p. 29. See www.amazon.com/Sic-Itur-Ad-Astravolition/dp/0880780045.

[10] Spencer H. MacCallum, *THE ART OF COMMUNITY*, Menlo Park, CA: Institute for Humane Studies, 1970.

[11] Spencer Heath, *CITADEL, MARKET AND ALTAR*, Baltimore: Science of Society Foundation, 1956.

[12] E.C. Riegel, *THE NEW APPROACH TO FREEDOM*, San Pedro, CA: Heather Foundation, 1976.

[13] E.C. Riegel, *FLIGHT FROM INFLATION: THE MONETARY ALTERNATIVE*, Los Angeles: Heather Foundation, 1978.

[14] Gustave de Molinari, *THE SOCIETY OF TOMORROW*, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1904.

[15] Peter B. Bos, "The Societal Implications of Risk Sharing," Draft of December 20, 1998. Available from Pbbos@aol.com.

[16] Charles R. Estes, *VOLUNTARY EXCHANGE: KEYSTONE OF CIVILIZATION*, San Diego, CA: Mary L. Estes, 1997.

[17] Robert LeFevre, "The Thinking Man's Guide to Politics" Seminar, Los Angeles: Free Enterprise Institute, May 2, 1964.

[18] Galambos, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

[19] Robert Klassen, *ECONOMIC GOVERNMENT*, San Jose: WRITERS CLUB PRESS, 2001.

[20] Spencer Heath, *POLITICS VERSUS PROPRIETORSHIP*, Self-published 1936. Available from Spencer H. MacCallum, sm@look.net. Heath was a lecturer at the Henry George School under the direction of Frank Chodorov in New York City at this time.

[21] Galambos actually launched his freedom business out of a licensed securities and insurance business, Universal Shares, Ltd., from which he sold mutual fund

shares and insurance policies as a means of making money while selling laissez-faire capitalism along with personal property and financial security.

[22] J. Michael Oliver and Donald C. Stone, "Exclusive Interview with Murray Rothbard," *The NEW BANNER: A FORTNIGHTLY LIBERTARIAN JOURNAL*, February 25, 1972, Columbia, SC: New Banner Institute. Excerpted from <http://www.lewrockwell.com/rothbard/rothbard103.html>.

[23] Suzanne Galambos, *MORE LASTING THAN BRONZE*, Coronado, CA: Universal Scientific Publishing Co., 1991.

Insurance Companies as Competing Governments: Whose Idea Was It?

by Richard Boren

(From Issue 167, 4th Quarter 2015)

[Editor's Note: As some of you may know, I operate a small retail tire store and auto service center. Several problems in the store involve questions regarding the sale of used tires and the proper way to repair punctured tires. If a customer brings in a tire with plenty of tread, but which was manufactured ten years ago, is it safe to install? Should a tire be 'plugged' from the outside or must it be inspected and repaired from the inside? These are questions the tire industry is struggling to answer. Many leading tire associations look to the federal and/or state governments to offer legislative and regulatory solutions. When I suggested to the editor of a tire magazine that the insurance companies should set these standards, he responded: "Where did you ever get that idea from?" Well, I got it from several decades of studying and thinking about voluntarist solutions to societal problems.

In a state-free market economy it would only be natural for insurance companies to establish safety and procedural standards for those that they insure. Among other things they would probably fund organizations like Underwriters Laboratory and Consumers' Union to test products and to establish minimum requirements for obtaining insurance. Thus, rather than the state dictating the rules regarding tire aging, tire repair, (and thousands of other standards, such as the way to store explosive fertilizers or the use of seat belts and air bags in autos), it would be the insurers of these products and procedures that would be responsible. After all, they would have a large amount at stake should an insurable event occur and cause them a loss.

In a voluntarist world, by definition, all products and services would be provided via private, voluntary action. Gustave de Molinari (1819-1912) was probably the first person to envision the role that private defense and protection agencies might play in a state-free world. (See his 1849 monograph, *THE PRODUCTION OF SECURITY*, partially reprinted in Issue 35 of *THE*

VOLUNTARYIST.) However, Molinari made no mention of the role of insurance. That idea appears to have first been expressed more than 100 years later by someone else, as will be described below.

When I received a copy of an email from subscriber Richard Boren in September 2014, I had already been thinking about the pivotal role that defense and insurance companies would play in a state-free society. Richard had written that email to Hans-Hermann Hoppe, the author of a book, *DEMOCRACY, THE GOD THAT FAILED*, he had recently read. That book, first published in 2001, placed heavy emphasis on the role of insurance companies in a free society. In it, Hoppe gave credit to Morris and Linda Tannehill for their “brilliant insights and analysis” in that regard, as expressed in their 1970 book, *THE MARKET FOR LIBERTY*. The purpose of Boren’s email to Hoppe was to suggest that perhaps the Tannehills were not the true source of the ideas he so greatly admired. I suggested to Richard that he write an article on the history of the insurance concept, and he offered me the following.]

I first heard the idea that insurance companies would play an important role in a state-free society in 1975, while taking Course V-50 at the Free Enterprise Institute (FEI). The concept had been taught there for over 10 years, which is to say about five years before the Tannehills published their book. My instructor was Senior Lecturer Jay Stuart Snelson (1936-2011). He did a superb job of teaching concepts innovated by Andrew J. Galambos (1924-1997) and others in what was labeled the Science of Volition. Galambos had founded the Institute, a profit-seeking venture, in the early 1960s. I was so taken by what I learned there that I took classes continually for four years, all but the first taught personally by Galambos. FEI operated under Galambos’ direct management until the mid-1980s when he was sidelined by Alzheimer’s disease.

Prior to reading Hoppe’s book, I had never heard of the Tannehills but was inspired to purchase their book. What they had written about insurance companies sounded a lot like what I had learned from Galambos. I tried to find out more about the authors but hit a dead end. I could find no mention of them anywhere, other than references to their book. It didn’t appear that they had written anything before *THE MARKET FOR LIBERTY*, or anything since. Apparently the book was quite successful in libertarian circles when it first came out. I asked myself, “Who comes out of nowhere, writes a well-received book, and then disappears?” The answer, as far as I know, is pretty much limited to J.D. Salinger and Harper Lee. I began to suspect that the Tannehills might not have existed, and were the pen-names of someone else. However, thanks to the help of Brian Doherty of *REASON*, I learned that the Tannehills were real, as evidenced by an interview with Linda Tannehill in the March 1991 issue of *LIBERTY MAGAZINE*. But still, their appearance out of nowhere to write a book of great substance, including the blockbuster insurance idea, was suspicious. Who in that position doesn’t remain active on the scene? Was the work really theirs?

In the “Acknowledgments” section of their book, the Tannehills expressed

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gratitude to “Skye d’Aureous” and “Natalee Hall.” I learned that these were the pseudonyms of Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw. I knew these names because of their prominence in the health-food, life-extension book and lecture business.

And then I learned something else. In the late 1960s, immediately preceding the 1970 publication of the Tannehill’s book, Mr. Pearson was a student of Andrew J. Galambos. In fact, Pearson was described as a “precocious” student by Alvin Lowi, Jr., who had close business and personal ties to both Galambos and Pearson.

The insurance-as-government concept was central to the state-free society that Galambos wanted to develop. He lectured for hours on how to build such a society, and Pearson could not have been a Galambos student, let alone a precocious one, without learning about the central role of insurance. Could it be that Pearson gave those ideas to the Tannehills?

Galambos recorded all of his lectures on audiotape, and made the recordings available to new students so that he wouldn’t have to deliver the same course over and over. He gave Course V-50 for the last time in 1968. After that, new students either heard that recording or attended the live presentations by Jay Snelson, as I did. Galambos also promised to write a book containing the ideas of V-50 and of a more advanced course, V-201, but never did. However, he pre-sold the book to a number of students (I am one of them) and promised that in the event of his death or other inability to write, his trustees would publish a transcript of his lectures to satisfy the book obligation. Galambos died in 1997 (after many non-productive years due to his disease) and in 1999 his trustees published Volume One of his book, consisting of a lightly edited transcription of the 1968 rendering of Course V-50. These are the ideas that Durk Pearson would have heard in person.

Galambos was an excellent lecturer, seemingly speaking without notes. V-50 was a 16 session course, with each session lasting about three hours. Anyone who could hold an audience’s attention for that long must have been doing something right. Nevertheless, a transcription is not as good as a carefully written book, but it had to do. The transcription of V-50 was released as an 800+ page book titled SIC ITUR AD ASTRA (This is the Way to the Stars). The title reflected astrophysicist Galambos’ desire to be involved in proprietary space travel. He would quip that he was “trying to make the world safe for astrophysicists.”

Galambos, in endeavoring to create a bona fide science of volition, insisted on developing and using a precise, uniform vocabulary. In the same way that physicists have standard, universally-used terms such as “mass” and “energy,” Galambos developed precise definitions of such words as “freedom” and “property.” He distinguished between “state” and “government” and gave credit to Albert Jay Nock and his book, *OUR ENEMY THE STATE*, for sensitizing him to that distinction. Galambos defined “state” as “any organized coercion which has general accreditation and respectability by the people; a monopoly of crime.” Then, rather than abandoning the word “government” in favor of something with no negative connotation, he attempted to rehabilitate it by defining it as “a person or organization which offers

services or products for sale for the purpose of protecting property, to which owners of property may voluntarily subscribe.” He said, “Please note the indefinite article: ‘a’ government, not ‘the’ government. It’s not a monopoly. It is not unique.” He counted lock makers and fence makers and private detective agencies as government. But, he added, “... the highest form of government available in this world is the insurance company. If all else fails, and you do lose your property, they’ll pay you the financial value for which you have insured it, and that is a government service.”

He called insurance “one of the great inventions of all time. It compares in importance with the invention of the wheel.” In his book, over 7,000 words are devoted to the concept of insurance companies providing services traditionally assigned to government. Galambos pointed out that an insurance company has a proprietary interest in its customers’ well-being, meaning that a customer’s loss would be the insurance company’s loss. The insurance company was a “totally impersonal organization operated by total strangers” but highly motivated to prevent the loss in the first place, and, in the case where there was a loss, to apprehend the person responsible and recover that loss.

In explaining this to students, Galambos emphasized that under the state the highly regulated insurance industry offers nothing like what it would in a state-free society. The service provided by insurance companies competing in a voluntary society would be vastly better than under state supervision. Many more insurance options would be available, and most people would insure a wide variety of things, out of habit, without thinking much about it.

As a requirement of attending classes at FEI, Galambos required students to sign a non-disclosure agreement. This policy has been attacked by some of his detractors - people who never took a course from him. I will not discuss it here other than to say that the point was to help ensure proper use and dissemination of knowledge, not to suppress it. Durk Pearson would have had to have signed such an agreement, and would have been in violation of it if he had disclosed the insurance concepts to the Tannehills without Galambos’ permission. Although the evidence is circumstantial, and I am speculating, I suspect that this is what happened. Galambos would never have given permission for anyone to publish his ideas before he had done so himself. So, since Pearson couldn’t legitimately write about the ideas, he used a pseudonym and gave them to the previously and subsequently unremarkable Tannehills.

Carl Watner reports having correspondence with Morris Tannehill in 1969, a period when Tannehill must have been thinking about and even writing the book, but there was no mention of insurance. It’s hard to imagine someone coming up with a big idea like that and not mentioning it, especially since Watner was not yet convinced of the state-free solution, and the idea goes a long way toward making that feasible. Once someone hears the idea and “gets it,” it is a fairly mechanical process to think of numerous applications. Readers of the Tannehills’ book will see that, as will those who are fortunate to read Galambos.

But where did Galambos get the insurance idea? I always assumed it was his, but

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came to learn that was not the case. As a working astrophysicist, in the early 1960's he began giving freedom-oriented lectures to his colleagues and his following grew. One way of reaching students with his original course, Course 100, was to have his friend and colleague Alvin Lowi, Jr. listen to each session, take notes, and then deliver that session to another group a week later. In one of those other groups was Peter B. Bos, an MIT aeronautical engineering graduate with a blossoming interest in libertarian issues.

According to Bos, he never took a course from Galambos, his exposure coming through Lowi. Like every person considering the idea of limiting or even eliminating the state, he had the usual questions about how the state's putative function of the protection of life and property would be performed. At some point he had the insight that there was no need to invent something new because the answer already existed in a well-established, well-capitalized industry: insurance. For anyone who has ever tackled any project, there's nothing better than realizing that the thing needed to solve a problem already exists and can be taken off the shelf and used. It was a "Eureka!" moment for Bos.

Bos realized that when it came to protecting your life and property, there would be no better ally than someone who would suffer a loss if you suffered a loss. Bos saw that insurance companies had a proprietary interest in your well-being - something the state does not. In fact the state does not even have a legal responsibility to keep you safe. However, if you are insured, then your insurance company must pay you if you come to harm. Therefore, the insurance company, in its own interest, has a motivation to keep you from having a loss of life or property in order to keep itself from suffering a monetary loss. There are many things an insurance company might do in this regard including, but not limited to, the production of physical defense. To Bos, the insurance company was the ideal replacement for the state because it has an incentive to do the things that make up the main reason for the state's existence - the protection of life and property, but which the state routinely doesn't deliver.

As witnessed by Lowi, Bos presented this idea at the 1963 FEI Alumni Meeting with Galambos in attendance. Galambos, who was in the middle of his own fundamental shift from promoting a society with a limited state to one that was state-free, soon incorporated the insurance idea into what became Course V-50. Perhaps fortuitously, Galambos himself was licensed to sell insurance and investments, and did so, but gave up that business to devote full time to FEI. He went on to develop Course V-30, Investments and Insurance, in which fundamental concepts were brilliantly explained. Galambos clearly had a deep understanding of insurance. However, the idea that competing insurance companies could and should take the place of the state came from Bos. But Galambos never gave Bos credit for the idea, and it was not until 2008 that Bos learned that Galambos had used it. Bos has written a book, *THE ROAD TO FREEDOM* (which should be available by early 2015), that incorporates his ideas for building a free world, and naturally insurance plays the role he envisioned.

Galambos' failure to give credit to Bos has not been explained. Not to have done so was a violation of the very things he taught. An answer might lie in his recordings and papers from that era, should they ever become available for study. As it is, however, the trustees of Galambos' estate have withdrawn SIC ITUR AD ASTRA from sale. They have also refused to fulfill the rest of the book contract by publishing the transcript of what Galambos called his most important course, V201, The Nature and Protection of Primary [Intellectual] Property and delivering it to those who paid for it. However, the most important material is gradually being revealed at capitalismtheliberalevolution.com, created by Frederic G. Marks, Galambos' onetime attorney and confidante. I highly recommend it.

So, did the insurance-as-government idea originate with Peter Bos, then flow to Galambos, to Pearson, and then to the Tannehills, with the latter getting the credit? Among other things, Galambos acknowledged that ideas could be independently discovered, and in course V-201 he proposed a number of tests for independency. It was one of those tests - whether the person claiming independent discovery had a track record in the subject area - that caused me to look into the Tannehills. In fairness, they didn't explicitly claim independency, but neither did they cite an antecedent, so the inference was that their book offered new ideas, and that's how it was accepted by the esteemed Dr. Hoppe. It's likely that we'll never know, but absent evidence to the contrary I'll credit Peter Bos who, by disclosing the idea in 1963, appears to have been first.

Let Us Imagine "Perfect" Protection

by Robert LeFevre

(From Issue 167, 4th Quarter 2015)

[Editor's Note: This is taken from a Freedom School pamphlet, titled PROTECTION (Colorado Springs: Pine Tree Press, December 1964, pp. 14-16).]

Conceive of an electronic device capable of creating a force field around any person or object. Imagine this force field of such intensity that it would actually stop a bullet or deflect any other object of force. Were such a force field available to you in the market, you could obtain one and place it around your home. You could even place it around yourself if you strolled abroad. With it in place, you or your property would be safe. No predator could possibly penetrate this shield.

Now, imagine a community in which all property and all persons were thus protected. What chance would a predator have in such a community? Would it be necessary to arrest and punish a malefactor? No. Because no predation could occur. The evil wisher would be confronted by an impenetrable shield standing between

himself and the target of his ambition. He would have to learn to cooperate and to live in peace and productive effort, or starve. If he hurled himself against a person or a property so protected, he would injure himself in the effort. You would not have to arrange for his punishment or even for his arrest. He would be engaged in an act of futility and thus would be a proper object for your compassion, not for retributive justice.

We do not know that the market place could produce this device or anything similar. But we do know that the market place can and has produced seeming miracles. Once we accept the idea that we must rely on the market and look to it for our protection, stimulation of invention and devising will occur. Whether the market can or will provide for such protection is not the point. The point is that we begin thinking in terms of protection rather than in terms of retributive justice. A free society requires protection; it cannot at the same time hold to views in support of retributive justice. Ideas of retribution are contrary to ideas of freedom.

If we are to persist in retributive concepts, then we will have to discard freedom as a total concept. The best we can hope for is limited freedom; freedom limited by a government which will have the power to trespass anyone's property or life at will.

If, however, we can discard this ancient and worn out idea that protection is impossible or ineffective in the sense that we are made safe, then we will have opened a door long bolted shut in our minds. Real protection is possible. But only the market place provides it.

Retributive justice is the last vestige of the ancient idea of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

“Call the COPS - But Not the Police:” Voluntaryism and Protective Agencies in Historical Perspective

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 123, 4th Quarter 2004)

“[T]he question arose of how to handle aggressors within the community. ... [W]hat about robbers, rapists, or murderers ... ? ... To deal with violent aggression within the city, associations sprang up in each place. Ours is named the Committee for Peace and Safety, but everyone calls it by its initials, COPS. ...

“COPS is careful to use force only against those who have initiated the use of force. A murderer initiates the use of force. So does a robber, or a rapist. [Our] philosophy ... allows for the use of force against aggressors, in reaction to their initiation of force. COPS can never initiate the use of force ... against people who haven't themselves used force. ...”

- Jim Payne, PRINCESS NAVINA VISITS VOLUNTARIA (2002), pp. 63-64.

Introduction: Government Police or Private Protective Agencies

To voluntaryists, the history of government institutions is only important as they shed light on how private organizations might evolve if no government coercion were present. The historical record with respect to “private” police is very spotty (and only cursory mention of it will be made here), since government monopolization has been the norm throughout the ages. Understanding the history of modern government policing is doubly important because it not only sheds light on how a voluntary society might rely on private agencies, but also illustrates the degree to which governments depend on legitimacy, rather than force, as the main prop to their existence.

Paraphrasing a definition from the ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, the term “police” denotes a body of people organized to maintain civil order and public safety, and to investigate and rectify breaches of the peace.[1] Nevertheless, the word “police” was unknown to the English language until two hundred and fifty years ago. A Frenchman arriving in London in the early part of the 18th Century observed a great deal of dirt and disorder in the streets. Asking about the police, but finding that none understood the term, he cried out, “Good Lord! how can one expect Order among these people, who have not such a word as Police in their language?”[2]

John Hasnas in his seminal article on “The Myth of the Rule of Law” has noted that for hundreds of years “most people have been [taught] to identify law with the state.” To them, it seems like there must be a single, monopolistic government, and that the police are the coercive functionaries of the state. The idea of a free-market approach to peacekeeping is simply impossible for them to imagine. Thus, despite the “remarkable historical, geographical, and organizational diversity in the activities of persons who are, or have been, counted as police” the common thread that links them together across time and space is the fact that they have been or are agents of the state “endowed with the exclusive monopoly of using force.”[3]

The ideas that a) protective agencies should not be tax-supported; b) customers contractually pay for the level of service that they desire; c) competition among agencies providing protective services will enhance the quality and tend to lower the price of the services they offer; d) employees of competing protective agencies or insurance companies derive their right to use force from the their customers’ right of self-defense and self-protection; and e) might act as agents of individuals to settle disputes or repair breaches of the peace is simply unthinkable to most people. Hence the distinction in my title: whenever you call the police, you are calling upon an agent of the state to assist you - a distinctly involuntaryist action. The COPS, on the other hand, as the fictional account in VOLUNTARIA describes them, are strictly volunteers who help maintain the social peace.

The purpose of this article is to present a brief overview of the history and

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evolution of policing, and to show that the only legitimate police function (keeping the peace) is made impossible when the police are agents of the coercive state. Just because I am opposed to a particular state activity (provision of the social order by the police) does not imply that I am against the activity 'per se'. There are other, non-state ways to "police" society that are more moral and more practical than governmental methods. In addition, I do not wish to imply that free market protection agencies would operate without problems, or that there would be no crime in a voluntarist society. However, I believe there would be fewer of these kinds of issues because free market protection agencies are a) entirely consistent with our commonly held moral practices that inculcate respect for private property; and b) would be more efficient and less likely to turn venal - because they must compete for the customer's patronage. Using the police to "police" society introduces a whole host of unsolvable problems: a) who "polices" the police (to see that they do not themselves violate the rights of individuals); b) what happens to the pacifists who do not want their tax monies used to fund the police; c) who protects us when the police turn criminal themselves; d) how do you protect innocent people and opponents of the state from persecution by the police?

Customary Law and Policing

Some of the earliest forms of police discovered by historians date back to the time of Babylon and involve religious, political, or military personnel wielding force to keep the public order and enforce the mandates of those in power. Emperor Augustus in 6 A.D. created ten cohorts of 1000 freedmen each to provide fire and police protection for the city of Rome. "These cohorts could, in turn, call upon the emperor's own bodyguard (the Praetorian Guard) for assistance." [4] The Roman form of police became the model for many countries of the world, where the police evolved out of military or semi-military forces. Once the government of a country was relatively free from the threat of outside invasion, it was able to use its military forces to further pacify, control, and police its internal population. As we shall see, the police became like a domestic garrison force designed to restrain, not only forceful activities detrimental to the wider society, but also those threatening the government's own existence.

Historians have observed that in countries where there was not a strong centralized military force "citizens banded together for mutual protection" from criminals. [5] This is a natural reaction, for wherever the government cannot or will not provide a service that people desire, the people themselves will organize voluntarily to provide it. This is best evidenced by reviewing the history of customary law and protection in early England, where "kinship was the basis for reciprocal recognition and enforcement of law." [6] As Bruce Benson notes:

The Anglo-Saxons carried their customary legal system to Britain beginning in about 450 A.D. By the tenth century, there was a clearly

recognized Anglo-Saxon legal institution called the hundred [based on kinship groups of one hundred men or households]. The primary purposes of the hundreds were rounding up stray cattle and dispensing justice, When a theft occurred, the men of the several tithings [groups of ten men or households] that made up a hundred were informed and they had a reciprocal duty to pursue the thief. A tithing apparently consisted of a group of neighbors, many of whom were probably kin. These voluntary groups provided “the police system of the country”, but their role went well beyond policing: they also “made everyone accountable for all his neighbors.” Indeed, social relations were generally maintained only with people who shared surety protection through association with a tithing and a hundred.[7]

The Norman Conquest of 1066 resulted in many structural changes to the provision of traditional Anglo-Saxon protection. Under William of Normandy, a feudal system was established and the Norman institution of frankpledge was imposed. Frankpledge was much like the customarily-evolved Anglo-Saxon system of hundreds in that it obligated the local populace to pursue and capture criminals. The difference was that “[f]rankpledge was a police system invented by the conquering Norman monarchy as an instrument of central government control.”[8] The Norman kings used the law enforcement system of the frankpledge “to generate revenues needed to finance their military operations, to enhance their own wealth, and to buy support of powerful groups.”[9] Fines or restitution collected from criminals no longer went to the victim or local tithing but rather into the king’s treasury. Reeves were appointed by the king to supervise the shires, or counties, the area occupied by a hundred (hence the term shire-reeve, from which the word ‘sheriff was derived). Tithing members who violated their obligations were no longer brought before local manorial courts but rather before “central courts whose justices were the king’s appointees.”[10] Every effort was made to expand the king’s jurisdiction. Violations of the king’s peace became known as crimes (in contrast to civil wrongs, known as torts), and these criminal offenses “generated revenues for the king or the sheriffs rather than payment to a victim,” as had been customary under earlier Anglo-Saxon tribal law.[11]

Over the next five hundred years, the monarchy continued to broaden its law enforcement activities to the detriment of custom-based law enforcement. The concept of felony was brought to England, “making it a feudal crime for a vassal to betray” his lord. Eventually any crime deemed a felony meant that a convicted felon’s possessions escheated to the king.[12] Royal laws eventually “declared that the victim [became] a criminal if he obtained restitution prior to bringing the offender before a king’s justice where the king could get his profits.” The crime of theftbote was created “making it a misdemeanor for a victim to accept the return of stolen property or to make other arrangements with a felon in exchange for an agreement not to

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prosecute” in the king’s courts.[13] The earliest justices of the peace were appointed in 1326, and their role in keeping the peace and generating both personal and monarchical revenues was expanded over many centuries. As Bruce Benson concludes, “The evolution of England’s criminal law system was altered by a long history of direct commands to serve the self-interested goals of kings, their bureaucrats, and politically powerful individuals and groups. These changes substantially weakened private citizens’ incentives to participate in voluntary law enforcement arrangements,” ultimately giving the government both reasons and excuses for providing “bureaucratic alternatives. The fact that the state has taken such a prominent role in criminal law is not a reflection of the superior efficiency of state institutions, but [rather the] result of the state’s undermining the incentives for private participation in criminal law.”[14]

This brief review of English criminal law does not do justice to the sweeping changes it underwent over hundreds of years. However, its roots in traditional kinship and neighborly reciprocity mirror the two basic principles of all customary law. These operative principles are that a) there is no paid (standing) police force, and b) judges do not enjoy a monopoly over judicial activities. Under Anglo-Saxon, Norman, and English customary law until the 19th Century “1) it was everyone’s duty to maintain the king’s peace, and any citizen could arrest an offender; 2) the unpaid, part-time constable had a special duty to do so, and in towns he would be assisted by his inferior officer, the watchman; 3) if the offender was not caught red-handed, a hue and cry must be raised; [and] 4) everyone was obliged to keep arms and to follow the cry, when required;”[15]

The Evolution of the Modern Police

Beginning in the 18th Century, as England evolved into a modern nation-state, criminal law took on a new form. Increasing urbanization, industrialization, and politicization resulted in the decline of the constabulary system. A stipendiary police system evolved under which it was necessary to pay the justices of the peace, the constables, and their night watchmen fees for the services they rendered. Other laws were passed which allowed persons to hire replacements to serve their terms as constables. In 1735, “two Westminster parishes obtained parliamentary sanction for the substitution of a new system financed by money collected by means of a” tax on the inhabitants.[16] The system was soon embraced by King George in 1737, who “initiated action to allow city councils to levy taxes to pay nightwatchmen.” This was the first instance in the English-speaking world that “tax money was used to pay police salaries.”[17] The system soon spread to the rest of London, where a mixed system of policing evolved. There existed, side by side, watchmen who were paid with public monies, but supervised by constables receiving no public salaries (although some constables were privately paid by those who engaged them as substitutes).

Leon Radinowicz, author of A HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH CRIMINAL LAW

AND ITS ADMINISTRATION FROM 1750, noted that the word “police” was “suggestive of terror and oppression” to all common law loving people.[18] As we have seen, the traditional English policing until the 18th Century was provided by individuals who were not in the pay of the government. The idea of “tax-paid police officers” was “a dangerous innovation in principle.” It was believed that those who were “unpaid and unsalaried” had no particular interest “in perverting the law to oppression. To appoint a set of Justices with salaries from the Government, and consequently to a certain degree under the influence of the government, was [not only] to change the long-established practice, [but] to introduce a new principle, which might be indefinitely extended under various pretexts,... the effects of which no man could foresee.” A [tax-]paid police would be “as so many mercenaries ..., and at the complete disposal of the Government.”[19]

One of the first attempts at creating a “new” police force for London took place in 1785 when Prime Minister William Pitt, the Younger, introduced the first Police Bill in the House of Commons. The central idea of this legislation was “to create a single police force for the metropolis.”[20] Although the bill was withdrawn because it was considered “an unconstitutional imposition on the magistracy and the people,” it set a precedent for what was to follow. The next year, 1786, a bill with similar provisions was imposed on the city of Dublin, by the English statesmen ruling Ireland. They saw a centralized police force paid for by the municipality as an efficient means of dealing with “rural disorder amounting to near insurrection, ... mob justice against soldiers, and the threat of popular armed force in Dublin itself.”[21] Under the Peace Preservation Act of 1787, the Irish Parliament dismissed the idea of a rural police for all of Ireland, but did legislate police units for the four most disturbed counties.[22] “The 1786 Act, repealed after strong opposition on the grounds of costs and constitutionality, was quickly replaced after the rebellion of 1798 by a highly centralizing statute of 1799.”[23]

Peel and the “New” Police

Further reforms of the English and Irish police took place during the next four decades of civil unrest. The most conspicuous politician to take a part in these changes was Robert Peel, who as chief secretary to the lord lieutenant of Ireland, implemented the Peace Preservation Police in 1814. Peel had little regard for the Irish, stating that his bill establishing this new police force “was not meant to meet any temporary emergency, but was rendered necessary by the past state of Ireland for the last fifty years and by the probable state of it for the next five hundred.”[24] Peel’s police were a “paramilitary force ... despatched to the most disturbed parts of the country.”[25] Peel envisioned “a permanent, country-wide police wholly controlled from Dublin Castle: ‘a body of gendarmerie to be called by some less startling name’.” By 1822, Peel’s riot police had become entrenched in half the counties of Ireland, but continuing agrarian violence prompted Parliament to legislate a new Insurrection Act and to suspend habeas corpus for all of Ireland. Under the Act, a new

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national rural police, or ‘constabulary’ of about 4500 men was created. These new police were compulsory for every county in Ireland, and were partly paid for out of central government funds (rather than being totally paid for by the local county). These police were clearly intended to become the first line of defense against disorder, and were viewed as a supplement to the military establishment of 20,000 troops which the British kept in Ireland.[26]

The English experiences in Ireland were based on “highly centralized coercive measures,” and police “organized as a civil force on military lines.” However, neither of these policies were totally adaptable to England.[27] Nevertheless, English society did become more receptive to such ideas, so that by 1829, Peel - now Home Secretary for England - was able to persuade “Parliament to accept his proposal [for] a single government-controlled police for London; the new Metropolitan Police, a gendarmerie without [...] arms, represent [ing] a tamer, anglicized version of the police he had established earlier in Ireland.”[28] In Peel’s view, and in the eyes of other British reformers, such as Colquhoun and Chadwick, the new police were to be a professional, uniformed, yet unarmed, force devoted mainly to the prevention of local crime, riot, and public disorder. Such a police force was to be paid by and remain under the control of the central government. Nonetheless, Peel and his supporters recognized that without “the consent and cooperation of the citizenry” the “new” police could never be a success.[29] The English experience in Ireland had already “proved that police officers were helpless if local citizens did not give them aid and information.”[30]

The new police institution had many supporters in government, but opposition was to be found in the wider society. The fundamental principles behind the force were seen as an anathema to Whig political principles, which emphasized “liberty over authority, the rights of the people against the prerogatives of the Crown, local accountability in place of centralization, and governance by the ‘natural’ rulers of society instead of salaried, government-appointed bureaucrats.”[31] Some farmers and middle-class people objected to paying for police they didn’t need.[32] Working-class radicals and Chartists believed that the new police would be used to interfere in trade strikes or to “spy upon working-class political movements.” Members of the lower-classes pointed out that the “government had saddled the country with [a bunch of] well-paid idlers, ‘blue locusts’ who devoured tax money and produced nothing of use in return.”[33]

On March 18, 1833, William Cobbett delivered a speech in Parliament in which he pointed out that, “Tyranny always comes by slow degrees; and nothing could tend to illustrate that fact [more] than the history of police in this country.”

Englishmen were shocked at the idea [of establishing a government police force]. The name was completely new among us. ... We continued for some time with a police office in Bow Street, a couple of police Magistrates, and a few police officers ... but at length the right [H]on.

Baronet [Peel] came forward and said that “owing to the improvement of the age, we want something a little more regular in the form of our police” ... behold! We had now [in London] a police with numbered collars and embroidered cuffs - a body of men as regular as in the King’s service, as fit for domestic war as the red-coats were for foreign war. ... The system was spreading. Formerly it was confined to London, but the ministers had been smuggling it into the great towns; before long there would be a regular police force established in every village. ... [Cobbett] warned ... the people of England against the scourge which ... [the] Government was preparing for them. ... [Cobbett] believed the Government had the project in contemplation to govern England, as Ireland had been long governed [with police].[34]

Cobbett’s prediction was correct: by 1856, the County and Borough Police Act of that year required the creation of a full-time police force in every town and county of England. “The central government was empowered to inspect each force, and, if found up to the mark, to support them with a grant amounting to one-fourth of their total cost.”[35] Cobbett was also right in referring to the Irish precedent: “[T]he experience of organizing and recruiting the Irish police undoubtedly informed a central English political elite of the feasibility of police, their usefulness in times of disorder, the advantages of disciplined professionalism, and the desirability (in the midst of religious conflicts of Ireland) of an appearance of strict neutrality if they [the police] were not to be destroyed by the hostilities of the community.”[36]

The “New” Police in the United States

Even though many Americans shared the common law’s traditional antipathy toward “state-directed police,”[37] Peel’s Metropolitan Police force for greater London “was to become the model for the United States’ police system.”[38] The absence of political centralization predisposed early Americans to carry the English attitudes towards the police “to the extreme,” and has resulted in the extensive decentralization of American police forces today (estimates range from 20,000 to 36,000 public police agencies in the US).[39] One of the dominant themes in the history of police in the United States has been the struggle over which political faction would control the police.[40] Under the U.S. Constitution, police power was not a federal responsibility, but rather an obligation of either the state, county, or local governments. Since control over the police was a local responsibility, it had to vacillate “between city or state elective authorities. Thus, nowhere was the embrace of police and politics tighter than in the United States.”[41]

Originally the municipal policing in the United States was based on the customary English system. The amount of manpower devoted to protective services in early America was extremely small. “For two centuries Boston’s policing was conducted by a handful of amateur, part-time constables and watchmen; as late as

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1832 the city of 65,000 got by with about fifty of these early patrolmen.” When the Boston Police Department was officially begun in 1855 it was staffed by 200 police. Until 1820, New York, a city of 125,000, was patrolled by a night watch of 100 men. The Great Fire of 1835, caused the city authorities to increase the night-watch patrol to 250 men. Ten years later, the official New York City Police Department had some 800 men, headed by a chief of police.[42] The historian providing these numbers points out that New York City must “have been relatively free of crime and disorder” for so few police to have been successful in their jobs.[43]

The first paid, professional police forces were formed in the larger American cities, sometimes in reaction to the demands of each city’s elite to control the poor and the immigrants, and sometimes simply in reaction to the desire of city bureaucrats to better “control and manage” their cities.[44] New York City created its first police department, modeled after the Peelian force of London, in 1844.[45] Other cities soon followed suit: “New Orleans and Cincinnati in 1852; Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago in 1855; Baltimore and Newark in 1857; and Providence in 1864.”[46]

Statewide police, paid by state governments, rather than individual cities, followed somewhat later. Apart from the Texas Rangers, which began operations as a frontier border patrol in 1835, the first true state-wide and state-paid police force was established in Massachusetts in 1865. A rural force of 130 men, the Massachusetts State Police was mainly “[c]harged with enforcing liquor prohibition laws,” and was so controversial that it was “reorganized into a small state detective squad” ten years later.[47] No further state police forces were organized until the 20th Century. Pennsylvania created a state constabulary in 1905; followed by New York and California in 1917, and 1929, respectively. These forces were established to deal with industrial unrest, crime, and the problems generated by the growth of automobile traffic. “The men’s uniforms reflected the public’s significant change in attitude toward police: The state troopers with their guns, military belts, tailored (and oft-stripped) trousers, and ‘battledress style of jacket,’ would have shocked early-nineteenth-century Americans.”[48]

A Domestic Army: Police Penetration of Civil Society

Although it has been argued that the prevalence of crime in modern cities required the creation of modern police forces, some historians have pointed out that there is no relationship between increasing urban populations, the amount of crime, and the creation of municipal police. Roger Lane, author of *POLICING THE CITY: BOSTON, 1822-1855*, concluded that “the existing historical evidence suggest[s]... that over [the] long-term, urbanization has had a settling, literally a civilizing, effect on the population involved.”[49] David Bayley, in his article on “The Police and Political Development in Europe,” observed that there is “no threshold of population size which seems to compel development of a police system.”[50] Paris had a population of 540,000 in the mid-17th century when the Lieutenant-General was established. London had nearly 1,500,000 people in 1829 when the New Police were

founded. “A comparison of events in London and Paris strongly suggests that insecurity is not sufficient to create a police force. ... In short, development of police cannot be understood in terms of crime.”[51]

If the development of modern police, either in America, Britain, or other parts of Europe cannot be fully explained as a response to the amount of crime present in any given society, then we must look elsewhere for explanations. Although many historians and political theorists disagree, it appears to this author at least - that the new, modern police established on the London model of 1829 were purely a political development brought on by the evolution of the nation-state during the 19th century. Modern nation-building and the police forces have gone hand-in-hand, until today, when the police have become the most visible representatives of the modern state.[52] The police are the state’s “prime instrument of power” and the most “obvious physical manifestation” of political governance and law-enforcement activities.[53] The problem of rulership has always been to create the most amount of governance at the least amount of cost, and the creation of the “new” police was envisioned as at least a partial solution to this perennial problem.

British statesmen in their approach to controlling civil unrest and dissent in Ireland realized that more than a standing army was needed to subdue the native population. They realized the ineffectiveness of a continual harsh military presence, and saw the need for a softer means of social control.[54] The police, as we know it today, grew out of their experiences in Ireland. The central feature of this new order was “a garrison force, present at all times,” personnel knowledgeable of and living in close proximity to those to be ruled, a force which could efficiently arrest criminals, “and a force capable of graduated responses to rioting, able to anticipate violence and break it up before it grew to serious proportions, and able to respond in measured proportions to the size and character of the danger, rather than unleashing a military charge.[55] Such a police force achieved legitimacy because it was able to impose “law and order” and was, at least sometimes, helpful to those being forced to pay for its services.

Alan Silver has pointed out that modern police personnel serve as “the agent [s] of legitimate coercion and as a personification of the values of the” political government that they serve.[56]

The police were designed to penetrate civil society in a way impossible for military formations and by so doing to prevent crime and violence and to detect and apprehend criminals. ... The police penetration of civil society, however, lay not only in its narrow application to crime and violence. In a broader sense, it represented the penetration and continual presence of political authority throughout daily life.[57] ... Police forces came to be seen as they were in the time of their creation - as a sophisticated and convenient form of garrison force against an internal enemy.[58]

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The “modern preventative police established in London and New York represented an unprecedented, highly visible increase of the state’s power over the lives of ordinary citizens.”[59] No wonder that many Englishmen at first considered the Peelian police as “a government army.”[60]

Legitimacy and the Role of Police

Silver and other historians of the police have repeatedly pointed out that in order for the police to be effective in “keeping order” there must be a general agreement among the populace at large “that the power they exercise is legitimate.”[61]

The replacement of intermitt[e]nt military intervention in a largely unpoliced society by continuous professional bureaucratic policing meant that the benefits of police organization - continual, pervasive, moral display and lower long-term costs of official coercion for the state and propertied classes - absolutely required the cooperation of civil society. Thus, the extension of moral consensus and of the police as an instrument of legitimate coercion go hand in hand. Along with other ramifying bureaucratic agencies of the center, the police link daily life to central authority. The police, however, rely not only on ... coercion but also on a new and unprecedentedly extensive form of moral consensus. The center is able to supervise daily life more closely and continuously than ever before; but police organization also requires pervasive moral assent if it is to achieve the goals peculiar to its technique. ... Without at least a minimal level of such assent, coercive functions become costly in exactly the ways that those who created the policed society in England sought to avoid.[62]

The “new” police contributed to 19th century state-building by giving the citizenry at least some reasons to voluntarily comply with the demands of political authority. The police sometimes did successfully provide essential services and therefore earned the thanks of the population. However, the modern police were also part of the national “extraction-coercion” and “extraction-persuasion” cycles. The constitutional and legal obligation to pay taxes involved the police, not only as recipients of tax funds (the source of their salaries being taxes), but also in their enforcement role, as the armed personnel that exercised the threat or actual use of force against those who refused to pay or were recalcitrant in paying.[63]

The “new” modern police were designed to do more than just “chase” criminals. From helping to collect taxes, to taking lost children home, to directing traffic at funerals, the police perform a myriad of services. In fact, it has been estimated that the percentage of police effort actually devoted to traditional criminal matters “does not exceed 10%.”[64] Is it any wonder, then, that there is a demand on the free market

for private police and private detectives to supplement the public police?

Historically, there has been an ever-present demand for police services over and above those provided by the State. In England, during the late 18th and 19th centuries, over 400 neighborhood associations for protection against felons and recovery of stolen property existed. These were private subscription organizations whose personnel specialized in protection and restitution. In the United States, during the late 19th and early 20th century, many railroads employed their own private police to protect travelers and their rolling stock and freight from thieves.[65] The Burns International Security Services, and Pinkerton's Inc., with historical roots back to the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, rival or exceed in size some public law enforcement agencies today. Even as early as 1901, it was asserted that "The Pinkerton Detective Agency ... could protect Chicago for less than two-thirds of what the municipal police department now costs the taxpayers, and the protection would be real and thorough!"[66] As late as 1978, the General Motors Corporation had a force of 4200 plant guards, "a body larger than the municipal police forces of all but five American cities." [67]

Throughout much of the 1980s, funding for private security in the United States exceeded the combined total of Federal, State, and local law enforcement expenditures. The private security workforce outnumbered public law enforcement personnel by a ratio of nearly 2:1. In 1982 there were more than a million people employed in the United States by the private security industry, while publicly paid police employees numbered just over 500,000.[68]

Free Market Protection Agencies

So the voluntaryist idea that protective agencies could completely replace the public police is not such a far-fetched idea. As Murray Rothbard has written, there is nothing divinely ordained about having only one police agency in a given geographic area.[69] The two earliest advocates of a free market in police protection were Gustave de Molinari, a 19th century French economist, and Lysander Spooner, an American lawyer. In his 1849 article, "The Production of Security," Molinari noted that "the production of security, like everything else [in the free market] should be subject to the law of free competition."

This option the consumer retains of being able to buy security wherever he [the consumer] pleases brings about a constant emulation among all the producers, each producer striving to maintain or augment his clientele with the attraction of cheapness or of faster, more complete, and better justice. If, on the contrary, the consumer is not free to buy security wherever he pleases, you forthwith see open up a large profession dedicated to arbitrariness and bad management. Justice becomes slow and costly, the police vexatious, individual liberty is no longer respected, the price of security is abusively inflated and inequitably apportioned ... [70]

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Three years later, in 1852, Lysander Spooner, an American constitutional lawyer, argued that protection ought to be private and be provided by insurance organizations.

All legitimate government is a mutual insurance company, voluntarily agreed upon by the parties to it, for the protection of their rights against wrongdoers. In its voluntary character it is precisely similar to an association for mutual protection against fire or shipwreck. Before a man will join an association for these latter purposes, and pay the premium for being insured, he will, if he be a man of sense, look at the articles of the association; see what the company promises to do; what it is likely to do; and what are the rates of insurance. If he is satisfied on all these points, he will become a member, pay his premium for a year, and then hold the company to its contract. If the conduct of the company prove unsatisfactory, he will let his policy expire at the end of the year for which he has paid; will decline to pay any further premiums, and either seek insurance elsewhere, or take his own risk without any insurance. And as men act in the insurance of their ships and dwellings, they would act in the insurance of their properties, liberties and lives, ... [71]

Molinari and Spooner were individualist-anarchists, the forerunners of thinkers like Murray Rothbard, David Friedman, George H. Smith, Randy Barnett, and Morris and Linda Tannehill, all of whom advocated free market defense agencies during the latter half of the 20th century.

Probably the most frequent criticism of the concept of free market defense agencies has been: What would prevent the various private protective companies from going to war with one another? In other words, if there were more than one defense agency in the same geographic area, wouldn't they fight one another? The Tannehills indirectly answer this question (in their extended discussion of private agencies and insurance companies) by pointing out that private agencies depend on the patronage of their customers. Inter-agency warring would antagonize customers, be costly, and there would be no guarantee that one agency (even if successful) could automatically assume control over another agency's customers:

In a laissez-faire society, there would be no governmental police forces, but this does not mean people would be left without protection ... [P]rivate enterprise defense agencies would arise, perhaps some of them out of the larger private detective agencies of today. ...

The function of a private defense service company is to protect and defend the persons and property of its customers from initiated force or any substitute for initiated force. This is the service people are looking for when they patronize [such an agency], and, if the defense agency can't

provide this service as well or better than its competitors, it will lose its customers and go out of business. A private defense service company, competing in an open market, couldn't use force to hold onto its customers - if it tried to compel people to deal with it, it would [induce] them to buy protection from its competitors and drive itself out of business. ...

The superiority of a private enterprise defense service company springs from the fact that its function - its only function - is to protect its customers from coercion and that it must perform this function with excellence or go out of business. ... [T]heir primary focus would be [to protect customers and prevent] aggression.[72]

Warring Defense Agencies: Public or Private?

While there can be no guarantees that there will not be warring defense agencies in a free market, the important point to remember is that “police protection is a service so basic and important it should not be left in the hands of any one group [because] [i]nvariably such power will tempt the group to use it for their own benefit.”[73] The question of whether or not the police should have a monopoly was known to the ancient Romans who asked: “Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?” [Who guards the guardians?] “The correct answer is of course: other agents of competing protective agencies. When police are denied a monopoly there will be other independent, competitive police. When there is competition between policemen and their employers, no policeman will dare misuse his weapons, for if he did so, his company would lose both customers and money. It would lose customers to other police forces, and money to its victims who would find courts of law willing and able to condemn such misuse and award them compensation and fines accordingly.”[74]

The significant and historical fact is that there have been “warring” police agencies in the United States, but they have not been private, but rather public institutions battling for political control. Ten years after the first city police force had been established in New York City, the city's Democratic mayor, Fernando Wood, was charged “with lax enforcement of licensing and Sanitarian laws and with filling the police with Irish Catholics.”[75] In 1857, a law was passed transferring control of the New York City police to the Republican (Protestant) governor in Albany. It was hoped that the Democratic influence within the city would be weakened, since the police would no longer be able to help assure Democratic election victories. Mayor Wood refused to recognize the legality of the new “Metropolitan Police,” and “for three months in 1857 the city suffered the dubious distinction of having two rival police forces.” “An armed battle took place between the two departments when the Metropolitan Police tried to arrest the mayor at city hall.”[76] There were other fights between the two groups: each would try to capture the other's prisoners. “In one riot, 500 municipal police, assisted by what, one observer described as a “miscellaneous assortment of suckers, soaplocks, Irishmen and plug uglies officiating in a guerrilla

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capacity” were thrashing a smaller band of Metropolitans until the arrival of state militiamen turned the battle in favor of the [Albany] controlled police.” The stalemate ended in July 1857, when Mayor Wood acknowledged a court ruling that upheld the 1857 legislation turning over control of the city police to the state’s governor.[77] A similar fight for political control over city forces took place in Denver, CO. In the City Hall War of 1894, the Republican Board of Commissioners refused to resign in favor of state-appointed police officials. “As the battle shaped up, the state militia supported the governor, while the police, sheriff’s deputies, and strong arm representatives of Denver’s vice businesses barricaded themselves in the city hall - armed with dynamite and whiskey. ... For a short period after this, Denver had two police boards and three chiefs, but ultimately, as in New York, the incumbents yielded to a court order and the populist police took office.”[78]

Conclusion

Are the police as we know them today an essential part of modern society? At least a few non-voluntaryist thinkers have observed that society would not go to pieces even if there were no police.[79] Pearl Buck, the famous novelist, noted in her 1953 book, *THE MAN WHO CHANGED CHINA*, that the Chinese “were [a] civilized people and they had through the centuries learned that if people live decently and work hard and respect each other, then it is quite possible to live for a while without a government and even without police. Policeman, after all, are needed only to protect people from each other, and if there is mutual respect and good behavior people can manage themselves. The Chinese had long ago learned this lesson.”[80] So despite the complexity and seeming sophistication of our 21st century society, it is quite possible to imagine society without police, or society with only the COPS.

“[I]n Voluntaria ... we go to great lengths to avoid using force, in order to establish the idea that using force is wrong. Over the years, our people have gradually absorbed this message, and it has now become a basic part of our cultural heritage,”

“But didn’t you just say that your COPS uses force to apprehend wrongdoers?”

“Well, we will use force if we must... but we strive to do so only as a last resort - even if it means risking our lives. We are all volunteers, by the way. No one is paid anything for service to COPS, so that it may never be said that anyone receives any benefit from using force. Furthermore, we go unarmed. ... COPS members ... [try] to follow ... the example of avoiding force in trying to quell violent situations, even at risk to ourselves.”[81]

So if you need help in a voluntaryist society: Don’t call the police. Try to handle the situation wisely yourself, or call the COPS. Maybe they or some private protective

agency will assist you.

End Notes

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Part V: Taxation

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“If taxes are voluntary, then why do people have to be threatened with criminal sanctions if they choose not to pay?”

- Carl Watner

The only highwayman I ever met was the state itself - When I have refused to pay the tax which is demanded for that protection which I did not want, itself has robbed me - When I have asserted the freedom it declared, it has imprisoned me.

- Henry David Thoreau, JOURNAL, Volume 2
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An “Open Letter on Taxes”

by Ammon Hennacy

(From Issue 129, 2nd Quarter 2006)

[Editor's Note: Ammon Hennacy (1893-1970) was a self-described Christian-anarchist and pacifist, author of *THE BOOK OF AMMON* (1965) and *THE ONE-MAN REVOLUTION IN AMERICA* (1970). The expression the “one man revolution” was taken from Robert Frost's poem “Build Soil - A Political Pastoral” (part of which follows) -

You see the beauty of my proposal is
It needn't wait on a general revolution.
I bid you to a one man revolution —
The only revolution that is coming.

The following letter appeared in *THE CATHOLIC WORKER*, February 1953, page six. It was addressed to Mr. William P. Stuart, Collector of Internal Revenue, Phoenix, AZ. While there are a number of statements in this “open letter” which voluntaryists might question (for example, Hennacy opposes taxes because the money supports war, not because taxes are theft; and he blames overproduction on the free market), Hennacy, and the Catholic Workers with which he was associated, must be respected for acting out their principles and living consistently with their ideals.]

Dear Mr. Stuart:

I am refusing for the ninth consecutive year to pay my income tax. I suppose that you are aware that my action is taken for the same reason that I have refused to pay all along: namely, that most of this tax goes for war and the upkeep of an unholy and un-Christian social system. The philosophy upon which my action is based is that of the Christian anarchist, who regards all government as based upon the return of evil for evil in courts, legislatures, and prisons. Opposition to all government is therefore a necessary part of the daily life of one who seeks to follow the Sermon on the Mount. As all churches uphold the state, I do not belong to any church, but attend mass and pray for grace and wisdom because of my love and respect for Dorothy Day and Robert Ludlow, editor of the *CATHOLIC WORKER*. This was the first publication to support my non-payment of taxes. Its basis of voluntary poverty and manual labor on the land I accept as an integral part of my life as a revolutionary Christian.

A hundred years ago the test of whether a person was socially conscious or not was whether he supported slavery or opposed it. Practically all the good religious

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people justified ownership of slaves by quotations from the Bible. Northerners whose fortunes were based upon the slave trade denounced William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist. (Garrison was also the first Christian Anarchist. Tolstoy having been encouraged in this direction by Garrison's famous Peace Declaration in Boston in 1838, in which all government was considered anti-Christian.) Mr. Stuart, your ancestors as well as mine, likely hid escaped slaves and helped them get to freedom in Canada. The law said that escaped slaves should be returned to their masters, but good Quakers broke the law.

Today the measure of social consciousness is whether we support war and conscription. All thinking people must admit that the state is a Monster - a Monster of corruption and inefficiency, a Juggernaut that crushes freedom, that regiments us from cradle to the grave, supposedly for our own good. Yet, while most churches grudgingly allow members to be conscientious objectors, they all with the exception, generally speaking, of Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethern [sic], support war when it comes. And, with very few exceptions, all pacifists pay taxes for war. They may wish to do differently, but the reason they pay up is because they are so attached to the comforts of capitalism that they dislike to inconvenience themselves for an ideal. People who thus know better but do not do better are properly classified as pipsqueaks [sic]. Peter Maurin, the French peasant, founder of the Catholic Worker movement, said that "he who is a pensioner of the state, is a slave of the state."

The Christian Anarchist patterns his life after that of the early Christians. He does not vote for officials or go to courts to get even with those who may wrong him; neither does he need a cop to make him behave. He wants no social security benefits or pension. As Dorothy Day says of my refusal to pay taxes, in her recent book, *THE LONG LONELINESS* (Harcourt, 1952): "as he does not accept from Caesar, he does not render to Caesar." Instead of opposing war and the state most people fall for this BIG LIE.

Hitler said that if you said it loud enough and often enough THE BIG LIE could be put across. He proved it for the duration of his despotism, which fell somewhat short of the 1,000 years that he had planned. With our loyalty oaths we are adopting the methods of Hitler. With our lack of moral perception we double-talk on our Voice of America and throw our dollars over the world thinking it will cover up our imperialism in Puerto Rico and our continued despoilation of the American Indian. By calling the communists names and linking up with the despots, Tito, Chiang, and Franco, we are not fooling the starving millions of Asia. If all the communists were dead we would still have the problem of capitalist overproduction causing depressions and wars. Truman, MacArthur, Stalin, Churchill all vie in calling for peace while preparing for war. Hitler and Mussolini said "Peace" too - again this is THE BIG LIE. Without the income taxes, paid grudgingly by most people, THE BIG LIE of the capitalist imperialists who dominate our lives today would endure but for a moment. For one person to refuse to pay taxes will not stop war but it may start a person here and there to question the whole setup of exploitation and the fallacies of THE BIG

LIE, which consist of:

1. The assertion that preparedness prevents war — The fact is that those countries which have had the greatest armies and greatest preparations for war have gone down in defeat. Sparta, Rome, the Great Spanish Empire, Germany, Japan, and now the British Empire is on the skids. This country has become penurious at times because of the cost of armaments but its spirit has still been larceny minded. Accordingly after wars it has relaxed somewhat but has kept up the economic imperialism and diplomatic trickery which led right into another war. Today we are spending untold billions in upholding French and Dutch imperialism in the Far East and our war in Korea has been a farce no matter which way you may look at it. And we are making more bombs and getting into war deeper and deeper.

2. The assertion that the majority is always right — Benjamin Tucker, anarchist editor of LIBERTY half a century ago, gave the answer to this illusion in unalterable logic: “If one man robs another, as does a highwayman, that is theft and is wrong. If one man robs all other men, as does a despot, that is wrong. But if all other men rob one man, as by the instrument of the ballot and majority rule, that also is wrong.” In any moral issue the majority have always been wrong. When the matter is no longer in dispute the majority will corrupt the good by their sheer weight of complacency and orthodoxy, as William James has told us in his incomparable VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE. The strongest man in the world is not the dictator, but as Ibsen said, “he who stands most alone.” Thoreau put it, “that one on the side of God is a majority.”

3. The illusion that there has always been a state and that it is necessary — This final installment of THE BIG LIE is so old that most people will die for it in the mistaken idea that they are helping themselves. In the Bible it tells us that, “in those days there were no kings in Israel for each man did what was right in his own heart,” [sic] But the people wanted a king and asked Samuel for one. God told Samuel to tell them that a king would make their sons soldiers, “[sic] All the best of your lands and vineyards and oliveyards he will take away ... you will be his slaves and when you cry out for redress against the king you have chosen for yourselves, the Lord will not listen to you: you asked for a king.”

If we were not demoralized by the gadgets of our materialistic civilization and mesmerized by our chant of The American Way of Life we might be quiet for a minute and know that unless our fears and covetousness were not organized in a state they would never amount to more than a McCoy Hatfield feud. It takes a state with taxes from Christians to make A Bombs. It takes a state with politicians seeking to keep in power to make wars. It takes a state giving fat contracts and big wages to make munitions for war. When this Moloch devours our children in the next war we need not cry to God for mercy, for we asked for it. We have been warned and would not listen.

If, Mr. Stuart, after your thought on these matters for the several years I have been refusing to pay taxes here in Phoenix, you come to the point where you realize

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that “all is vanity and vexation of spirit” in this mad world, you may see fit to renounce your post as tax collector and join me in my exhortation to those who may not be able to live one more day as a prop to this dying system. Did you know that Ernest Crosby, who was Judge of the International Court of Claims in Cairo, Egypt, resigned his job as jurist after reading Tolstoy's *THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU*, for which he was welcomed by Tolstoy, himself? Therefore for those of us who can take it[,] it is time to break away from *THE BIG LIE*. Take the first step in refusing to make munitions; in refusing to register for war or military training; in refusing to buy government bonds which are truly slave bonds; and when you can get around to it, refuse to pay income taxes. No matter what we have done toward living the ideal we should remember the words of St. Augustine: “As who says that he has done enough already has perished.”

P.S. I earned \$1,701.91 in 1951. I sent my younger daughter at university \$1,200; spent \$225 on living expense; and the remainder on propaganda. I owe \$192 in taxes, and you may rest assured that I as an anarchist, Mr. Stuart, will simply refuse to pay the tax and not resort to political influence to avoid payment.

Why Voluntarism and Liberty Don't Depend on Taxes or Government

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 134, 3rd Quarter 2007)

Seldom does one find a book that embraces statism to the hilt, but *THE COST OF RIGHTS* (New York: W. W. Norton: 1999), by Stephen Holmes and Cass R. Sunstein, is one such. From its subtitle, “Why Liberty Depends on Taxes,” to the assertion in the second paragraph of the dust jacket, that “our rights to property, speech and religion ... would not exist if government could not collect taxes to codify, protect, and enforce them,” we find the authors turning liberty upon its head, making us slaves of the state, and our ownership of property dependent upon the legislature. Let us first offer a few definitions and then let our authors speak for themselves.

As I have previously explained in my articles about “Freedom As Self-Control,” freedom is an attitude of mind, a spiritual quality which cannot be conquered by iron jail bars or even death. Freedom is an inner spirit which allows each person to seek and speak the truth to the best of their ability. Freedom is bulletproof in the sense that one cannot shoot a truth. One's body may be shot, but that does not affect the validity of one's ideas. Liberty is a condition of not being molested by other human beings, either in one's own body or in one's rightfully owned property. In other words, each person has rights as an individual, that do not depend on their place of birth or the

privileges granted to them by the political system within which they live.

Holmes and Sunstein might not dispute these assertions, but they completely ignore the possibility that rights might be protected by entities other than coercive governments. They define “rights” as “*important interests that can be reliably protected by individuals or groups using the instrumentalities of government.*”[p. 16, italics in original] To our authors, “individual rights and freedoms depend fundamentally on vigorous state action.”[p. 14] “Personal liberty ... presupposes social cooperation managed by government officials.”[p. 15] “Without government ... there would be no right to use, enjoy, destroy, or dispose of the things we own.”[p. 59] “Property rights exist because possession and use are created and regulated by law.”[p. 60] As Daniel Klein put it in his analysis, Holmes and Sunstein “hold that all things are owned, fundamentally and ultimately by the government. ‘Private property’ [is] a creation of state action, [and] ‘laws’ [enable property owners] to acquire and hold what is ‘theirs.’”[pp. 66, 230][1] Holmes and Sunstein never defend the implication of their definition, that all rights stem from the government. Nor do they ever explain why and how governments have the right to “protect us.”[2]

The reason that Holmes and Sunstein say that government depends on taxes is because governments require money to exist. Without money to pay soldiers, police, judicial officials, office workers, and other bureaucratic employees, governments would not be able to provide the services they now perform for their citizens. Fire protection, police, the army, the courts all require paid personnel, equipment, buildings, and roads to access these facilities. In short, these things cost money. Since governments are not charities, they do not solicit voluntary contributions. Since governments are not competitive businesses, they do not charge for their services. Instead, governments get their funds via taxation: the compulsory collection of revenue from their citizens. How much governments collect is not limited by what its competition charges (since the government will permit no one to compete with it, there is no competition), but simply by how much robbery the public will stand for before its members refuse to pay, revolt, or both.

But the truth is Holmes and Sunstein miss their mark. Most people desire some sort of professional protection from thieves, fires, and access to some type of professional dispute resolution service. Holmes and Sunstein never ask the most important question: Is it necessary that these services be provided by a coercive and monopolistic government? The answer is, “No,” and there are clear historical cases - when and where governments were not present to provide these services - that we find such services being provided on a competitive and voluntary basis. Such services do not depend on the existence of governments, but rather on the need, desire, and willingness of consumers to pay for them (on a competitive market, where they are not monopolized or prohibited by a coercive government). In American history, this has happened innumerable times. Both travelers going west on the Overland Trail and people in California during the early days of the Gold Rush, had no government to provide basic public services. Does this mean they had no right to their property or

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that anarchy and chaos ensued? Surely not. Listen to one contemporary observer of the Gold Rush:

The first consequence of the unprecedented rush of emigration from all parts of the world into the country almost unknown, and but half reclaimed from its original barbarism, was to render all law virtually null, From the beginning, a state of things little short of anarchy might have been reasonably awaited.

Instead of this, a disposition to maintain order and secure the rights of all, was shown throughout the mining districts. In the absence of all law or available protection, the people met and adopted rules for their mutual security - rules adapted to their situation, where they neither had guards nor prisons, and where the slightest license given to crime or trespass of any kind would inevitably lead to terrible disorders. ...

In all the large diggings, which had been worked for some time, there were established regulations, which were faithfully observed. ... When a new placer or gulch was discovered, the first thing done was to elect officers and extend the area of order. The result was that in a district five hundred miles long, and inhabited by 100,000 people, who had neither government, regular laws, rules, military protection, nor even locks or bolts, and a great part of whom possessed wealth enough to tempt the vicious and depraved, there was as much security to life and property as in any part of the Union, and as small a proportion of crime.[3]

At other times, on the American western frontier, the federal government could not adequately maintain a circulating currency. So businessmen set up their own mints and began providing coined money that effectively competed with government coinage. The point is that while the western frontier may have been stateless, due to the absence of the federal government and its employees, it was not lawless. Property on the western frontier existed despite the fact that state and federal governments were not there to enforce their statutory laws.

The fact of the matter is that Holmes and Sunstein have it all backwards. If there were no property, there would be nothing for the parasitic state to expropriate. If members of civil society did not work and produce, what would there be for the members of the state apparatus to confiscate? There can be no thievery if there is nothing to steal, and there can be nothing to steal if something is not first produced. As Carroll Quigley observed, when public authority in the Western world disappeared around 900 A.D., "society continued. ... It was discovered that man can live without a state; It was discovered that economic life, religious life, law, and private property can all exist and function effectively without a state." [4] Or as John Zane put it in *THE STORY OF LAW*: "Nothing is more silly than to say that the law made private property. The fact is the exact opposite. Private property came to exist

[independently of the state] and it made the law.”[5]

Government protection (alleged) of property rights is one of those political myths which governments use quite effectively to legitimize their conquest over us. In reality, government can only negate property rights, not protect them. This is true for a number of reasons, both theoretical and historical. First of all, governments have historically derived their revenues from taxation. This necessarily violates the rights of those who would not voluntarily support them. If those people do not willingly surrender their property, which is demanded by the government in the form of taxes, then government agents will ultimately either seize their property or imprison them for refusal to pay.

Secondly, all governments presume to establish a compulsory monopoly of defense (police, courts, law) services over a given geographical area. Individual property owners who do not wish to be included are “protected” nonetheless. If they resist the enforcement of government laws, they will eventually be jailed for obstruction of governmental administration of justice, or killed for resisting armed government officers. Furthermore, as commentators such as Murray Rothbard, Hans-Hermann Hoppe, and Walter Block have noted, the idea that the state can provide any sort of legitimate protection is inherently contradictory. How can government protect us by stealing from us? Governments do not protect our property from thieves; instead governments steal our property under the guise of taxation and call it “protecting” us. Or as Hans-Hermann Hoppe put it, “A tax-funded protection agency is a contradiction in terms.”[6] In the last paragraph of their book, Holmes and Sunstein write that “only through government can a complex modern society achieve the degree of social cooperation necessary to” attain the liberty of the individual,[p. 232] I wholeheartedly disagree with their statement. The history of voluntarism in America, and other parts of the world, proves them wrong. From the evolution of the English language, to the establishment of time zones, to the standardization of railroad track gauges, to the establishment of industrial standards, to the evolution of private mediation and arbitration, voluntarism has shown itself capable of creating vibrant communities. Social cooperation does not depend on government compulsion, nor does co-operation happen at the point of the government's gun. It occurs when people interact for mutual benefit.

Another example of world-wide voluntary co-operation is the credit card industry. Credit card associations, such as Visa, Mastercard, and Discover make it possible for cardholders to use their charge cards almost anywhere. Yet as Edward Stringham has pointed out government did not create this system. No one is forced to use a credit card, nor is anyone harmed by not using one.[7] The difficult problem of verifying the credit worthiness of individual customers is solved by their use of a reputable credit card. If debit and credit cards can operate all over the world, in the absence of a single unified world government, what other services might exist if there was no government to inhibit their creation?

To Holmes and Sunstein I say, yes: rights have costs; but governments have even

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greater costs and drawbacks. Give us, the members of society, a choice. Let us spend our money, freely, as we choose! My guess is that very little money would go to coercive government. As soon as people realized they could get “more bang for the buck” from the competition, government as we know it would become bankrupt. Voluntaryism and liberty depend on respect for individual rights and free choice, not on coercive government and taxes. Pay your money, and make your choice: Which would you rather have?

[1] Daniel B. Klein, “The People's Romance -Why People Love Government (as Much as They Do),” 10 THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW (2005), pp. 5-37 at p. 12.

[2] As Peter Dillard asked, after having read an earlier version of this article, “How did government come to acquire a fundamental right of ownership over us?” Governments which, after all, are nothing but people must have some basis on which to justify their control over us, but Holmes and Sunstein offer no such defense.

[3] Cited in Carl Watner, “Voluntaryism on the Western Frontier,” THE VOLUNTARYIST Whole Number 41, December 1989, and reprinted in Carl Watner, I MUST SPEAK OUT, San Francisco: Fox and Wilkes, 1999 at pp. 362-363.

[4] Carroll Quigley, TRAGEDY AND HOPE, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1966, p. 83.

[5] John Maxey Zane, THE STORY OF LAW (2nd edition), Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1998, p. 147, (final paragraph of Chapter 8).

[6] Hans-Hermann Hoppe, DEMOCRACY - THE GOD THAT FAILED, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2001, pp. 230, 246.

[7] Edward Stringham, “Market Chosen Law,” 14 THE JOURNAL OF LIBERTARIAN STUDIES (Winter 1998-1999), pp. 53-77. See the discussion on pp. 62-63.

A Moral Challenge

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 138, 3rd Quarter 2008)

I have recently been having correspondence with my son about the morality of government taxation, and it prompted this “challenge.” I maintain that taxation is theft and contrary to the universally accepted moral principles: thou shall not steal and thou shall not murder. While these two principles are found in the Ten Commandments, they are also embraced by people of non-Judeo-Christian belief. They form the basis of every civilization because without them there can be no peaceful social cooperation or voluntary exchanges between human beings.

Most of the people I have spoken to over the years think that government taxation is not theft because government is a necessary social institution. The

attainment of the common good requires taxes to support government. Thus those who evade paying their proper share or those who object to how their tax money is spent (the pacifist - on war; the Catholic - on abortion; the anarchist - in general) must be threatened with force beforehand. If they refuse to pay they will ultimately have their property confiscated and sold at auction or they will find themselves imprisoned (either after a conviction for violating the tax laws or for contempt of court [for refusing to obey a judge's orders to cooperate]). If they violently refuse to cooperate with the marshals that come to take their property or arrest them, they will be subdued or killed.

These actions by government agents are “stealing” and/or “killing” by any commonly accepted definition of those terms. Aren't government employees doing the same thing as members of the criminal gang: taking property or life without the owner's consent? As Murray Rothbard (FOR A NEW LIBERTY, 1973, p. 55) once asked: Is there a way to define taxation so as to morally differentiate it from robbery?

Furthermore, consider the fact that there is a moral way to collect taxes (without force or violence): Try rational argument and persuasion.

If government is really as necessary as most people think, then it ought to be quite simple to convince others to support it (or at least support as much of it as they believe is necessary). Instead of threatening people, educate them. Convince them. Demonstrate why they ought to contribute to government. Threatening them with force is not a way to answer their arguments against paying.

If those who refuse to pay taxes at all, or who selectively refuse to pay part of their taxes (for whatever reason), cannot be convinced, then they ought to be left alone. They ought not to be placed in jail or stolen from. Deny them whatever government services they are not willing to pay for.

And, if the supporters of government are still unable to collect enough in taxes to support the amount of government they deem necessary, then they ought to dig deeper into their own pockets. The fact that government is a “good cause” is no justification for stealing from or killing those who refuse to support it.

My challenge to people of good will is to recognize the logic and morality of my argument. The first step in universalizing the commandments against stealing and killing is to admit that taxation is theft, even if one cannot understand how government and society would function under the absence of coercive tax collection.

Moral Challenge II

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 141, 2nd Quarter 2009)

I am getting increasingly frustrated (as I write this it is August 2007) because so very

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few seem to comprehend my moral argument that taxation is theft. Even members of my own family don't seem to get it. It appears to me that there are two components to the argument that taxation is theft.

First is the moral argument: If you define theft as the taking of a person's property against their will, it ought to be perfectly straightforward to conclude that unless taxes are voluntary, it must be theft when the government collects taxes under penalty of imprisonment or confiscation of property. It might be plausible to argue that taxes are theft, but that they require an exemption from the general social prohibition against stealing. But so far, no one I have argued with has explained why taxation is a morally justified form of theft. They simply argue that taxes are not theft because the government is owed the money. Government is owed the money because it has provided some sort of protection service. Thus, when the government coercively demands taxes from its citizens, it is simply being reimbursed for the service it has provided.

Second is the practical argument: Most people believe that if taxes were voluntary, then government would shrivel up and die. If they are religious, they argue that God couldn't have willed thievery. If they take a secular view, they simply believe that government wouldn't have the money to support itself. "But government," they argue, "is a necessary component of human society." Since government "must" have money to exist, its income (taxes) can't be theft.

One way I have tried to approach the general argument that "taxation is theft" is to admit that human beings "need" protection services, just as they "need" food, shelter and clothing. The question that then must be answered is: How is that protection to be provided? In the case of food, shelter, and clothing we have ample proof that the voluntary provision of these goods and services is possible. Why must the provision of protection be an exception?

It appears that most people cannot get past "what is seen and not seen." They "see" only what exists. They cannot even begin to imagine the free market provision of protection services because they have been indoctrinated by both Church and State to believe that these services must be (and can only be) provided by a coercive, monopolistic government. What they don't stop to think about is that if people weren't forced to pay taxes, they (the people, the citizens) would have ample funds to supply themselves with protection. If people were not coerced into paying for government's high-priced and inefficient monopoly protection they could turn to alternative sources of protection. I am sure that variants of protection would come into being which we cannot even imagine or dream of now. Witness all the other miracles of the free market. Who could have dreamed of, a hundred years ago, all the ways electricity is utilized today, or the advent of plastics, nylons, or computers. Imagine what protection services might be offered if government was not there to monopolize its production and stifle both invention and competition. But really, the practicality of the market provision of protection is irrelevant to the moral question. Was plantation slavery in the South justified because slaves were the only means of

harvesting cotton?

Many people admit that much of what passes for taxation today is theft, but they still cannot get past the idea that some amount of taxation is “just and proper.” It reminds me of the argument for the “just” price on the market. The only fair price is what a willing buyer and seller agree on; and it is only fair at the time and place where they decide to trade. The only possible way to determine a “just” tax is in the same manner. How could government know how much protection people “need”? Let market purchasers of protection services buy what services they want, at what prices they deem advantageous to themselves. This is the only way to truly determine how much protection we (as a society) should have. The only way to find out how much government is necessary is to see how much government people are willing to pay for - which means making their contributions to government voluntary. When people and citizens are ready to apply the general social prohibition against stealing to the government itself, then we (as a society) will have truly reached the realization that “taxes are theft.”

Are Taxes Theft?

From Carl Watner to Clarence Thomas
(From Issue 141, 2nd Quarter 2009)

November 8, 2007
The Honorable Clarence Thomas
Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court
1 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20543

Dear Justice Clarence Thomas:

I recently read (and very much enjoyed) an interview in Hillsdale College’s IMPRIMIS (October 2007) about your new book, MY GRANDFATHER’S SON. I was very much impressed with two passages in that interview.

The first regarded the relationship between freedom and responsibility:

What my grandfather believed was that people have their responsibilities, and if they are left alone to fulfill their responsibilities, that is freedom.[p. 5]

The second concerned his attitude toward “the idea of taxation [which] offended him”:

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My first ideas about taxation had to do with the fact that we worked for everything we had. My grandfather would give whatever he could to relatives who needed it - to the elderly, to people with lots of kids, to people who had fallen on hard times. We'd harvest food and take it to folks who needed it. But the idea of someone coming and exacting from us what we had worked for, he was offended at that idea.[p. 3]

Did your grandfather ever make a connection between these two observations? Would he have thought that taxation violated the idea of his being "left alone" to fulfill his responsibilities? Did the fact that he had less property after being "taxed" mean that he couldn't fulfill his responsibilities (as well as if he had been allowed to keep all his property)?

The reason I ask these questions is because I look upon taxation as theft, and contrary to the moral commandment "Thou shalt not steal."

Do you think your grandfather would have agreed with me?

Sincerely,
Carl Watner

[Justice Thomas acknowledged receiving my letter on February 19, 2008. In a hand-written addition to that acknowledgment he added: "I will only say that my grandfather felt very strongly that one should keep the fruits of his labor."]

My Taxes

by Karl Hess

(From Issue 142, 3rd Quarter 2009)

On April 15 [1969], I sent the following letter, accompanying my filled-out 1040 Form to the Tax Collector:

The Declaration of Independence of the United States of America establishes a bill of particulars in regard to intolerable infringements, abuses, and denials of political power which belongs to the people. The Federal government of the United States of America today is guilty of exactly every sort of infringement, abuse, and denial stated as intolerable by the Declaration of Independence.

I cannot, in conscience, sanction that government by the payment of taxes.

Further, the Federal government of the United States of America has established as a principle, and ruthlessly by the power of its officials, enforces as a practice, that it can demand the primary loyalty of the people, that it can exercise all political power on their behalf, that it can wage war without their approval, and that it can and should establish the standards of their behavior and the goals of their lives.

I could not in conscience sanction such a government by the payment of taxes.

Finally, the Declaration of Independence, in the clearest possible language, tells Americans that when a government becomes destructive of the ends of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that it is the right and duty of the people to abolish such government, to “throw off such government.”

It is in the spirit of that Declaration, and in comradeship with men everywhere who seek freedom and to throw off such government, that I now refuse to pay the taxes demanded by the government in the attached form.

[This letter, written by Karl Hess, originally appeared in THE LIBERTARIAN, May 1, 1969, p. 3.]

The Catholic Church’s Confused Ideas About Stealing

by Mark R. Crovelli

(From Issue 143, 4th Quarter 2009)

Like virtually all Christian denominations, the Roman Catholic Church derives its moral philosophy in very large part from the Decalogue; that is, the set of ten moral precepts handed down from God to Moses that lay bare the moral responsibilities of man vis-à-vis God and other men. The predominant position of the Decalogue in Catholic moral philosophy was established by Jesus when he was asked “Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?”:

To the young man who asked this question, Jesus answers first by invoking the necessity to recognize God as the ‘One there is who is good,’ as the supreme Good and the source of all good. Then Jesus tells him: ‘If you would enter life, keep the commandments.’ And he cites for his questioner the precepts that concern love of neighbor: ‘You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’ Finally Jesus sums up these commandments positively: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’[1]

As the foundation upon which Catholic morality very heavily rests, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (the official depository of Catholic doctrine) unsurprisingly devotes a large amount of space and energy to explicating each of the Ten Commandments. In this article, I take issue with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church’s* treatment of the 7th commandment: “You shall not steal.” I argue that, insofar as the *Catechism* can be deemed to be representative of the general Catholic position, the Catholic Church has developed extremely confused, misleading, and often erroneous ideas about stealing. I argue that the Church has sought to justify the

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taking of property that directly contradicts the straightforward prohibition against stealing delineated in the Decalogue. I make this argument in the hope that Catholic thinkers and writers will A) take seriously the idea that taking men's justly-earned property without their consent is *always* stealing, and B) stand up for the billions of people who are persecuted by this villainous activity.

The Definition of Stealing in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

In order for Catholics, and Christians in general, to be able to abide by the 7th commandment, it is necessary for them to know, first and foremost, what the definition of stealing is. For, quite obviously, in order to avoid stealing in one's life, one must be able to clearly discriminate between those actions that involve stealing and those actions that do not. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* offers just such a definition of stealing for Catholics:

The seventh commandment forbids *theft*; that is usurping another's property against the reasonable will of the owner. There is no theft if consent can be presumed or if refusal is contrary to reason and the universal destination of goods. This is the case in obvious and urgent necessity when the only way to provide for immediate, essential needs (food, shelter, clothing...) is to put at one's disposal and use the property of others.[2]

Although it is not my primary intention to dissect and critique this definition of stealing, it should be noted that this definition is extremely ambiguous in a number of respects. It is unclear, for example, whether the phrase "reasonable will" means simply the *rational consent* of the owner, or whether it means what the property owner *ought to will*. Similarly, the relevance of the phrase "universal destination of goods" is unclear, given Pope Leo XIII's clear admonition that this idea cannot be used to deny the right to private property:

The fact that God gave the whole human race the earth to use and enjoy cannot indeed in any manner serve as an objection against private possessions. For God is said to have given the earth to mankind in common, not because He intended indiscriminate ownership of it by all, but because He assigned no part to anyone in ownership, leaving the limits of private possessions to be fixed by the industry of men and the institutions of peoples. Yet, however the earth may be apportioned among private owners, it does not cease to serve the common interest of all, inasmuch as no living being is sustained except by what the fields bring forth.[3]

My objection to the *Catechism's* treatment of stealing goes much deeper than mere quibbling over phraseology. Indeed, it is my contention that there is an absolute

failure to consistently apply the standards for stealing as delineated in this definition throughout the *Catechism*. Specifically, there is an utter failure to apply the standards for stealing *to those people who work for the State*. While the *Catechism* applies the criteria for stealing quite consistently to ordinary people, it does not apply those criteria to presidents, prime ministers, congressmen, police officers, tax collectors, bureaucrats and every other person who lives off of tax money.

It's Not Stealing if the State Does It

When discussing the actions of people who are not employed by the state, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* applies its definition of stealing quite consistently. Thus, we find a condemnation of “*any form of unjustly taking and keeping the property of others*” as a violation of the 7th commandment.[4] Similarly, the *Catechism* admonishes those who have stolen goods to make restitution to the goods’ rightful owner: “In virtue of commutative justice, *reparation for injustice* committed requires the restitution of stolen goods to their owner.”[5]

When it comes to the actions of people employed by the state, however, the *Catechism* makes a variety of excuses for state employees to take property without the consent of the owner. In fact, the idea advanced in the *Catechism* is that when the people employed by the state take private property without the consent of the owners, (e.g., *tax* them), *they are not stealing*. Though the *Catechism* does not explicitly state that taxation is not stealing, it does nevertheless state that

Submission to authority and co-responsibility for the common good make it morally obligatory to pay taxes... [6]

And

It is unjust not to pay the social security *contributions* required by legitimate authority.[7]

Taken alone, these admonishments do not necessarily imply that taxation is not stealing. They *do* have this necessary implication, however, when they are coupled with another central tenet of Catholic, and indeed all Christian, morality; namely, the duty to disobey the state when its laws are contrary to those of God: “We must obey God rather than Men” (Acts 5:29). With respect to this tenet of Catholic morality, the *Catechism* explicitly enjoins Catholics to refuse to obey the state when its actions are contrary to the laws of God:

The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teachings of the Gospel. *Refusing obedience* to civil authorities, when their demands are contrary to those of an upright conscience, finds its justification in the distinction

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between serving God and serving the political community. ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ ‘We must obey God rather than men.’[8]

(Note here that the *Catechism* does not say that citizens are merely *permitted* to disobey the civil authority when its demands are contrary to the moral code; rather, it states plainly that citizens are “*obliged in conscience*” to disobey.)

Putting these two ideas together, we see that the *Catechism* commands Catholics to disobey the state when its laws run counter to those of God, but it also explicitly commands Catholics to pay their taxes and social security “contributions.” The necessary implication here is that when the state takes money away from people against their will, this is not a violation of God’s law—*specifically, the 7th commandment*. For, if taxation was deemed to be a form of stealing, (and, thus, a violation of the 7th commandment), Catholics would be conscience-bound to oppose it on principle and refuse to pay taxes whenever possible. The unavoidable conclusion to be drawn here is that, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, it’s not stealing if the state does it.

Theft is Theft—Even if the State Does It

As was just seen, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* takes the position that when people employed by the state take property without the consent of the owner, this is not a form of stealing. I would like to suggest that this is not the position that should be taken by a Christian church that takes the Decalogue as the foundation for its moral code. The 7th commandment is explicit in its prohibition of theft, and it does not make exceptions for people who work for the state.

In order to see why taxation is indeed a form of stealing, all that is necessary is to recognize that *all* people pay their taxes to the state involuntarily. This is true, quite simply, because all people pay their taxes only in order to avoid the punishments that are put in place by the state for those who refuse to obey. I will have several more observations to make about the fact that taxation is theft, but what is truly morally relevant is simply that taxes are paid to the state *involuntarily*. The involuntary nature of taxation can be seen in the very meaning of the word. As Charles Adams has noted in this regard:

The similarity between tax collectors and robbers is also found in the basic meaning behind the word ‘taxation,’ which means *forced exaction*. Taxes are not debts, despite the fact that we carelessly refer to them as such. The principle of fair value received—which is the basis for a legally enforceable debt—has no place in a tax dispute. A tax is owed because a government orders it to be paid. Nothing else is required.[9]

It matters not, moreover, that the state claims to provide “services” in exchange for the money it extracts from its subjects. This is true, quite simply, because if the

state must threaten its subjects with severe penalties in order to get its subjects to fork over their money for its “services,” the subjects clearly don’t value those services very much. Sony does not have to threaten its customers with long jail sentences in the company of rapists and murderers in order to sell its newest hi-definition televisions, because it provides a product that at least some people are voluntarily willing to purchase. The state, on the other hand, does *literally* threaten to incarcerate its subjects if they refuse to hand over their money—and *indeed does incarcerate them if they fail to pay*; a measure that would be unnecessary if the so-called “services” it claims to provide were actually valued by its subjects. It is simply not the case, in short, that subjects of a government pay their taxes in an attempt to purchase “services” that they either want or need. As H.L. Mencken has sardonically observed in this respect, the intelligent man does not pay his taxes believing that he has thereby purchased a valuable service.

The intelligent man, when he pays his taxes, certainly does not believe that he is making a prudent and productive investment of his money; on the contrary, he feels that he is being mulcted in an excessive amount for services that, in the main, are useless to him, and that, in substantial part, are downright inimical to him. He may be convinced that a police force, say, is necessary for the protection of his life and property, and that an army and navy safeguard him from being reduced to slavery by some vague foreign kaiser, but even so he views these things as extravagantly expensive—he sees in even the most essential of them an agency for making it easier for the exploiters constituting the government to rob him. In those exploiters themselves he has no confidence whatever. He sees them as purely predatory and useless; he believes that he gets no more net benefit from their vast and costly operations than he gets from the money he lends to his wife’s brother. They constitute a power that stands over him constantly, ever alert for new chances to squeeze him. If they could do so safely they would strip him to his hide. If they leave him anything at all, it is simply prudentially, as a farmer leaves a hen some of her eggs.[10]

Just as taxes are not voluntary payments in return for services rendered, they are also not voluntary “contributions” intended to help “the common good.” This is a critical point, because, as was seen above, the *Catechism* carelessly refers to social security taxes as “contributions.” It is appropriate to use the term “contribution” when referring to a voluntary donation to, say, a Boy Scout candy drive. It is, however, completely inappropriate to use the term to describe social security taxes—or any other tax. In the first place, as was just seen, subjects are not given a choice about whether to make this so-called “contribution.” On the contrary, they are simply ordered to pay a certain amount or face a stint in jail. More often than not, moreover,

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the money the state desires is simply deducted from the subject's paycheck before he has a chance to even hold his own hard-earned money in his hands. The subject can hardly be said to have made a "contribution" when his money is extracted even before it makes its way into his hands. This is to say nothing of the rather large number of people who view government social security schemes as nothing more than inherently bankrupt Ponzi schemes on a massive scale. It would be completely disingenuous to claim that those people would be making "contributions" to a program they despise and view as criminally insolvent. In like manner, we would hardly use the word "contribution" to describe tax money that is forcefully extracted from American Catholics to be used for state-funded abortions. Catholics do not want to voluntarily fund abortions, but, because taxes (and, yes, social security payments as well) are compulsory and thus involuntary, they have no choice in the matter.

It would be useless to object at this point that people do ultimately consent to taxation, at least in democracies, because they are given the right to vote. To view voting as an act of consent to the state's taxing powers would be to radically misinterpret what actually happens when people vote. As A. John Simmons has pointed out, voting is only an action that expresses *preference*—it by no means can be assumed to imply *consent* to taxation, or even to the existence of the state:

[W]e would do well to remember that voting is often a way not of consenting to something, but only of *expressing a preference*. If the state gives a group of condemned prisoners the choice of being executed by firing squad or by lethal injection, and all of them vote for firing squad, we cannot conclude from this that the prisoners thereby *consent* to being executed by firing squad. They do, of course, choose this option; they approve of it, but only in the sense that they prefer it to the other option. They consent to neither option, despising both. Voting for a candidate in a democratic election sometimes has a depressingly similar structure. The state offers you a choice among candidates (or perhaps it is "the people" who make the offer), and you choose one, hoping to make the best of a bad situation. You thereby express a preference, approve of that candidate (over the others), but consent to the authority of no one.[11]

These considerations bring us back to the definition of stealing contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Recall that the *Catechism* defines as stealing, (and thus proscribes as violations of the 7th commandment), those actions that usurp "another's property against the reasonable will of the owner." I have thus far argued that taxation is necessarily nothing more than the usurpation of people's property without their consent on a massive scale, because taxpayers hand over their money only in order to avoid being sent to prison—or worse, in some cases. I have put forth evidence in support of St. Augustine's famous rhetorical question, "what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale? What are criminal gangs but petty

kingdoms?” I have argued, in short, that taxation is stealing, and is thus proscribed by the 7th commandment. The remainder of this section will be devoted to two objections to the idea that taxation is theft that could be made using the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Objection 1: People Ought to Want to Pay Taxes for “the Common Good”

The first objection that could be raised is that taxation is not stealing because people ought to want to support “the common good” by paying money to the state. This objection asks us to make a gigantic leap of faith with regard to the state; namely, that the state is an institution that actually acts for “the common good.” Unfortunately, there is not a shred of truth to this idea. In fact, we would probably be closer to the mark if we were to argue the reverse; namely, that the state is an institution inexorably *opposed* to “the common good” of mankind.

In order to see why this is the case, let us take a closer look at how effective the tax-funded state has been at protecting and promoting “the common good” of mankind over just the past hundred years. During just the last hundred years the various states of the world have managed to accomplish the following, (and, mind you, this is a very partial list):

- Fight two World Wars funded through taxation that resulted in millions of deaths, the destruction of scores of cities in Europe and Japan, and the total impoverishment of many millions of other people
 - Fight scores of other, bloody inter-state and civil wars funded through taxation
 - Murder, in cold blood, approximately 170 million of their own innocent subjects, as R.J. Rummel has documented[12]
 - Engineer, utilizing tax money, atomic weapons that threaten the very existence of human beings on Earth, and even go so far as to use them on innocent civilians
 - Incarcerate tens of millions of people for either slave labor (e.g., in the U.S.S.R.), or for other trivial reasons (e.g., drugs, in the U.S.)
 - Enter into murderous agreements to limit trade (e.g., Iraq) and banned the use of DDT in malaria stricken parts of the world, costing millions of lives. The enforcement of the bans being funded through taxation, of course.

It would take either a truly utopian or truly historically blind mind to think that the tax-funded state has been an instrument for “the common good” over the last hundred years. The *Catechism* defines “the common good” as “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”[13] Unless the Catholic Church thinks man finds his fulfillment in murder, it is hard to fathom that the state could be blindly presumed to be an instrument of “the common good.” Moreover, it seems hard to condemn those who, recognizing these colossal historical facts about states in the twentieth century, might refuse to pay the taxes that fund these crimes.

Even if it were true, moreover, that people ought to want to pay money to the state in order to promote “the common good,” this would by no means imply that the people employed by the state have a *right* to take money from people by force if they

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do not want to pay. Indeed, it would be a gigantic *non sequitur* to conclude that the state has a right to usurp people's property without their consent merely because "they ought to want to." As was just seen, the claim that people ought to want to support these murderous institutions is itself extremely dubious, but even if it were true that the state was an instrument solely for supporting "the common good," how could this be a coherent moral justification for threatening to jail people who chose not to pay? As Carl Watner incisively points out in this regard:

Instead of threatening recalcitrant citizens with jail, educate them to their civic duties. Demonstrate why they ought to contribute to their government. Threatening them with force is not a way to convince them. They ought to be left alone and denied whatever government services they are unwilling to pay for. And if the supporters of government are still unable to collect enough in taxes to support the amount of government they deem necessary, then they ought to dig deeper into their own pockets. The fact that government is a "good cause" is no justification for stealing from or killing those who refuse to support it. This is what I call the Christian way of dealing with those who refuse to pay.[14]

The claim that people ought to want to support the state by no means offers a cogent moral exception to the Decalogue's explicit and simple proscription: "You shall not steal."

Objection 2: Only *Some States are Evil*

The second objection I wish to consider to the idea that taxation is stealing (and is thus proscribed by the 7th commandment), has to do with the idea that only some states act in ways that are evil, while others do not. This objection arises in the *Catechism* from the idea that authority comes from God, and can be exercised either legitimately or illegitimately:

Authority is exercised legitimately only when it seeks the common good of the group concerned and if it employs morally licit means to attain it. If rulers were to enact unjust laws or take measures contrary to the moral order, such arrangements would not be binding in conscience. [15]

An appeal to so-called "legitimate authority" cannot, however, offer a cogent argument against the idea that taxation is stealing. On the contrary, as I have argued elsewhere, the appeal to authority is actually question begging if it is used to justify taxation:

The fallback position of Catholic social teaching, when confronted with these sobering facts about the state as a necessarily coercive

institution, has been to affirm that there exists a difference between so-called ‘proper’ or ‘legitimate’ authority and wrongfully employed authority. ... The problem with this sort of argument is that it is almost stupefyingly question begging. It would be one thing to assert that God has bestowed different gifts on people, and that some men are blessed by God with the gift of leadership, while others are not; it is quite another thing, however, to deduce from this that some men are given the right by God to impress their will on their less fortunate neighbors, take a portion of their neighbors’ income by threatening to jail or kill them if they refuse to obey, and impress their neighbors into military service, jury duty, or any other service for that matter.[16]

It is important to note, moreover, that the *Catechism* explicitly asserts that authorities may only employ “morally licit means” to attain the common good. Given this, and the fact that stealing is not a morally licit means for Christians, any reference to legitimate authority as a justification for taxation is baldly question begging.[17]

The simple fact of the matter is that all modern states derive their funding by threatening people with harm if they refuse to pay. And, as Murray Rothbard observed, since taxation is definitionally synonymous with stealing, it is hard to fathom that any tax-funded, self-proclaimed ruler could be said to be “legitimate.”

All other persons and groups in society (except for acknowledged and sporadic criminals such as thieves and bank robbers) obtain their income voluntarily: *either* by selling goods or services to the consuming public, *or* by voluntary gift (e.g., membership in a club or association, bequest, or inheritance). *Only* the State obtains its revenue by coercion, by threatening dire penalties should the income not be forthcoming. That coercion is known as ‘taxation,’ although in less regularized epochs it was often known as ‘tribute.’ Taxation is theft, purely and simply, even though it is theft on a grand and colossal scale which no acknowledged criminals could hope to match.[18]

Conclusion

The purpose of this article is simply to remind the Catholic Church that the foundations for its ethical system lie in the Decalogue. The 7th commandment in the Decalogue offers a straightforward condemnation of the taking of people’s property without their consent. The commandment does not offer exceptions, such as “You shall not steal, except for old age Ponzi schemes,” or “You shall not steal, unless you work for a group that has an anthem and a flag.”

The question of taxation is of profound moral importance in the modern world. The people who work for modern states have enriched themselves and armed themselves to the point where they have become a profound menace to the very

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existence of the Earth and the people who occupy it. Their riches are acquired by taking money and property away from ordinary people, without their consent, and by threatening to jail them if they refuse to pay. It is of no value to either Catholics or people generally, for the Catholic Church to turn a romantic eye toward the state wishing and hoping that it will become an agent for “the common good,” while modern states continue to rob and murder their way into the history books. The Christian virtue of prudence in fact *demands* that we view the world for what it is, with clear vision and hopeful resolve.

It is also of no value to the world for the Catholic Church to try to trivialize the moral question of taxation by comparing it to abortion, and concluding that, since murder is worse than stealing, we must first deal with abortion before turning to taxation. As Saint Bernardino of Sienna noted in a story about St. Francis of Assisi, the sheer magnitude of theft in this world makes it a paramount concern of Christians:

One day, as Saint Francis was traveling through a city, a demon-possessed person appeared in front of him and asked: “What is the worst sin in the world?” Saint Francis answered that homicide is the worst. But the demon replied that there was one sin still worse than homicide. Saint Francis then commanded: “By God’s virtue, tell me which sin is worse than homicide!” And the devil answered that having goods that belong to someone else is a sin worse than homicide because it is this sin which sends more people to hell than any other.[19]

Taxation occurs on such a massive magnitude in the modern world that it is perhaps the most consequential moral question of our time. And the Catholic Church, if it wishes to remain faithful to Jesus’ admonishment that we obey the commandments, must come to recognize that *taxation is stealing*, and is thus proscribed by the 7th commandment.

End Notes

[1] *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (United States Catholic Conference Inc., Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994). Sec. 2052.

[2] *Ibid.*, Sec. 2408.

[3] Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (Boston: Pauline Books, 2000), Par 14.

[4] *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *op. cit.*, Sec. 2409.

[5] *Ibid.*, Sec. 2412.

[6] *Ibid.*, Sec. 2240.

[7] *Ibid.*, Sec. 2436.

[8] *Ibid.*, Sec. 2242.

[9] Charles Adams, *For Good and Evil: The Impact of Taxes on the Course of Civilization* (New York: Madison Books, 1993), p. 1.

[10] H. L. Mencken, *A Mencken Chrestomathy* (New York: Vintage, 1982), pp. 147-148.

[11] A. John Simmons, *One the Edge of Anarchy: Locke, Consent, and the Limits of Society*, in Marshall Cohen, ed., *Studies in Moral, Political and Legal Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 222-223.

[12] R. J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1994).

[13] *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., Sec. 1924.

[14] I would like to thank Carl Watner for many helpful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this article. See his articles in *The Voluntarist*: “A Moral Challenge,” Whole Number 138 (3rd Quarter 2008), and “Moral Challenge II,” Whole Number 141 (2nd Quarter 2009).

[15] *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., Sec. 1903.

[16] Mark R. Crovelli, “What Belongs to Caesar?” *Mises Daily Article*, <https://mises.org/library/what-belongs-caesar> (September 2, 2008).

[17] I am grateful to Carl Watner for this point.

[18] Murray Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 162.

[19] Quoted in Alejandro A. Chafuen, *Faith and Liberty: The Economic Thought of the Late Scholastics* (New York: Lexington Books, 2003), p. 31.

To Steal or not to Steal?

by F.A. Harper

(From Issue 150, 3rd Quarter 2011)

[Editor’s Note: Dr. Harper was a long time staff member of the Foundation for Economic Education, and founder/ president of the Institute for Humane Studies. These excerpts are taken from his article, “Morals and Liberty,” published in the July 1971 issue of THE FREEMAN (pp. 426-441. Excerpts are from pp.436-439).]

As a means of specifically verifying my impression about the basic, intuitive morality of persons, I would pose this test of three questions:

1. Would you steal your neighbor’s cow to provide for your present needs? Would you steal it for any need reasonably within your expectation or comprehension? It should be remembered that, instead of stealing his cow, you may explore with your neighbor the possible solution to your case of need; you might arrange to do some sort of work for him or to borrow from him for later repayment, or perhaps even plead with him for an outright gift.

2. Would you steal your neighbor’s cow to provide for a known case of another neighbor’s need?

3. Would you try to induce a third party to do the stealing of the cow, to be given

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to this needy neighbor? And do you believe that you would likely succeed in inducing him to engage in the theft?

I believe that the almost universal answer to all these questions would be: “No.” Yet the facts of the case are that all of us are participating in theft every day. How? By supporting the actions of the collective agent which does the stealing as part of the Welfare State program already far advanced in the United States. By this device, Peter is robbed to “benefit” Paul, with the acquiescence if not the active support of all of us as taxpayers and citizens. We not only participate in the stealing—and share in the division of the loot—but as its victims we also meekly submit to the thievery.

Isn't it a strange thing that if you select any three fundamentally moral persons and combine them into a collective for the doing of good, they are liable at once to become three immoral persons in their collective activities? The moral principles with which they seem to be intuitively endowed are somehow lost in the confusing processes of the collective. None of the three would steal the cow from one of his fellow members as an individual, but collectively they all steal cows from each other. The reason is, I believe, that the Welfare State—a confusing collective device which is believed by many to be moral and righteous—has been falsely labeled. This false label has caused the belief that the Welfare State can do no wrong, that it cannot commit immoral acts, especially if those acts are approved or tolerated by more than half of the people, “democratically.”

This sidetracking of moral conduct is like the belief of an earlier day: The king can do no wrong. In its place we have now substituted this belief: The majority can do no wrong. It is as though one were to assert that a sheep which has been killed by a pack of wolves is not really dead, provided that more than half of the wolves have participated in the killing. All these excuses for immoral conduct are, of course, nonsense. They are nonsense when tested against the basic moral code of the five postulates. Thievery is thievery, whether done by one person alone or by many in a pack—or by one who has been selected by the members of the pack as their agent.

“Thou Shalt Not Steal, Except....”

It seems that wherever the Welfare State is involved, the moral precept, “Thou shalt not steal,” becomes altered to say: “Thou shalt not steal, except for what thou deemest to be a worthy cause, where thou thinkest that thou canst use the loot for a better purpose than wouldst the victim of the theft.”

And the precept about covetousness, under the administration of the Welfare State, seems to become: “Thou shalt not covet, except what thou wouldst have from thy neighbor who owns it.”

Both of these alterations of the Decalogue result in complete abrogation of the two moral admonitions — theft and covetousness—which deal directly with economic matters. Not even the motto, “In God we trust,” stamped by the government on money taken by force in violation of the Decalogue to pay for the various programs of the Welfare State, can transform this immoral act into a moral one.

Herein lies the principal moral and economic danger facing us in these critical

times: Many of us, albeit with good intentions but in a hurry to do good because of the urgency of the occasion, have become victims of moral schizophrenia. While we are good and righteous persons in our individual conduct in our home community and in our basic moral code, we have become thieves and coveters in the collective activities of the Welfare State in which we participate and which many of us extol.

Typical of our times is what usually happens when there is a major catastrophe, destroying private property or injuring many persons. The news circulates, and generates widespread sympathy for the victims. So what is done about it? Through the mechanisms of the collective, the good intentions take the form of reaching into the other fellow's pocket for the money with which to make a gift. The Decalogue says, in effect: "Reach into your own pocket—not into your neighbor's pocket—to finance your acts of compassion; good cannot be done with the loot that comes from theft." The pickpocket, in other words, is a thief even though he puts the proceeds in the collection box on Sunday or uses it to buy bread for the poor. Being an involuntary Good Samaritan is a contradiction in terms.

When thievery is resorted to for the means with which to do good, compassion is killed. Those who would do good with the loot then lose their capacity for self-reliance, the same as a thief's self-reliance atrophies rapidly when he subsists on food that is stolen. And those who are repeatedly robbed of their property simultaneously lose their capacity for compassion. The chronic victims of robbery are under great temptation to join the gang and share in the loot. They come to feel that the voluntary way of life will no longer suffice for needs; that to subsist, they must rob and be robbed. They abhor violence, of course, but approve of robbing by "peaceful means." It is this peculiar immoral distinction which many try to draw between the Welfare State of Russia and that of Britain: The Russian brand of violence, they believe, is bad; that of Britain, good. This version of an altered Commandment would be: "Thou shalt not steal, except from non-resisting victims."

Under the Welfare State, this process of theft has spread from its use in alleviating catastrophe, to anticipating catastrophe, to conjuring up catastrophe, to the "need" for luxuries for those who have them not. The acceptance of the practice of thus violating the Decalogue has become so widespread that if the Sermon on the Mount were to appear in our day in the form of an address or publication, it would most likely be scorned as "reactionary, and not objective on the realistic problems of the day." Forgotten, it seems, by many who so much admire Christ, is the fact that he did not resort to theft in acquiring the means of his material benefactions. Nor did he advocate theft for any purpose—even for those uses most dear to his beliefs.

[Editor's Addendum: I continue to harp on the fact that taxation (for whatever purpose) is theft, and this piece reinforces my contention that even the most limited government must violate the stealing commandment. Note Harper's description that many have become "victims of moral schizophrenia," meaning that such a person acts honestly in his day-to-day commercial activities, but sees no dishonesty when it

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comes to forcing people to pay taxes. I also like his declaration that one should reach into one's own pocket – not your neighbor's pocket – to finance acts of compassion and assistance. For further writings on this topic see my articles, "Moral Challenge," and "Moral Challenge II," in Numbers 138 and 141 of THE VOLUNTARYIST.]

Taxation No Better Than Slavery

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 152, 1st Quarter 2012)

[This is the draft of an introduction to a proposed anthology tentatively titled Taxation: Essays in Opposition. Write or email The Voluntarist for information regarding price and availability.]

Slavery is wrong.

Taxation is a form of slavery.

Therefore taxation is wrong.

The implications that follow from this syllogism are the subject of this book.

Slavery is wrong. A slave is a person who is the property of another or others, such that whatever the slave produces can be taken by force or the threat of force.[1] The slave has no right of self-ownership, and those who exercise dominion over the slave always have the *legal* right to use coercion against him, but certainly have no *natural* right to do so. He who takes the life, liberty, or property of another without that other's consent is stealing; and as the early abolitionist described it, *man-stealing* is just as wrong, if not worse, than *property-stealing*, because human beings hold a higher rank in existence than inert property matter.

Taxation is a form of slavery. A tax is a compulsory levy on a person subject to the jurisdiction of a government. Anyone who is taxed is a slave because his or her earnings and property are forcibly taken to support the State. Most individuals do not consent to taxation. Historically, the Romance languages, such as French, Spanish, and Italian, have tried to make the tax-payer "feel good" by euphemistically "calling him a 'contributor'." [2] "Customers" is the term that our own Internal Revenue Service uses to identify those from whom it extracts payments, using threats of force or actual force in some instances.

Therefore taxation is wrong. As Auberon Herbert, one of the contributors to this volume, pointed out decades before the passage of the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (on the basis of which Congress legislated a federal income tax): truth and consistency demand that if the State may forcibly take one dollar "out of what a

man owns, it may take what it likes up to the last dollar Once admit the right of the [S]tate to take, and the [S]tate becomes the real owner of all property.” To those who wish to debate this point, I only ask: where in the federal Constitution is there any limitation on the amount that Congress may try to take from us?[3]

But, as Charles Adams, one historian of taxation, has observed: “without revenue, governments would collapse, society as we know it would disappear, and chaos would follow.”[4]

True: coercive political governments which depend on violence to sustain themselves with police and armed force would disappear. Yes, society as we know it today in the United States would change.

But would chaos follow? Not necessarily. If the opponents of taxation used revolutionary violence to abolish the State, then there would undoubtedly be some who would fight for the re-establishment of taxation. But if taxation were to be abandoned as a result of a shift in public opinion and understanding, then in the words of Murray Rothbard, we would simply achieve a peaceful “society without a state.” As Thomas Paine explained centuries ago: A “[g]reat part of that order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of Government. It has its origins in the principles of society and that natural constitution of man. It existed prior to Government, and would exist if the formality of Government” no longer existed.[5]

All history attests to the fact that if a service supplied by government is truly wanted, a voluntary way will be found to provide it. It may cost some people more than when the government supplied it; but the point is that if a true demand exists, some entrepreneur or some group of individuals will associate cooperatively to provide it. Any number of examples can be used to illustrate this point: Did religion disappear when churches lost their government support? Did people go without coined money when there were no government mints? Did people go shoeless because there were no government factories to produce footwear?

A number of contributors to Section VI of this anthology attempt to answer the question, “How would a society of individuals function without taxes?” But perhaps the even more important question is, “Does our governmentally-directed society based on coercive taxation really work all that well?” If we were to start out *de novo* would we actually entrust all our protective and defensive services to the members of one organization, and empower them to collect their revenues at the point of a gun? What kind of service could we expect from a monopoly that had no competition and a guaranteed income? Who would protect us from our guardians if they turned venal? Who would guard the guardians? Voluntary, consensual arrangements are always more flexible and less predictable than those imposed by coercive governments, which always perceive change as a threat to their dominance and sovereignty.[6]

Government taxation is a coercive activity that introduces force and violence into otherwise peaceful relationships. That is our primary reason for opposing taxation. It pits one man against another; one group against another group; upsets the natural market incentives that produce the greatest benefits for all. Although it is true that

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many who oppose taxation believe that a voluntary system will lead to a spectacular standard of living for the masses, that is not the reason for the opposition that inspires this book. We believe it is morally proper that a man keep the product of his labor; that he not be enslaved. If it is wrong for a slave owner to enslave a single person, then it is wrong for a group of individuals to do so. Majority rule cannot legitimize slavery or taxation. As R. C. Hoiles, founder of the Freedom Newspapers, was always keen to point out, there is only one standard of right and wrong, and that standard applies to the lone individual, to members of a group, and to the employees of the State.[7]

Conscientious objectors to taxation recognize that some goods and services are essential to human survival, but also realize they need not be provided by the government on a coercive basis. What we oppose is the coercion involved in collecting taxes. We oppose the means and take the position that the ends never justifies the means. Our opposition to taxation doesn't concern itself with whether *too* much money is being collected, or whether that money is being spent wastefully. Rather, the focus is on the fact that any amount of money forcefully collected is stealing. It is no more proper for government agents to seize property than it is for you to rob your neighbor at gunpoint, even if you spend the money on something that you think will benefit your neighbor.

If some in our society think that certain government services are necessary, then let them collect the revenues to support those services in a voluntary fashion. We who oppose taxation may or may not support their efforts. It would soon be revealed which services are sufficiently desired. And if the people collecting the money to support these services do not, in their judgment, collect enough, then let them dig into their own pockets to make up the deficiency or do without. They do not have the right to spend other people's money.

The articles in this anthology have been chosen because they discuss the historical, political, and philosophical relationships between taxation, slavery, and stealing. Robert Ringer, in his opening essay, describes taxation as a disgrace to the human race because it is a "violation of property rights, which means a violation of human rights." He points out that he is not only opposed to the income tax, but to all the "subtle" and hidden taxes that politicians on every level of government have enacted. He further alludes to the tremendous amount of "stolen" time that taxpayers surrender as they fill out their tax returns and compute the amount of taxes they owe. Harry Reid describes these activities as "voluntary" because everyone (or everyone's accountant) figures out the extent of his or her own tax liability. The interview with the Senator has been included because it demonstrates the gross absurdity of calling taxes, especially the federal income tax, a consensual activity. It only appears so because the American taxpayers are so brainwashed that most of them no longer perceive the government as a violent threat, but rather view it as an unending source of welfare benefits that someone else pays for.

Two articles by an anonymous author illustrate the inherent dangers in criticizing

government authorities. If you were Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service and received a letter from a disgruntled citizen comparing your organization to the Mafia wouldn't you investigate that critic to make sure he or she was paying his or her taxes? The fact is that the United States government has prosecuted and imprisoned those who question the constitutionality of its unapportioned taxation of income. In my own article, "Is 'Taxation Is Theft' A Seditious Statement?", I point out that judges in the federal courts have gone so far as to prevent defendants (alleged tax protesters) from presenting their constitutional arguments against income taxation. But as is apparent here, the U.S. Constitution has no special moral authority to convert taxation into non-theft. For those of our authors who embrace taxation as theft and slavery, Anonymous summarizes their opposition by writing: "I am going back to 'the old, traditional standards of religion, ethics, common law,' and common sense. I am refusing to act in a way that produces or contributes to evil."

What you will not find here is the call for "tax reduction" or for declaring the federal income tax laws "unconstitutional." The closest we come to that is Vivien Kellems' chapter in which she attacks the federal withholding system as being "illegal, immoral, and unconstitutional" because it is not her responsibility, as an employer, to discharge the income tax liability of her employees by making deductions from their pay. Instead, you will find a moral clarity exuded by many of our authors. For example, Frank Chodorov declares that "taxation is robbery" and that no amount of verbiage "can make it anything else." In conclusion, he notes that there can neither be a "good tax nor a just one" because "every tax rests its case on compulsion." Mark Crovelli tackles the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and writes that "theft is theft - even if the State does it." His purpose is to harken back to the unadorned language of the 7th commandment that "offers a straightforward condemnation of the taking of other people's property without their consent." As he notes, the commandment "does not offer exceptions, such as "You shall not steal unless you are a government employee."

Some of the contributors to this volume label themselves pacifists and war tax resisters. In Michael Benedetto's essay on "The Origins of Conscientious Tax Objection" we find a review of the religious objections to war taxes. Juanita Nelson, author of "A Matter of Freedom," (reprinted here) and her husband, Wally, began their tax resistance in 1949, but it was not until June 16, 1959 that Juanita "became the first woman in modern times to be apprehended by the federal government for opposition to war and war preparation." Although she was eventually released, the government filed tax liens against her and in 1973, agents from the Internal Revenue Service attempted to seize two vehicles that she and her husband had parked at their home in New Mexico. "Each of them sat in front of a vehicle, and the agents finally left." [8] Ammon Hennacy, another one of our contributors, was imprisoned during World War I for his refusal to be conscripted. Out of this experience, he became a Catholic, an anarchist, and a tax refuser. He, the Nelsons, and other war tax resisters certainly earn my greatest respect for having the courage and consistency to stick to their beliefs -

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even when the State has used force against them. Yet, to them and all other war tax resisters, I ask: What about excise taxes, real estate taxes, personal property taxes, use taxes, inheritance and estate taxes, social security taxes, and sales taxes? Are they not wrong, too? Do these taxes not go to support government? Are not all activities of government ultimately dependent on force, violence, and threats? Why limit your opposition to government wars and their funding? Are not the actions of the U.S. government in controlling its citizens in its own domestic venue similar in nature to its military operations abroad since both are predicated on the exercise of coercion?

Randolph Bourne, an early 20th Century intellectual, once observed that “war is the health of the state.”[9] Compulsion is its backbone; taxes are its lifeblood. The ultimate basis of State power is coercive taxation.[10] As Lysander Spooner pointed out in his essay, “Taxation,” (reprinted here) written before the United States Civil War, with money a government can hire armed men to plunder and punish those of its citizens who do not obey. The underlying premise of government taxation is that you and your property belong to the State.[11] Whatever you are allowed to keep is due to its generosity, and if you resist and want to keep more of your own property, you will be fined, jailed for contempt of court, or killed resisting arrest. Taxation is nothing but a polite euphemism for stealing - legitimized by the overpowering strength of the State. Thus it becomes our duty as individuals, and as inhabitants of the earth, to speak out - to make known our views - about taxation. Regardless of how much or how little tax we pay, we can say: taxes are wrong. We agree with the Jewish Zealot, Judas of Gamala, who over two thousand years ago said that the census tax imposed by the Roman occupiers of Palestine in 6 A.D. “was no better than an introduction to slavery.”[12]

One of the main purposes of this book is to encourage people to look at an old situation in a new way. Until individuals could recognize that there was a practical alternative to slavery, it was difficult for them to see slavery as the moral atrocity it was. To speak of doing away with taxation, today, brings forth the same reactions and reasons that Robert Higgs describes in one of the concluding chapters of this book. The defenders of slavery could not visualize how civilization, how law and order, could be maintained without slaves, and yet, society and civilization have survived. It is our position that taxation is just as abominable, as unjust, and as unnecessary as slavery. There are many voluntary ways to solve societal problems if only people would begin to free their minds from the constraints of government indoctrination and propaganda. Only a free mind is able to recognize the truth. Paraphrasing Alexander Solzhenitsyn, only a free mind is able to take that courageous step, and refuse to take part in falsehood. Only a free mind can recognize that “one word of truth outweighs the world.”[13]

End Notes

[1] Lesley Brown, (ed.), *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, See “slave,” Vol. II, p. 2893.

[2] Mario Pei, *Double-Speak In America*, New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1973, p. 96.

[3] Auberon Herbert, “Some Reasons Why Voluntarists Object To Compulsory Taxation In All Its Forms,” Section 27 (reprinted here). Even if there were such a limitation in the federal Constitution, of what value would it be? First and foremost, how can the Constitution possibly legitimize stealing and/or slavery? Second, and of lesser importance, what would prevent such a limitation from being amended, repealed, or ignored?

[4] Charles Adams, *For Good and Evil: The Impact of Taxes on the Course of History*, Lanham, Madison Books, 1993, pp. 1-2.

[5] See Murray Rothbard, “Society Without a State,” *The Libertarian Forum*, Volume 7, No. 1, January 1975, online at <http://mises.org/daily/2429>, and see Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (1792), Ch. 1, Bk. 2.

[6] Rothbard, op. cit. For historical examples of voluntarism, see Carl Watner (ed.), *I Must Speak Out: The Best of The Voluntarist, 1982-1999*, San Francisco: Fox & Wilkes, 1999.

[7] See Carl Watner, “To Thine Own Self Be True: The Story of Raymond Cyrus Hoiles and His Freedom Newspapers,” in Watner, op. cit., pp. 151-152. Originally printed in *The Voluntarist*, Whole No. 18, May 1986.

[8] Hedemann, Ed and Benn, Ruth (eds.), *War Tax Resistance: A Guide to Withholding Your Support from the Military*, New York: War Resisters League, Fifth Edition, 2003, p. 96.

[9] Lillian Schlissel, *The World of Randolph Bourne*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1963, pp. 246-250, and pp. 259-271. Excerpts reprinted in *The Voluntarist*, Whole No. 39, August 1989. The fact is: there couldn't be wars without taxation.

[10] David Beito, *Taxpayers in Revolt*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989, p. 127.

[11] Anonymous, “Why I Refuse To Be Numbered,” *The Voluntarist*, Whole No. 116, 1st Quarter 2003, p. 1, 4th paragraph.

[12] Flavius Josephus, *Selections from His Works*, with an Introduction and Notes by Abraham Wasserstein, New York: The Viking Press, 1974, p. 179 (from *The Antiquities of the Jews*. Cited on the internet as *Jewish Antiquities*, 18.4-6). This description of the Roman tax is attributed by Josephus to Judas of Gamala (otherwise known as Judas the Galilean), the reputed founder of the Zealots who revolted against the institution of the poll tax by the Romans in 6 A.D. in Palestine. He is to be distinguished from the better known Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve apostles and the betrayer of Jesus.

[13] I would like to thank Jim Russell and Spencer and Emi MacCallum for their critical reading and suggestions on how to improve this introduction.

Slavery the Worst Form of Stealing

by George Bush

(From Issue 152, 1st Quarter 2012)

Whatever may be said of other possessions, a man's person is his own; his life is his own; his liberty is his own. He who takes them away without his consent, and without any crime on his part, steals them. And surely stealing men is a much greater crime than stealing money, as a human being holds a higher rank in the scale of existence than inert and senseless matter. The eighth commandment, then, forbids, distinctly and peremptorily, all the despotic enslaving of our fellow men, of whatever condition or color, or of exercising absolute lordship over them; because those acts virtually deprive human beings of that property in themselves with which the Creator endowed them. This is a usurpation of the rights of man which no usage, law or custom, can legalize in the sight of heaven. No title can make good my claim to another's person; no deed of inheritance or conveyance transmits it to a third party. . . . Every man under God, owns himself; He has a right to himself which no other man can challenge. I may be lawfully restrained, punished, and even executed by just laws; but I can never be owned; I can never be in the sight of God, either serf or slave; I cannot sell myself; no other can sell me. - Though I may, for a consideration, make over to another my right to my services, yet the right to myself is no more alienable by myself than by another.

- from George Bush, "Notes on Exodus," published in Vol. 7, No. 32, HERALD OF FREEDOM (October 1, 1841), p. 1

Do You Really "Owe" Those Taxes?

by Anonymous

(From Issue 159, 4th Quarter 2013)

I recently had a short conversation with a friend about the meaning of the stealing commandment, "Thou shall not steal." His attitude was "If you owe the taxes, then the government can't be stealing from you when they collect it." However, he did recognize that if you don't owe it, then it is stealing when the government comes after you with all its might. So, do you really owe the tax money or not? Are you stealing from the government when you refuse to pay? Or is the I.R.S. stealing from you because you never agreed to pay what they claim you owe? It has got to be one or the

other. Which is it?

On the one hand, government personnel pass legislation that demands compulsory contributions from the citizenry. No one is really asked to consent to this legislation, and even if one voted to select some of the government personnel that support these taxes, one could hardly be said to have agreed to its imposition. And what if one voted, but chose an opposition candidate who was defeated; or didn't vote at all? Clearly, the government does not care whether you have voted or not. They still consider you liable for your taxes.

Most people want to be upright and meet their voluntarily-assumed obligations. They willingly pay their rightful debts in order to maintain their own self-esteem and to maintain their reputation in the minds of their friends, neighbors, and countrymen. So if taxes were really voluntarily contracted debts as the Internal Revenue Service maintains, then why does the government need to rely on force and its threat to collect the money? The very fact that the government must resort to this supports my argument that taxes are not voluntarily-assumed obligations.

Is there really any evidence that you owe your taxes? Did you even enter into a contract that you would pay 'x' amount in return for government services? Is your income tax return such a contract? No, it is a document coerced from you under penalty of perjury and under penalty for not filing. Furthermore, the government does not depend on having you file a tax return in order to claim that you owe them money. Ever hear of people being imprisoned and fined for NOT filing returns? The government cannot have it both ways: you owe if you do file and you owe if you don't file. In fact, this is proof that the government is simply demanding money from you, no matter what you do. Therefore, I think it is safe to conclude that neither filing nor not filing constitutes any kind of proof that you owe taxes. There is no evidence of any consent or agreement on your part. The government considers you under its jurisdiction and consequently claims you owe it the tax.

Most advocates of taxation justify their view that "taxation is not theft" by referring to some form of "tacit" consent that each person incurs by simply being alive. This amounts to the claim that if you were born in the United States, then your presence means that you have agreed to be taxed! But where does it say that on your birth certificate (another service controlled by the government)? And even if it did, could an infant agree to such a condition at time of birth? No: infants do not have the capacity to contract debts. Besides, what would happen to those parents if they refused to consent on behalf of their children? Would they and their infant be forced to leave the country?

Does one's use of government-provided services, such as the roads and the schools, mean you agree to be taxed to support the government? No. The government coercively monopolizes many of the goods and services some people would willingly pay for. By preventing competition, the government effectively denies them any choice in who they should buy these services from. At most, the government should present a bill for specific services rendered, not a bill for supporting all its activities.

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Furthermore, governments collect for such services from people regardless of whether they use, or even want, the service in question. For example, parents with no children, or, parents with children who do not attend government schools, must still pay school taxes. Pacifists are forced to pay taxes to support the police and the army. What possible justification can there be for compelling a man to accept a product he never ordered, doesn't use, and would prefer not to have? And then jailing him when he refuses to pay the bill?

But this moves the argument one further step backward. Does the State have the right to determine the conditions under which we live? It is true that there are costs expended in protecting one's property, and most people recognize that they must furnish their own protection or pay someone else to provide it. However, they should not be restricted from doing so themselves or seeking competitive bids for the provision of the services they desire. Government taxation prevents this from occurring.

Some argue that government is a necessity, just like food, shelter and clothing. Therefore, we are obligated to pay for it, despite not having requested its services. But this is a false analogy for two reasons. First, government is not a necessity, though some of the services it provides may be a requisite for civilized living. The question then becomes: what is the most moral and most practical method for delivering these services to those who want them? Second, even if government were a necessity, there is no reason for it to compel the purchase of its services. No one forces us to buy food, shelter, and clothing for ourselves. If a concerned third party acted like the government, they would outlaw all other providers and force us to buy from them. If we refused to do so, they would bundle us off to jail and steal our property, to boot. But that is not the way the "free" world works. If I fail to buy food, shelter, or clothing, I may die of hunger, exposure, or cold, but no one puts me in jail or confiscates my property for failure to do so.

It should be clear that government taxation is a coercive activity that introduces force and violence into an otherwise peaceful society. Those who say they haven't agreed to pay their taxes understand that certain goods and services (food, shelter, clothing, protection) are essential to human survival and must be paid for, but realize they need not be provided by the government on a compulsory basis. What they oppose is the coercion involved in collecting taxes. They oppose the means, and take the position that the ends never justify the means. If some people think that certain government services are necessary, then they should try to collect the money to fund them in a voluntary fashion. If the people collecting this money do not think enough has been collected, then let them dig into their own pockets to make up the deficiency or do without. They do not have the right to spend other people's money on things they think are necessary.

The whole premise of government taxation is essentially the idea that you and your property belong to the State. You are a slave of the State. Whatever the government allows you to keep or accumulate is simply attributable to its generosity.

It is not yours by right. The voluntaryist view is that the State is a criminal institution; and that the State accumulates its resources and wealth only by stealing from each member of the community. Consequently, failing to file a tax return, or “cheating” on one's tax return is simply a case of outwitting the criminals and keeping your own property. How could anyone object to you hiding your jewels so that a common thief couldn't find them? Is that any different than you holding on to your wealth so that the government can't seize it?

The answer in both cases is the same. Neither the common thief nor the government have any right to your wealth. They have no right to object to your actions that prevent them from seizing all or part of it. What the government calls tax evasion, either not paying your taxes or paying less than it claims, is simply a person's way of saying, “No!” or “Enough is enough!” Such actions are one way of protecting your property from government thieves and reducing the amounts the government steals from you. The non-filer and tax evader are usually looked upon as cheats but is that really the case? No! The cheaters are those who deceive others into believing that they “owe” taxes to the government. These are the people who are trying to cheat the rest of us out of our rightfully earned property! Tax refuseniks are simply trying to outwit a criminal government by keeping what belongs to them. It is their money. It was honestly earned. They are fully justified in keeping it out of the clutches of both the thief and the tax man!

The gist of my article is to counter the belief that you are obligated to pay taxes levied by the government. Most people agree that if you “owe” somebody money, then you should meet your obligation and pay the debt. But to “owe” already assumes that you have voluntarily contracted the debt, and thus obligate yourself to its repayment.

But this is false in the case of taxes (which is precisely why the government goes to such great length to argue that paying taxes is voluntary). Taxes are a coercive demand imposed upon you by the government, just as the robber demands your wallet.

If you once admit taxes are “forced exactions,” then it follows that taxation is no different than the forced exactions of a thief. You certainly don't “owe” the thief the contents of your wallet. “Well,” you reply, “the government provides us with infrastructure and services.” “So what?” I reply, “so does the kidnapper who forcibly abducts you and then feeds and shelters you.” Do you “owe” the kidnapper for his services in keeping you alive while he demands a ransom? Of course not!

Isn't the government acting just like the kidnapper? - which brings us to the whole point of my argument: “How can you define taxation in a way which makes it different from robbery?”

Sophisticated Slavery

by Marco den Ouden

(From Issue 163, 4th Quarter 2014)

[Editor's Note: This article is the winner of The Voluntarist essay contest on how best to explain that taxation is theft.]

One of the by-products of the American Civil War was the abolition of slavery. Well, sort of!

The Civil War resulted in the elimination of formal slavery. However, it did not get rid of essential slavery. What does this mean? Let's go back to pre-Civil War America to find out.

The Southern U.S. states were not sophisticated slave states. Slaves were held as chattel. The plantation owner literally "owned" his slaves. They were his property. He kept them and cared for them just as he kept and cared for cattle and other domestic livestock. He housed them, fed them and clothed them, and, of course, he made them work for him. If they did not suit him, he sold them.

But suppose slavery was not abolished in the 19th Century, but rather it evolved into a more sophisticated system. How might it have changed? First a slave owner might have thought, "Hey, what if I can get the benefit of slave labor without the exorbitant cost of feeding, clothing and sheltering them?" Some slave owner may have taken the first path to sophistication by paying his slaves a nominal wage (less than it cost to keep them on the plantation) and told them, "I'm going to start paying you for your work but you must go and find your own food and shelter. You are free to go about your own business except that you must come to the plantation to work every day. After all, I still own you."

Other slave owners notice he's saving a bundle on costs and also adopt the practice. Soon the entire society has adopted this new mode of slavery.

The slaves have so much free time on their hands that some start moonlighting. While it's still nickel and dimes, the slave owners look the other way. But after a while they notice something quite unexpected. The slaves are not the stupid, backward people they thought they were. Some used their spare time to get educated and now earn as much, if not more, off the plantation as on.

A very sophisticated slave owner puts two and two together. "My slaves can generate more wealth on their own time than working for me," he reasons. "Why don't I give them complete freedom to choose their own line of work and develop wealth in their own way. Instead of having them work on the plantation, which would under-utilize their skills, I'll let them do what they are best suited for in the

marketplace. I'll hire some poor white trash and slaves who can't find other work for the fields. And as for my slaves, they will give me 50% of all they earn. After all, I still own them.”

If the slave owner is really sophisticated, he will notice that skills and aptitudes vary greatly among his slaves. The unskilled ones will not be able to survive on the small remuneration he pays for farm work. The original concept was to save on the costs of feeding, clothing, and sheltering his slaves by paying them and letting them fend for themselves. He decides that he will not demand any tribute from slaves who can do little besides farm work. He decides to graduate the tribute demanded according to how much the slave earns. The more they earn, the greater the percentage they pay to the slave owner. He carefully crafts the rates of tribute so the slaves still have an incentive to better themselves and earn more. He calls this sliding scale a “progressive” tribute system.

Soon other slave owners follow suit and the slave society reaches its ultimate level of sophistication. The slaves are formally free to do what they want to do. Formal slavery has been abolished. But essentially, they are still slaves. They must pay a tribute based on their earnings to their masters. The essence of slavery is working for the benefit of others rather than yourself, not by choice (as in supporting your family or giving to charity) but by force. To paraphrase Frederick Douglas, who escaped from slavery in 1838, a slave is someone who “toils so that another may reap the fruit.”

The American Civil War resulted in the end of formal slavery. But it did not end essential slavery. In fact, over the years, essential slavery has expanded to include not just former slaves, but everyone. And everyone is a partial slave owner as well. We have, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, a system of slavery “of the people, by the people and for the people.” The instrument of its implementation is the income tax!

Until we abolish coercive taxation, the forced taking of the fruits of the labor of those who have earned it for the benefit of those who have not, we will not have abolished the essence of slavery. Until we see the rise of another great emancipator who can educate the world to the evil of slavery down to its essential core, we will not be a truly free people!

[This article originally appeared at About.com on April 13, 1998. It can also be found at Towards a Tax Free Canada.]

Meeting the State Head-On

by Anonymous

(From Issue 165, 2nd Quarter 2015)

[Author’s Note: This article was sparked by recently reading two older voluntaryist

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essays by Carl Watner: “Highway Tax vs. Poll Tax: Some Thoreau Tax Trivia” (Issue 71), and “Charles Lane: Voluntaryist”, the Introduction to A VOLUNTARY POLITICAL GOVERNMENT: LETTERS FROM CHARLES LANE.]

In Henry David Thoreau’s famous essay “Civil Disobedience” (which was originally titled “Resistance to Civil Government”), he wrote that he had paid no poll-tax for six years.[1] The poll-tax or head-tax, as it was sometimes called, has been part of human history since the times of the ancient Egyptians and Romans. It was basically a capitation tax levied in a fixed amount on each “taxable” person. In colonial America this often meant that the male “head of household pa[id] the tax on himself, his wife, his children sixteen years of age and older, indentured servants, and slaves.” (Rabushka, 15) The poll-tax was epitomized in Jewish law which collected one-half shekel from every man regardless of his wealth: “the rich shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less.” (Exodus 30:11-16)

In the Massachusetts of Thoreau’s day, the poll-tax amounted to \$1.50 per year. [2] The basis for its assessment was found in the State Constitution of 1780 “which provided that ‘the public charges of government’ should be assessed ‘on polls and estates in the manner that has hitherto been practiced’.” (Broderick, 613) As recounted in TAXATION IN COLONIAL AMERICA, Alvin Rabushka observed that the poll tax was collected in nearly all the North American colonies, and in many cases refusal to pay resulted in distraint of one’s property.[3] Although it was a standard source of revenue for both colonial and state governments, “low taxes, noncompliance, and arrears were a chronic fact of fiscal life.” (Rabushka, 868) In fact, Rabushka asserted that in Massachusetts at the time of Paul Revere’s ride on April 18, 1775, “the residents of Massachusetts had created for themselves a fiscal paradise.” (779)

So why did Thoreau and his friends, Bronson Alcott and Charles Lane, object to paying the poll-tax even though it was such a minimal amount? “It [wa]s for no particular item in the tax-bill” that Thoreau and friends “refuse[d] to pay it. (206) Much like voluntaryists today, they “simply wish[ed] to refuse allegiance to the State, to withdraw and stand aloof from it” (206) The Massachusetts Revised Statutes of 1836 stated that the poll-tax was to be assessed upon “each taxable person in the town, where he shall be an inhabitant the first day of May in each year.” (Broderick, 614) As Rabushka put it, “To reside was to pay.” (166) It had nothing to do with citizenship. (Lane had been born in England and resided there until 1842.) It had everything to do with simply being a person living in a particular place. Did they, by their very existence, owe taxes to the town government where they lived? According to the town of Concord and the State of Massachusetts, there was no legal way to avoid the tax, short of leaving the state permanently. Yet, they did not want to leave their homes or lose their property, but neither did they want to support the institution of government.

Thus the “inhabitants” of Massachusetts’ towns had to meet the poll tax head-on, much as people today are faced with confronting local, state, and federal income

taxes.[4] Governments, then and now, take one's very existence as evidence that one owes a tax. In "Resistance to Civil Government," Thoreau wrote, "If there were one who lived wholly without the use of money, the State itself would hesitate to demand it of him." (200) However, this is not true today, even if it were in Thoreau's time (which is doubtful). If there were such a person in today's United States, the IRS or a state revenue department would still want to know 1) why that person hadn't filed a tax return; 2) if that person had any taxable income; and 3) how that person lived without incurring a tax liability. It is just as nearly impossible to hide from the IRS as it would have been to hide from the town-constable in Thoreau's day. (It might even be more difficult today with the advent of government identifiers, computers, and government-issued birth certificates.)

Thoreau's refusal to pay the poll tax would be much like refusing to file or pay federal and state income taxes today. It pits the individual against the State. The IRS assumes that your very existence means that you owe taxes, or at least an explanation as to why you don't. The IRS places the burden of proof on the individual tax-payer to show why no return is due and/or to prove why no tax is owed. In principle, the government assumes that everyone owes, and that it may take as much or as little as the President, members of Congress and the IRS agree on. In effect, what you think you 'own' is actually government property that the government lets you 'rent.' See what happens to you and your property if you don't pay your 'rent' (i.e., taxes). Much like monarchs of old, the government grants people the privilege of keeping only as much as the government allows. Taxation is not theft, from the government's perspective, because it is only taking what already belongs to it. The whole premise behind government taxation is essentially the idea that you and your property belong to the State; that the government 'owns' everything in the geographic area over which it exerts control.

People are enslaved if their bodies are owned by others; but they are also slaves if others control their property or the results of their labor. If the State may take one dollar out of what a man owns, then it may take up to his last dollar. Once admit the right of the State to tax, then the State becomes the owner of all property. As in most situations in life, it is best to resist at the beginning, and thus it behooves us to stand tall and firm against the State and resist head-on by refusing to file or pay taxes.

Endnotes

[1] See page 203 of Thoreau. Numbers within parentheses in the text are page numbers of a particular article or book referred to below.

[2] \$1.50 would be 7.5% of a \$20 gold piece, which contains slightly less than an ounce of pure gold. We can extrapolate that into today's prices by taking 7.5% of gold at \$1300 an ounce and arrive at approximately \$97, which would have been collected once a year.

[3] Walter Harding (37) was the first to note that the town-tax collectors of

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Massachusetts were empowered to levy upon the goods and property of the person, and if these were insufficient to satisfy the tax, then the collector was authorized to “take the body of such person and commit him to prison, there to remain until he shall pay the tax and the charges of commitment and imprisonment, or shall be discharged by order of law.”

[4] The problem of avoiding sales tax, which is nearly ubiquitous today, is not discussed in this article.

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Taxation Is Theft: A Constructive Explanation

by Spencer and Emalie MacCallum
(From Issue 165, 2nd Quarter 2015)

How do we best explain the voluntaryist position and bring people to understand that taxation is theft? The philosopher Spencer Heath once remarked, when this question arose, that people cannot recognize atrocity until they can entertain in their minds an alternative. He gave the example of slavery in the ancient world. Virtually no writers of antiquity, although they may have urged that people treat their slaves and other livestock kindly, ever proposed the abolition of slavery. Slavery was accepted as the basic economy upon which society was established; it was not something that it made any sense to question. It was not until technology had developed to the point that people could entertain in their minds alternatives to slavery, that they could recognize slavery as atrocity.

The same now applies to taxation. Only when people can entertain in their minds alternatives to taxation will they be able to recognize it as theft. Hence it behooves us, rather than bashing taxation to no avail, to study and promulgate the alternative, free-market ways of financing public services -- to show the alternatives that are now emerging. This will be a constructive approach, which all people can appreciate and, moreover, will be unlikely to antagonize folks in places of power.

Oh, The Joy(s) of Slavery!

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 178, 3rd Quarter 2018)

In mid-May 2017, I received a proof copy of Gerard Casey's book, FREEDOM'S PROGRESS?- A HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT. In this massive tome of 960 pages, I found several references to a book by Richard Murphy, titled THE JOY OF TAX – HOW A FAIR TAX SYSTEM CAN CREATE A BETTER SOCIETY.

Reading that book didn't make me sick, but it did make me feel, as Gerard Casey put it, “as if I had fallen down the rabbit hole into some alternate reality” where paying taxes was the norm and where anyone who thought otherwise was considered “paranoid” (as Murphy labeled my way of thinking in an email). Murphy's book deserves attention because it propagates the views that government is an institution which should exist and which should be supported by taxation. Furthermore, it asserts that when a citizen earns an income, part of the income automatically belongs to the government. Why? Because the taxpayer has agreed to the government's laws and to “the social contract” under which the citizen and the government coexist.

After I read Murphy's book, I emailed him. Here are the questions I asked him:

- 1) How does the government's property (which the taxpayer is holding in trust until the tax is paid) come into the citizen's possession?
 - 2) Who created the property and who transferred the property into the hands of the taxpayer(s)?
- Could you please explain?

Although Murphy declined to let me quote from any of his emails, I did forward it to Gerard Casey, who responded as follows:

First, congratulations on getting a response from Professor Murphy. Let's take it step by step.

[Murphy wrote] “The government's property is [the] tax owing.”

I'm not sure what this is supposed to mean, unless it's something like “The government's property is the tax that is owed to it.”

So, where's the theory of property that would support such a claim? ... Any theory of property must, in addition to providing for acquisition by exchange, provide for original acquisition, otherwise the whole process

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could never start. Where is Murphy's theory of original acquisition? If a government could be shown to have originally acquired all the land over which it now exercises control, then it would relate to its citizens as landlord to tenant. Did/does any government even make such a claim, let alone defend it?

[Murphy wrote] "It comes into the taxpayers' possession when they make money on which they owe tax."

Leaving aside the question-begging nature of this assertion, it implies that the government's property only comes into existence when you (or some other idiot: "only fools and horses work") make money. If all the citizens stopped making money, the government would have no property!

[Murphy wrote] "My argument is that they never own the gross sum of their income, they only own the net sum after tax is due, meaning that the tax due is always the property of the government that they merely hold in trust for it."

This is not an argument; it's an assertion. An argument requires at least one premise and a conclusion. His conclusion is that the government owns the tax you owe it, and which you are holding in trust for it. The question is, what's the premise on which this conclusion rests?

[Murphy wrote] "No one as such transferred this property to the tax payer: the property was created by the taxpayer but is not theirs to enjoy because it belongs to someone else - the government."

His whole screed is simply the repetition of the same non-argumentative assertion - you don't own all of your income - the government owns part of it. (Why not all of it, by the way, and why the proportion that it does claim?) Interestingly, this last repetition of his assertion contains the seed of a counterargument against it. If X creates Y then, *prima facie*, barring some form of antecedent alienation, X has the best claim to own Y. So, if the taxpayer creates the property, then it is hard to see why it (or part of it) should be deemed to belong to someone else. Was there an antecedent agreement to this effect between tax-levier and tax-payer, justified by some variation on the 'tacit consent' argument? If so, then the usual objections to this dubious doctrine apply. If not, then what?

I then wrote Murphy a second time as follows:

Before I sent you my email, I had composed a short article titled "Oh, The Joy(s) of Slavery!" (draft attached) in which I tried to lay out your definition and argument for tax. I sent you my email in an attempt to better understand your position.

It appears that the basis of your position on tax is that

(A) all money and property possessed by the citizens of a country belong to the government.

Am I correct in thinking this?

If so, how did the government come to own everything? What is your theory of original acquisition? It would appear that the property that I own was obtained by my exchanging my labor for money and then exchanging that money for food, shelter, and clothing, which other individuals have produced. Other individuals come to own things in the same way. How do such products created by the activities of individuals become the property of government?

If your position is A, is that position an axiom, neither having nor requiring evidential support, or does it rest upon some evidential base? If so, what is that base?

No one I know has explicitly agreed that when they create property it then automatically becomes government property. Does your position depend upon some form of the doctrine of tacit consent? You would probably respond that their agreement is implied by an individual's continued presence in the country where they reside. However, I can assure you that there are some citizens who would deny this.

Would you agree that A (above) imposes on citizens a form of involuntary servitude, that is, slavery? If not, why not?

When Murphy responded, he appeared very upset with me. He would not agree to let me quote from his emails because he considered my interpretation manipulative and bizarre. He basically accused me of putting words in his mouth. He would not agree that the government owned all the citizens' income and property, but only that before people create their income, they have agreed to be taxed. Then whatever they "owe" in taxes automatically becomes the government's property (which they hold in trust for the government until such time as the tax is due).

After all of these email exchanges, Gerard Casey sent me a link to another article containing arguments similar to Murphy's. It was written by Philip Goff, an associate professor in philosophy at the Central European University in Budapest, and is titled "Is Taxation Theft? - The assumption that you own the contents of your pay-packet, although almost universal, is demonstrably confused." So Murphy is not the only academic thinking this way. This is government propaganda and indoctrination, pure and simple. Its aim is to make the citizen a docile taxpayer, who never questions the legitimacy or morality of government or its revenue-collecting processes.

In looking back, Murphy is correct that he never actually wrote that all the taxpayer's property belonged to the government. However, he clearly asserts that the government has a lien on the taxpayer's property and income, which if not satisfied allows the government to confiscate enough of it to satisfy its lien. I would have been more prescient to have asked him where and how this lien originates. Even better, I

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should have asked him why he assumes a coercive, monopolistic institution, like government, should even exist.

You, the reader, must decide who is right and who is wrong. Do you really think you owe the government the tax(es) it demands? That decision will affect your pocketbook for the rest of your life.

Here follows the original essay I sent to Murphy:

In his 1973 libertarian manifesto, FOR A NEW LIBERTY, Murray Rothbard observed that “it is startling for someone to consider taxation as robbery, and therefore [view the] government as a band of robbers. But anyone who persists in thinking of taxation as in some sense a ‘voluntary’ payment can see what happens if he chooses not to pay. ... [So] *[w]hat* distinguishes the edicts of the State from the commands of a bandit gang? ... Indeed, it would be a useful exercise for nonlibertarians to ponder this question: *How* can you define taxation in a way which makes it different from robbery?”

Now comes Richard Murphy to answer these questions in his book, THE JOY OF TAX (2015). His answer is clear and concise:

... tax is that property held in trust by an individual or company that is due to the state whose rightful and legal property it is. (46, emphasis in original)

In other words, as Murphy puts it, “tax is actually the government's money that we sometimes hold on its behalf.” (46)

What Murphy neglects to explain is: How did this money (or property) belonging to the government get in to the hands of the taxpayer in the first place? Was it stolen by the taxpayer from the government? Who originally created this property and how did it come into the hands of private citizens? Although he does not come out directly and say it, the whole premise of his explanation is that all property and money “owned” by the citizens of a country belongs to the government, but he never explicates how the government comes to own everything. This also explains his statement that “the action that we call paying tax is actually the process by which we transfer to the government that part of the funds that we hold which rightfully are not ours but are in fact the property of the state.” (46) And as he adds a page later, “We do not own our gross income, we only own our net income. (47-48)

Murphy takes issue with the online Oxford Dictionary's definition of tax as “*A compulsory contribution to state revenue ...*.” (33, emphasis in the original) He claims that taxes are not collected under duress because people (a) have “the right to vote in elections that result in the formation of governments that set the taxes in the countries in which they reside”; (b) “those same people also have a right to try to influence the democratic process”; and (c) they “have a right to leave the country if they really do feel they are being compelled to do something they do not want.” (35) Nevertheless Murphy admits that it is “impossible to deny” that there is some “element of compulsion to tax,” but he points out that compulsion is not an essential element of the tax system. (40) He argues that since most people consent to the government they live under, any compulsion found in the laws enforcing collection of

taxes is not really compulsion. Follow this reasoning if you will:

Just as most of us refrain from burglary without the requirement of any law to tell us not to do so, so do most of us in a modern democracy voluntarily pay our tax. It is for those who break the norm of society, by refusing to comply with what most of us think is the right thing to do, that we have law that penalizes anyone who persists in doing the wrong thing. The fact that we have these laws and use them relatively rarely ... is not evidence of compulsion but the exact opposite, which is that compliance is the norm that needs to be enforced only exceptionally. (41)

In other words, the violent penalties (imprisonment and/or confiscation of your property) for not filing a return and/or not paying your tax is not compulsion. Or if you believe Big Brother in 1984, “War is Peace; Freedom is Slavery.”

Nowhere in his discussion does Murphy discuss how property comes into rightful ownership. He simply assumes that the government owns everything in the area over which it claims jurisdiction. As I observed earlier, Murphy's philosophy of “voluntary” tax is based on the claim that “tax represents the 'consideration' paid by people who live in a country in exchange for the social contract that exists between them, its government, and each other.” (156) What this social contract implies is that all monies and property coming into the possession of the citizen belongs to the government. So long as the citizen pays his rent (the tax) to the actual owner (the government) he may retain temporary possession. Failure to pay will result in seizure (foreclosure) of the property and it being auctioned off to the highest bidder, who will then have to make payments to the state.

Near the beginning of his book, Murphy writes that “the ability to tax is an exercise in economic power over others.” (18) Later he writes that “the reality is that ... tax can be seen to be one of the cleverest of human inventions” (51) Legitimizing taxation in the eyes of the taxpayers, and convincing them that they actually owe the tax is not only diabolically devious and deceptive, but is the simplest and least costly way of reducing the amount of violence required to collect money and property from the government's citizenry. Taxpayers are happiest when they think there is no alternative (as in “death and taxes are inescapable”); just as slaves are happy when they think there is no alternative to slavery. Both the taxpayer and the slave are content to turn over the products of their labor to whomever “exercises” economic power over them. But voluntaryists are not content to be tax slaves because they view taxation as “sophisticated slavery” and “a disgrace to the human race.” Voluntaryists find no joy in slavery. Nor do they find any joy in taxation. If Richard Murphy enjoys paying his taxes, let him do so, but let him keep his Joy to himself.

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Bandit Gangs, All of Them

Excerpts from Gerard Casey

(From Issue 178, 3rd Quarter 2018)

States are criminal organizations, all states, not just the obviously totalitarian or repressive ones. The only possible exceptions to this sweeping claim are those mini-states that are, in effect, swollen bits of private property, such as the Vatican. I intend this statement to be understood literally and not as some form of rhetorical exaggeration. The argument is simple. Theft, robbery, kidnapping and murder are all crimes. Those who engage in such activities, whether on their own behalf or on behalf of others are, by definition, criminals. In taxing the people of a country, the state engages in an activity that is morally equivalent to theft or robbery; in putting some people in prison, especially those who are convicted of so-called victimless crimes or when it drafts people into the armed services, the state is guilty of kidnapping or false imprisonment;

For many people, perhaps most, these contentions will seem both shocking and absurd. Some will immediately object that taxation is clearly not theft. They may say as Craig Duncan does that since you do not have legal title to all your pre-tax income the state commits no crime in appropriating that part of your income to which it is entitled. The problem with this objection is that it completely begs the question – is the state entitled to part of your income?

The libertarian contention that taxation is the moral equivalent of theft can be

true, Duncan believes, only if people have a moral right “to keep and control all their earnings” but this claim, he thinks, is beset with fatal problems. To illustrate this point, he rehearses the tragedy of Annie the antiques dealer who has to hand over 20 per cent of her earnings to the owner of the premises she rents to conduct her business. If Annie were to claim that she had a right to all her earnings and should not be obliged to fork over the 20 per cent, the building owner will respond that without his premises, she would not have been able to make any sales in the first place. “Something similar”, says Duncan, “is true of government taxes.” If it were not for the state’s enforcing contracts, protecting property rights, keeping the peace, printing currency, preventing monopolies and so on, you or anyone else would not be able to go about your daily business. So, the argument goes, by analogy the state has a moral entitlement to a portion of your earnings, at least to an amount sufficient to cover the costs of the services the state provides.

This analogy is so weak it not only limps, as most analogies do, but it positively staggers around on one leg. First of all, Annie presumably has made an agreement with her landlord and did so freely. If she does not want to hand over 20 per cent of her earnings to him, she can try to renegotiate the contract or take her business elsewhere. In stark contrast, the average citizen has made no agreement with the state. The state unilaterally determines the amount that citizens must “pay.” Citizens are not at liberty to take their “business” elsewhere since the state forcibly excludes competitors who might be willing to supply more cheaply the services provided by the state. Duncan’s analogy, if it has any force at all, has it only if it runs in the opposite direction. On the libertarian way of thinking about it, taking commercial relations as the norm, Annie Citizen is forced to do her business in premises of her landlord’s (the state’s) choosing, paying whatever rent he (the state) determines he deserves, and her landlord (the state) can legitimately use violence to prevent someone else offering her a better deal.

[Editor's Note: The above excerpts are from pages 1-2 of Gerard Casey, *LIBERTARIAN ANARCHY: AGAINST THE STATE*. Copyright by the author, Continuum Publishing, 2012. Used by permission of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. The references to Craig Duncan are to be found at pages 46-47 of Craig Duncan and Tibor Machan, *LIBERTARIANISM: FOR AND AGAINST* Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.]

The Rescue Project: We Coerce You to Prevent Injustice

by Carl Watner

with Excerpts from Craig Duncan

(From Issue 180, 1st Quarter 2019)

Craig Duncan is an associate professor of philosophy at Ithaca College (New York). He and Tibor Machan authored a book titled *LIBERTARIANISM* (2005): Tibor arguing for, and Craig against. I first became acquainted with the book in late September 2017, after Gerard Casey called my attention to Craig's argument that "As the law stands, you do not have legal title to all the pre-tax money that others pay to you in the form of wages, salaries, sales, etc. You only have legal title to your after-tax earnings." (p. 46) I emailed Craig pointing out that I did not think his statement was accurate. Here is what I wrote:

What is the basis for your statements? Is it to be found in the US Tax Code? Do you think that the Internal Revenue Service would agree with your statement? At most, I think you could say that the federal government has a potential lien on ALL of your property until you have paid the amount that the Internal Revenue Service decides you owe for any given year.

The title – at the time you earn your wages, salary, or engage in exchange of property - is yours, solely; and the federal government has to follow due process procedures in order to file a lien against your property.

Here is how Craig responded on September 28, 2017:

Dear Mr. Watner,

First of all, thank you for reading my and Tibor Machan's book.

I don't have my book to hand at the present moment and so I cannot check the page you cite, but I believe at that point I was arguing that taxation is not "legal theft." I don't believe that this point should be controversial. The real question is whether taxation is "moral theft" - that is, whether taxation violates a moral right you have to keep every penny of your pre-tax earnings. That question takes more work to answer.

My point in the passages you cite is just this: if I owe \$D in taxation to the IRS, then the IRS is legally entitled to those \$D. If they are legally entitled to those \$D, then I am not legally entitled to those \$D. If I refuse

to pay the IRS the \$D, then I am breaking the law. And if the IRS confiscates \$D from me, then they are not guilty of the legal crime of stealing when they do so. (They still behaved morally wrongly IF they violated a moral right of mine to keep all my earnings, including the \$D. Whether there is such a moral right is a separate question, as I stated in the previous paragraph.)

So when I said (in the passage you quote) that you do not have legal title to all your pre-tax earnings I simply meant that you are not legally entitled to all your pre-tax earnings.

The IRS uses tax levies and tax liens to collect money that it is legally owed. Perhaps you are making the point that you have legal title to the \$D until the levy or lien is executed? Perhaps so, but if so, that is more of a lawyerly game of “gotcha” than a charitable interpretation of what I wrote. Perhaps a tax lawyer would inform me that “not legally entitled” and “no legal title” are not equivalent in meaning (i.e., perhaps “legal title” has a special lawyerly definition I am unaware of). If so, then I should simply have said “you are not legally entitled to all your pre-tax earnings.” I am 100% confident that there is some interpretation of this claim that tax lawyers would agree is true.

The genuinely interesting question is about moral rights to property.

Sincerely,

Craig

Craig’s point is that taxation is not theft because there is a government law that entitles the IRS to part of your property. It does not matter whether you agree with the law or not. The government’s definition of property rights takes precedence over what you consider your property (because government agents possess access to overpowering force). Nevertheless, Craig also recognizes that there is a question as to the legitimacy and morality of such a law. When I asked him in subsequent emails to justify his position, he asserted that citizens living in modern industrial societies, such as the United States, in justice do not deserve all they earn because they “partake of technological know-how and physical infrastructure (roads, transportation systems, buildings, etc.) that they did not create” This led to a wide-ranging exchange in which I questioned Craig about the justice of taxation, and even of government, itself. In the email excerpts that follow he elaborated on his argument.

[M]uch of the benefits that a given individual enjoys in ... a thriving social order is only in part due to his/her inputs (i.e. work, innovations, risk-taking, etc.). A portion of the benefits that an individual enjoys are a windfall due to the good fortune of being born into a functioning social order. All those individuals who contribute to the maintenance of the social order (contributing to the economy, obeying the laws, giving care

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within a family, showing mutual respect to fellow citizens, etc.) deserve to share in the good fortune that their fellow contributors are enjoying, at least to the extent of having secure access to a life of dignity (secure access to the opportunity to meet their basic needs and enjoy a reasonable level of control over the shape of the lives).

What the best means are for ensuring that contributors have access to a life of dignity is a social scientific matter. The track record of public and robust social safety nets is better than societies with threadbare nets or wholly private nets (i.e. only charity). It is not hard to see why. In any society, there are a number of menial jobs that must be done, and those jobs will pay poorly. (Since so many people can do them, any particular employee is highly replaceable, thus giving employees very little bargaining power with which to demand good wages.) Those people will have lives blighted by economic insecurity, health insecurity, etc., absent a safety net. But people who (say) drive delivery vans, empty bedpans, clean hotel rooms, stock shelves, etc., are playing a necessary part in the social order which benefits you and me. Such workers do not deserve to live blighted lives. Justice (which I regard as tracking desert) requires that the good fortune that comes with being part of social order be shared with other contributors.

According to Craig a “just system of [government] property laws will” strive to balance “respect for autonomy” of the person with “an ideal of reciprocity.” Government legislation will attempt to balance autonomy and control over one’s external goods with sharing that property with others who contribute to your prosperity, but who have a lower standard of living than you. “It was the argument of [a] previous email that a laissez-faire economy with no tax-funded social safety net would leave many workers who contribute to your prosperity without secure access to a life of dignity. And that violates reciprocity. Thus it is compatible with justice for the law to define property rights so that you legally owe, as taxes, a portion of goods that you come to possess via economic exchanges.”

Such was Craig’s basic justification for taxation. When I asked him if he endorsed the use of coercion, and its threat, to collect taxes, Craig responded that “how” the money was spent (i.e., its use to support the social safety net) justified using government force, if necessary. He argued that the compulsion inherent in the collection of taxes was coercion done in the name of preventing injustice. “Such coercion is done not with the main aim of improving those people who are coerced (in this case, those who are taxed), i.e., NOT done in order to say ‘You well-off earners should be more generous, so we are going to coerce you into being more generous!’ It’s done to prevent injustice to someone at the bottom, e.g., to prevent a low-wage worker from having his/her life blighted by financial and/or medical insecurity.” Furthermore, “absolute moral property rights - moral rights to property so strong that

all forms of taxation are regarded as illegitimate - predictably lead to many forms of injustice, namely, the injustices that arise in [an] anarcho-capitalist [system], such as (among other things) a lack of basic security for those at the bottom of society. So, justice doesn't endorse absolute moral property rights. Not all taxation is thus an injustice, the moral equivalent of theft. Some forms of taxation promote justice rather than violate it."

In his argument against libertarianism, Craig observed that government does not require the consent of all the people living under its jurisdiction. (See page 56 of LIBERTARIANISM.) Craig argued that:

If the actual consent of every single person were required for any government to be legitimate, then no government will be legitimate. That is an impossible standard to adopt in practice. Anarcho-capitalists gleefully agree, and draw the conclusion that no government is legitimate. But their view of the consequences of ancap [anarcho-capitalism] is implausibly utopian. A more realistic assessment of life under ancap acknowledges that a great deal of misery, grave insecurity, and unfairness would abound. It is implausible to me to think that justice requires us to tolerate such bad consequences. So it is implausible that justice requires the actual consent of every single person for government to be legitimate.

The most that can truthfully be said is that a government is legitimate only if it deserves the consent of all those who live under it. When does a government deserve its citizens' consent? When it shows adequate respect for citizens' autonomy and when its laws respect citizens' just deserts. The latter element requires a social safety net, for a society that lacks a social safety net has forfeited any claim to deserve the consent of citizens at the bottom of society. [Those at the bottom of society say,] "The social institutions that we live under do not deserve our consent. We contribute to society – we drive its delivery vans, stock its shelves, empty its bedpans, clean its hotel rooms, pick its fruit, etc. – but we lead lives blighted by financial and medical insecurity. We are thus not living on a footing of reciprocity with others; we are not getting our just deserts. A society that is willing to tolerate this is a society that does not deserve our allegiance."

Craig agrees with me that taxation is compulsory, but he sees nothing wrong with using violence, or its threat, to collect government revenues. To him it is simply a fact of life because it is required to insure that injustice is not done to those who require a social safety net. As Craig wrote:

To threaten force is not by that fact alone to imply that the audience is criminal or immoral. It is just to say: "Here are the rules of our society,

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designed to achieve justice. They are authoritative rules, not mere suggestions, and as such they will be enforced.” That’s not to infantilize citizens or treat them as corrupt or vicious or criminal. Compare: there are laws against parental neglect of children, and rightly so. But for our government to create such laws is not to label all parents as people who would refuse to fulfill their duties as parents in the absence of coercion. It’s just to say that these parental duties are important enough to make a basic, authoritative rule. Likewise, the laws that create taxation that is used to fund a social safety net do not label citizens as people who would refuse to fulfill their duties as citizens in the absence of coercion. It’s just to say that these citizenly duties are important enough to make a basic, authoritative rule. (And what citizenly duties are these? The duty to ensure that citizens who contribute to your prosperity do not have their lives ruined by financial and medical insecurity, that is, the duty to live on a footing of reciprocity with your fellow citizens, so that both you and they receive your/their just deserts.)

Here’s an analogy. (No doubt you will find it problematic!) Suppose you join a club. The club says, “Here are the rules. If you break the rules, we reserve the right to kick you out.” That is a threat of a kind, though not a threat of violence, of course. But it is a threat of some kind of penalty. Does the existence of the rule and the associated threat imply, “All you members are no good and have to be kept in line by threats”? No, there is no such implication; it’s just a statement of, “Here are the rules our club will operate by.”

Now, anarcho-capitalist will say: “Exactly, we want ALL societies to be voluntary societies which one is free to join or not!” That’s an inspiring credo – I really do understand the appeal it has for some – but anarcho-capitalists are insufficiently attentive to the problems that predictably would arise in such a way of life ..., i.e., various affronts to dignity that many would experience under [a stateless society]. In light of these problems I say that the ideal of “voluntary societies only” comes at far too high a price in human dignity. The better course, in terms of respecting human dignity, is to create involuntary institutions, but arrange them so that they at least deserve everyone’s voluntary allegiance. If this is done, then such a society will, all things considered, be more respectful of human dignity than an anarcho-capitalist society would.

At this point in our email exchange, I summarized Craig’s argument in the following way: the authority of some people or some group of people to coerce the behavior of others (i.e. collect taxes without their consent) originates in “legitimate governing institutions” which rest on the pillars of “respect for autonomy” and the “ideal of reciprocity.” So long as the government does a reasonable job (as

determined by those who direct the governing institutions), then the individuals who don't want to pay their taxes voluntarily must be threatened with coercion or experience government coercion upon their bodies and/or property. I wrote Craig that it appeared to me he was "simply saying that 'might makes right' and that the majority of consenting individuals have the right to coerce the behavior of other peaceful people."

In response, Craig again asserted that government need not obtain the consent of every individual under its jurisdiction since he realized that would be an impossibility. Rather, "What the government needs to do is give each person good reasons to consent" even though some individuals won't willingly consent, for whatever reason.

[I]magine Rugged Ronnie who owns 100 acres in Montana, say, and wants to take his chances outside the US and live as a "sovereign individual." The case for the USA being just is not simply that it furnishes benefits to Ronnie. Maybe so, but the stronger reason is that if the USA were required by justice to let people like Ronnie opt out, then over time that would harm the USA's ability to govern and the harms of anarchy would arise. So Ronnie's lifestyle preference for total legal independence turns out to have a quite harmful side-effect; by threatening the functioning of government it threatens the well-being of others One can think of government as a "rescue project" rescuing others from the harms of anarchy. If the rescue project required consent of all to be just then no rescue project [would be] possible and the unjust harms of anarchy would proliferate. Not a plausible view of justice.

So the answer to Ronnie is NOT "We are coercing you for your own good." The answer instead is "Our rescue project – our project of instituting law and order - is rescuing many people from the grave injustices of anarchy and this rescue project is impossible if each person is allowed to opt out. So, Ronnie, we are coercing you not for your own good, but because each of us - you, me, and each other person - has a duty to do our fair share of the rescue work, rescuing others around us from grave injustices. We understand that you prefer a different, solitary lifestyle, but your lifestyle unfortunately - since it makes our rescue project unworkable - has side-effects that expose others to grave injustices, and justice does not permit you to be indifferent to the harmful side-effects of your lifestyle preference. *So, we coerce you in the name of preventing injustice to others* (emphasis added). At the same time, we are mindful of the costs to you of our coercion, and we strive to ensure the costs inherent in supporting the rescue project - i.e. government - are fairly distributed." ("Fairly distributed" is gauged using reciprocity as a yardstick, as mentioned in previous emails.)

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In other words, we need a government to rescue us from the injustices of anarchy. This very nearly ended our emails.

When I asked Craig his thoughts on how far the rescue project and the social safety net should extend he admitted that he didn't "have a fully fleshed out answer to offer. But my basic answer is that if a current government is succeeding in rescuing its citizens from the harms of anarchy ... then we should count its boundaries as legitimate. The hard cases are where government has broken down. In those cases, the boundaries should be drawn in whichever way is most likely to work, i.e., most likely to yield effective and stable rescue projects"

At this point, Craig wrote that he had enjoyed our discussions but that due to time and work constraints he would not be able to co-author an article with me on the pros and cons of anarchy.

[Editor's Addendum: As in most things involving the government, I am not necessarily opposed to the ends, but I am opposed to the adoption of coercive means. Thus, it is fine for Craig to agitate for a social safety net for those on the lower rungs of the economy, but let him contribute his own money and solicit donations from those who voluntarily support his ideas. I may or may not contribute for any number of different reasons. The fact that a government may balance reciprocity and autonomy has no bearing on whether the government may resort to violence or its threat. When Craig says "we must coerce you in the name of preventing injustice to others," he is simply saying that the ends justify the means: in his mind, one injustice justifies another; but to voluntarists two wrongs never make a right. (And that is not even addressing the point as to whether or not an injustice has been done to those that are less well-off.)

Craig sees no reason to obtain the voluntary consent of those in society so long as governing institutions actually deserve their support. But who is to decide whether the government institutions meet this standard? Why should we rely on Craig's subjective preferences? Don't those who choose not to support a government have the right to decide whether the government meets their standards? By what right are the non-consenters forced to participate? Furthermore, Craig has no logical or consistent answer to the question of how far the geographic jurisdiction of a government should extend. Why shouldn't the less well-off in the United States help provide a safety net for those in Africa who subsist on far less than they do? If the less well-off here are entitled to a safety net, why not those in Africa?

Another topic that I did not discuss with Craig involves the question of "who and how" goods and services are produced. If the less well-off are entitled to a safety net to raise their standard of living, then what happens when the individuals who produce these goods and services decide "the juice is no longer worth the squeeze"? Perhaps the disincentives caused by taxation are such that they would rather join the less-well off than work their tails off. What will happen if they choose not to work as hard as they might, or if they choose to go on strike (as portrayed in ATLAS SHRUGGED)? Will they be forced to work like slaves or will their decision to slack off be respected?

And, if no one chooses to work, how will the safety fund be financed? What Craig seems to forget is that goods and services cannot be consumed until they are produced. Goods and services do not grow on trees. They are the result of capital accumulation and human energy.

As I see it, Craig's rescue project should really be put in reverse gear. Instead of rescuing us from the harms of anarchy, we voluntarists really need a rescue project to save us from the harms of government.

We will give Craig the last word. Here is his final Addendum:

You write: 'When Craig says "we must coerce you in the name of preventing injustice to others," he is simply saying that the ends justify the means.' I'll just add that libertarians are also willing to approve coercion in order to stop injustice from happening, i.e. to stop a rights violation (to stop a theft, an assault, etc.). So I think the disagreement between you and me is better characterized as a disagreement over the content of justice, rather than over the appropriate means of enacting justice. We agree that if a justice-based right is being violated, and if only coercion will stop the violation, then those coercive means are justified; e.g. I can tackle someone who is assaulting you. (This is not to deny nuances exist; e.g. the coercion should be proportionate -- I can't shoot dead someone who is attacking you with only his fists, for instance.) I'm claiming that a low-wage worker who lacks secure access to a life of dignity is a worker who is suffering a rights-violation: justice entails that as a contributor to others' prosperity, he deserves to be able to live a life of dignity; I'd argue that this in turn entails he has a justice-based right to secure access to a life of dignity. So the coercion of the social safety net is justified as a necessary means of stopping the violation of right of justice.]

[For an interesting history of the social safety net see Watner, "Voluntaryism and Extreme Necessity," (Issue 160).]

You Don't Own It or The Government as Landlord

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 177, 2nd Quarter 2018)

ownership – "The ... legal right of possession."

rent - "a tax or similar charge A periodic payment made by a tenant to an owner or landlord for the use of" the owner's property.

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[NEW SHORTER OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, 1993, pp. 2059 and 2546]

In today's statist world it is an illusion to think that anyone owns property, whether real estate or personal. The entire known world is claimed by one government or another. They all insist on collecting taxes in one form or another. What happens if you don't pay your tax(es)? Agents of the government come and take you, or your property, or both to settle whatever claims they might have against you. They can do this with impunity. If your neighbors try to help you resist, they, too, will be seized and hauled off to jail.

Everything you have is up for grabs: your life, your land, your valuables. Not only do you not own any property, you do not even own yourself. Governments can and have conscripted men and women to fight in their armed forces. It can put you in prison for refusal to do so. It can force you to be a juror or put you in jail for contempt for not following its orders. The government issues money for its citizens to use, but it can also declare the use of its currency illegal and make "your" money worthless. It also passes laws that authorize its chartered banks to take money from "your" account whenever the government has a claim against you (that you won't settle voluntarily) or whenever the bank needs a bail-in to rescue itself. Nothing is sacrosanct or immune from seizure, not even your intended resting place or the graves of your ancestors to which you might hold title.

There are at least two reasons not to "own" property in a statist society.

First, if a person "owns" no property it is practically impossible for the government to collect taxes from that person. One cannot be a taxpayer if one has no property to tax. (It is interesting to observe that this is not always true. Governments have collected poll taxes - taxes simply based on the existence of the citizen. Witness Henry David Thoreau's well-known night in jail for failure to pay his poll tax to the state of Massachusetts.)

The second reason is to refuse to participate in the charade that you are an owner. It is a myth and an illusion to think that one really owns property. At most one rents what one claims to own. So long as the government makes and enforces the laws, it can determine how much rent (taxes) you pay. Failure to pay that rent to whatever level of government it is due results in eviction or seizure. To claim to own property is to engage in a pretense of the government's creation. It needs your sanction. It wants to legitimize its rule over you by having you "think" you own property and by having you think that its purpose is to provide security and protection when really it is just plundering you.

Governments go to inordinate lengths to collect their rent and impose their wills on us. Imagine imprisoning a conscientious objector who refuses to fight in the government's war. Imagine being ordered to tear down "your" house because it wasn't built to "their" specifications. Imagine being jailed for teaching your children at home without government permission. Imagine being a victim of the government's War on Drugs. Imagine having your bank account seized because you refuse to pay

your taxes to the government.

Now, imagine being a medieval lord. Could you do the things that governments do today?

A true owner owes no rent for the use of his or her property. A true owner may choose to do whatever he or she wishes with her property so long as no physical harm is caused to others. A true owner can leave his property sit idle, or can rent, or lease its use to others. He may also choose to destroy it. On the other hand, a renter must follow the rules set forth by his landlord.

For example, if one builds a house that does not meet the building code, one is either forced to pay to bring it up to code or to tear it down. This happens every day of the work week in statist societies. Second, imagine what would happen if a miser was buried with his worldly treasures. What would happen if that person, or that person's estate, owed money to the government? The government would not hesitate for one instance to order an exhumation and recover whatever it was owed.

Addendum

This article was originally written in October 2016, and in April, 2017, I found a reference to a book titled *THE MYTH OF OWNERSHIP* by Liam Murphy and Thomas Nagel (Oxford University Press, 2002). Murphy and Nagel take a position somewhat akin to that of Holmes and Sunstein in their book, *THE COST OF RIGHTS* (1999), which I discussed in Issue 134 in my article "Why Voluntaryism and Liberty Don't Depend on Taxes or Government."

In the final chapter of their book, Murphy and Nagel summarize their position. They assert that property rights are conventional; that is, governments define and determine the extent of property rights. As they write: "Property rights are the rights people have in the resources they are entitled to control after taxes, not before." (175) They recognize that this is counterintuitive since most people ask, "How much of what is mine should be taken from me to support public services or to be given to others?" Instead they argue that the real question for every citizen ought to be, "How should the tax system divide the social product between private control of individuals and government control ... ?" (175-176) They conclude that "individual citizens don't own anything except through laws that are enacted and enforced by the state. Therefore, ... issues of taxation are not about how the state should appropriate and distribute what citizens already own, but how" much the state should allow them to keep.

My article, as it appears here, begins by quoting the dictionary definition of 'ownership' as "The ... legal right of possession." If we accept the dictionary as the authority, then we are left to wonder if "legal" means "as legislated by the State," or does it mean "the customary rules of the community in which one lives"? The difference is significant. The former favors the position of Holmes, Sunstein, Murphy and Nagel. The latter embraces a natural law outlook based upon the fact that all production and wealth creation are the result of individual effort, and that there can be nothing to distribute if it is not first created by the individual. Since human beings

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require property to live (space to eat, work, and sleep; food to consume; clothes to wear) voluntaryists recognize that property ownership does not depend upon the State. Doug Casey recently pointed out that “What keeps a truly civil society together isn't laws, regulations, and police. It's peer pressure, social opprobrium, moral approbation, and your reputation.”[1] Rose Wilder Lane put it this way, “The only safeguards of property ... [are] individual honesty and public opinion. ... How much of the time is any American within sight of a policeman? Our lives and property are protected by the way nearly everyone feels about another person's life and property.”[2] The self-ownership and homesteading axioms are the foundational bedrocks upon which voluntaryism rests. The State doesn't own you or your work. You do! The government is not really your landlord, although it wants you to think so.

End Notes

[1] Doug Casey, “On the End of Western Civilization,” CASEY DAILY DISPATCH, May 6, 2017.

[2] Rose Wilder Lane, THE DISCOVERY OF FREEDOM, New York: The John Day Company, 1943, pp. 109-110.

Part VI: Schooling and Education

“There can be no greater stretch of arbitrary power than is required to seize children from their parents, teach them whatever the authorities decree they shall be taught, and expropriate from the parents the funds to pay for the procedure. ... “Free education” [is] the most absolute contradiction of facts by terminology of which the language is capable. Everything about such schools is compulsory, not free; A tax-supported, compulsory educational system is the complete model of the totalitarian state.”

- Isabel Paterson, THE GOD OF THE MACHINE (1943), from Chapter XXI, “Our Japanized Educational System.” [Ms. Paterson failed to note that the expropriation was from all taxpayers, not just the parents.]

[T]o proclaim a people free to choose their own government but then to insist that the government determine, through a government-controlled compulsory educational system, the very attitudes and values by which the people will choose becomes the most insidious and pernicious form of tyranny: it gives the people the illusion of freedom while all along controlling them through a form of governmental programming.

- Blair Adams, WHO OWNS THE CHILDREN? (1991), p. 46.

School and State

by Benjamin R. Tucker

(From Issue 108, 1st Quarter 2001)

[Editor's Note: Benjamin Tucker was a well-known 19th Century libertarian whose comments on public schools and taxation are still of interest today. The following excerpts are taken from his articles which appeared in the April, May, June, and July 1876 issues of THE WORD, which was published by Ezra Heywood.]

Bishop McQuaid [an outspoken critic of tax-supported public schooling] asked for "free trade in education" and the abolition of public schools; in other words, freedom for each class of persons in the community to establish and conduct its own schools as it pleases, at its own cost, without being compelled at the same time to support through taxation, schools to which it is opposed. Viewing the question from a Catholic standpoint, and basing his argument upon freedom of conscience, the Bishop clearly expose[d] the impudence of the State in assuming to compel, or in any manner interfere with, the education of children; a matter which ought, in justice, to be left to the control of parents.

The objection, expressed by some, that he does not sufficiently consider the rights of the children, is of no force in this connection, for, since those who advance it do not claim the children are competent, before a certain age, to consider their rights for themselves, the question to whom should the authority to act in their stead be vested still remains open; and as authority obviously belongs to the author, and as parents are the authors of their children, Bishop McQuaid's position is impregnable.

J. M. K. Babcock, editor of THE NEW AGE, objects to our view on the school question ... and favors State instruction. ... But does Mr. Babcock realize wither his doctrine will lead him, provided he faithfully follows it? Not to dwell on the fact that, if the State should teach anything, it should expound on the supremely important matters of religion and the rights of conscience, thereby becoming a theocracy, we ask Mr. Babcock's especial attention to the no less alarming consequence that, if the State is better fitted than the parent to guard, provide for, and develop the young mind, it is surely by a parity of reasoning, better fitted to perform the same functions with respect to the youthful body; in other words, if children are to be educated by the State, they must be supported by the State. Apply to all our institutions the principle upon which our present school system rests, and the United States would gradually transform itself into a mammoth [communist] community All our liberties would be destroyed, Common schools, common property, and common family are three different (but in the long run) interdependent manifestations of the one despotic principle which has so long governed the world; *free* [market] schools, on the

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contrary, inevitably lead to free [market] labor, private ownership, and individual choice. Individual sovereignty on the one hand, ... communism on the other. ...

[Thus] since the principle upon which our common school system is founded is identical with that of absolute and thorough communism, no one can occupy a definite and consistent position upon the School Question without choosing between individualism and communism, freedom and force. ... Has not Mr. Babcock been defending the public school system? and is not that system supported by taxation? and does not, therefore, a defense of the one include a defense of the other? ...

If, however, ... it be true that society is impossible without the forced surrender of individual rights, then isolation is the brave man's choice. Said a celebrated Bishop of the English Church, in discussing prohibition, or compulsory temperance, "If I must choose between England free and England sober, give me England free." So we say in discussing public schools, or compulsory education: if we must choose between America free and America educated [by the State], give us America free.

Moral Ideas Tax Supported Schools Cannot Teach

by R. C. Hoiles

(From Issue 109, 2nd Quarter 2001)

[Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the Santa Ana (CA.) REGISTER on March 14, 1947, and was reprinted in that newspaper on July 10, 1968 (p. B6). See "Nobody Cares About Hoiles; Everybody Cares About Freedom," in Whole No. 105 of THE VOLUNTARYIST for more information about the author.]

We are facing a battle of ideas.

One of the reasons we are in the trouble we are in today is that people are not taught the ideas that are in harmony with such moral laws as the Ten Commandments.

Compulsory education cannot teach these moral laws. Belief in these laws is absolutely necessary if we are to live together and develop character, peace, and material prosperity.

I want to name some moral ideas, some moral laws [that] proponents of tax-supported schools cannot teach unless people are not influenced by example and do not learn by imitating.

Here are some of them:

They cannot teach humility or meekness. They have so exalted and glorified themselves—they are so sure of their Tightness—that they are willing to send the sheriff to make everyone comply [as in compulsory attendance laws]. They use force instead of persuasion and love.

They cannot teach individual responsibility. They are denying individual

responsibility by their acts.

They cannot teach a definite limited government. They know no definite limit of government excepting the arbitrary will of men. [At this time, R.C. still believed that government could be “limited”; he did not yet realize that “limited government” is a contradiction in terms.—Ed.]

They cannot teach ... government [by] consent of the governed. They are violating the consent of those who disagree with them.

They cannot teach the inalienable rights of man. They are violating the[se] inalienable rights.

They cannot teach the Ten Commandments or what robbery is. They are practicing that the majority can do what would be robbery [if] done by the individual. If they were successful in teaching what collective moral robbery is there would be no compulsory education.

They cannot teach any personal, eternal, universal rule of conduct. Their act[ion]s are in harmony with none.

They cannot teach the dignity or worth of every individual. They are practicing that the majority need not respect the dignity or worth of the individual.

They cannot teach the harm of initiating force. They are collectively initiating force via the tax collector against the individual.

They cannot teach love, or charity, or faith. They are saying by their actions that men do not have faith, that men will not do what they ought to do, that men will not be charitable, and have love. So they cannot teach faith, hope, charity, and love.

They cannot teach peace because they are initiating the opposite of peace—force.

They cannot teach the single standard of rightness because they are practicing a double standard. They would not claim that any individual had a moral right to use force to make another support his ideas of education. Yet they claim by their act[ions], that the majority has a right to do so.

They cannot teach that the individual cannot transfer to the state the right to do things that he originally does not have a right to do. They cannot teach this because they are trying to do it themselves.

They cannot teach rules that should govern taxation. They are practicing that the majority can take from one and give to another, that the government need not collect taxes in proportion to the cost of the service the government renders to each individual. [R.C. had not yet come to the realization that all taxation is theft; otherwise he would not have endorsed ‘rules that govern taxation’.—Ed.]

They cannot teach freedom or liberty. They are denying the freedom of the individual by ... compelling him to do something he thinks is harmful.

They cannot teach the importance of developing a conscience. They are substituting force for conscience and persuasion.

They cannot teach that there is any moral law superior to the will of man. They are using the will of the majority in place of God’s will.

They cannot teach the harm of socialism and communism and Fascism. They

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cannot teach their harm because they are practicing them.

They cannot teach that might does not make right. They cannot teach the opposite from what they are doing.

They cannot teach that the state is the servant of the individual rather than his master. They are his master when they are saying that he must pay for an educational system [that] he thinks is out of harmony with God's laws.

They cannot teach that God's will and not man's will or the majority's will must prevail.

They cannot teach these things any more than a robber can teach honesty.

It is little wonder that we have so much covetousness and hate when the people believe that their children can be educated in the important things in life—morals—by way of the state.

The grass roots of our trouble is that the wrong ideas are embedded in the minds and hearts of the youth of the land. This is because the state cannot educate the youth in the value of these virtues. That is the reason that I am constantly taking the unpopular position of pointing out the great harm that comes from thinking that the youth of the land can be educated by bureaucrats paid for by compulsion.

To call anything education that cannot teach these eternal moral laws—ideas—is the worst form of fraud ever conceived in the mind of man. It is sounding brass—a tinkling cymbal. As long as we continue to pour our poisonous ideas into the youth of the land via state education it is absurd to think that they will understand these virtues and know how to live in harmony with them.

Just what moral ideas can government schools teach? I would like to know a single one that is in harmony with compulsory education.

Only Freedom Breeds Excellence

One voluntarist's reaction to a reading of THE DISSENTING TRADITION IN AMERICAN EDUCATION, by James C. Carper and Thomas C. Hunt (New York: Peter Lang, 2007. ISBN 978-0-8204-7920-0. See www.peterlang.com.)

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 140, 1st Quarter 2009)

It is often said that the victorious side in a war gets to write its history. This observation is no less relevant to philosophical disputes than military confrontations. In the case of schools and schooling, the dominant, winning side in the struggle over control of the education of the young in the United States has been American governments, at all levels. This is evidenced by compulsory school attendance laws and government-run schools supported by local, state, and federal taxation.

In their book, *THE DISSENTING TRADITION IN AMERICAN EDUCATION*, James Carper and Thomas Hunt point out that education was either church or familial throughout most of the early American colonies and states. “[T]he colonial approach to education continued virtually unchanged throughout the late 1700s and early 1800s.” Much of colonial and pioneer America was so far from the seat and power of governments that there were few compulsory attendance laws or taxes for the purpose of supporting what few government schools there were. It was then accepted as a common law right that parents were responsible for the educational, moral, and religious upbringing of their children. Anyone trying to assume control of the children against the parents’ wishes (at least on the frontier) would have probably been shot peremptorily. This was the attitude of the rugged individualist whose schooling was “unsystematic, discontinuous, and unregulated” by the State.[241]

So how is it that people who rejected government schools, objected to paying taxes for their support, and opposed compulsory attendance laws are today called “dissenters”? How and why is it that Americans have moved from the acceptance of parental responsibility for their children’s schooling to a position according the State the major decision-making power over their children’s education? In short, why aren’t the “dissenters” those who called for State control? The short answer: the State so legitimized itself in the eyes of its citizens that they readily acceded to the State’s philosophical position. Thus, the new norm became State control and those who opposed it became dissenters, even though parental control has been the naturally accepted way throughout much of human history.

The “dissenting tradition” in England and the United States traces its roots back to the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 in England. Anyone who refused to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church found themselves labeled as a “dissenter” or “nonconformist.” Every schoolmaster and every private school had to “conform to the liturgy of the Church of England.” In order to avoid both persecution and prosecution, much of “Nonconformist education went underground, so to speak.” The Dissenting Academies became well-known for “their innovation and scholarship.” “No one, indeed, in eighteenth-century England, could claim the title ‘friends of liberty’ ... with more justification than the Dissenters, for they were enamoured not only of their own liberty in matters of religious conscience but also of secular causes resting on the inherent rights of human personality, wherever they were in question.” [Smith 114]

The main theme of *THE DISSENTING TRADITION IN AMERICAN EDUCATION* is that

As was the case with the traditional established churches in Old Europe and early America, however, individuals and groups have expressed objections to [both government control and support of religion and schooling]. Since ... [public schooling’s] inception in the mid-1800s, they have dissented on religious, cultural, philosophical, and/or pedagogical

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grounds.[4] [D]issenters have claimed that tax-supported, state-regulated, compulsory public schooling violates the rights of conscience and religious liberty. Specifically, they have objected to the prevailing orthodoxy, purveyed by the state through its public schools in a given era, to paying twice for mandated education (taxes and tuition) in order to exercise their right to educate their children according to their beliefs, and to intrusive state regulations of alternative educational arrangements that embody worldviews that differ from ... [the] public orthodoxy.[266-267] The present volume focuses on episodes of religiously and/or culturally motivated dissent from the prevailing orthodoxy of public [school] education, universal taxation for public schools, government responsibility for schooling, and state attempts to control nonconforming schools. It is not a comprehensive history of dissent in American education.[4]

The book discusses a number of prominent personalities who opposed public education, in one way or another. “Chapter 2 features the dissenting role of the aggressive nineteenth-century Catholic Bishop of New York City, John Hughes, called ‘Dagger John’ by one of his biographers.” Hughes claimed that it was unfair to tax Catholics “for schools that their faith would not permit their children to attend.”[5] His support for parochial schools never wavered, even after he was unsuccessful in his campaign to obtain public funds for the schools run by the Church. Chapter 6 focuses on three nineteenth-century Presbyterian dissenters: Charles Hodge, Robert L. Dabney, and William M. Beckner. Hodge, a long-time theologian who taught at Princeton Seminary for more than 50 years, advocated Presbyterian parochial schools unless the government-run schools embraced “religious instruction in the basic doctrines of Protestantism.” Dabney, of whom we shall hear more about later, opposed the establishment of state-run schools in his home state, Virginia, and argued that the family and parents, not the government, should be the primary agency responsible for the education of children. Beckner, a Presbyterian layman and Kentucky state legislator supported the “fledgling public school system in the 1870s and 1880s.” When the Kentucky state Constitution underwent revisions in 1890, he became concerned that all students would be forced to attend government-run schools. He sponsored a statement in the “Kentucky Bill of Rights that forbade the state from forcing parents to send their children to a school to which they were conscientiously opposed.”[7]

The next three chapters of the book deal with dissent during the last half of the twentieth-century. During the early 1970s, numerous Christian day schools appeared “throughout the country and were often involved in clashes with state authorities regarding regulatory issues.” In 1976, the Ohio Supreme Court handed down a decision regarding the legality of The Tabernacle Christian School founded by Pastor Levi Whisner. “It ruled that Ohio’s detailed accreditation standards” were

unconstitutional when applied to religious schools, and that those religious schools “were not subject to regulations that in effect compromised the ability of the schools to carry out their mission.” As homeschooling became popular during the 1980s and 1990s, school officials in nearly every state tried to impose reporting, teaching certification, and testing requirements. In South Carolina “a group of homeschool advocates mounted a successful effort to pass legislation that recognized the supervisory authority of an association run by and for homeschoolers as an alternative to government approval.”[8-9]

As long-time readers of THE VOLUNTARYIST know, I am a homeschooling parent and have written many articles in defense of parental control and educational freedom. I am what our authors would call a dissenter, but it is strange that only one of the dissenters they describe comes anywhere close to the voluntaryist position. Robert L. Dabney (1820-1898) was born and raised in Virginia, pastored his first church in 1846, and eventually became a professor of theology and philosophy at the University of Texas, Austin. In 1879 and 1880, he published two articles against government-run education in the PRINCETON REVIEW. “Dabney vigorously asserted that God had designated the family, not the church or the state, as the agency in charge of the education of children.” He prophesied (correctly) that “state-sponsored schooling would inevitably devolve into a thoroughly secularized, atheistic education.”[178] As our authors explain, Dabney

rejected the very concept of state-sponsored schooling. His argument against public schooling rested on the assumption that the family was the primary unit of society. He maintained that parents were, or ought to be, the sole agents of the family. The state’s duty was to protect the family, not to interfere with it, especially by usurping one of the family’s principal functions, namely, the education of children. Basing his position on, among other things, an exegesis of Genesis and the fifth Commandment, the Presbyterian theologian asserted that God held parents alone responsible for their children’s intellectual, moral, and spiritual training. [179]

In his article, “Secularized Education,” Dabney pointed out that his theory of parental control makes the parent sovereign “during the child’s mental and moral minority.” What, he asks, if the parent forms “his child amiss”? Well, “inasmuch as that supreme authority must be placed somewhere, God has indicated that, on the whole, no place is so safe for it as the hands of the parent, who has the supreme love for the child and the superior opportunity. He acknowledged that parents occasionally neglected their children, but so did the government.”[paragraph 43, page 13, and also see 184]

‘In an imperfect state of society,’ Dabney reasoned in language similar to

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that of today's educational dissenters, 'the instances of parental abuse of the educational function will be partial and individual.'[184] Yes, [but] does the State never neglect and pervert its powers? With the lessons of history to teach us the horrible and almost universal abuses of power in the hands of civil rulers, that question is conclusive. In the case of an unjust and godless State, the evil would be universal and sweeping. [paragraph 43, page 13]

And have we not seen this coercive monopolization of education nearly result in the abandonment of the most effective method of early reading instruction (phonics)? The widespread disaster of teaching several generations of children the look-say method of reading could have only been avoided if educational freedom had been embraced.[Coulson 367]

While I share Dabney's emphasis on parental control over the educational process, he still admitted a certain ancillary role for the State, one which I cannot accept. Nevertheless, he was at least aware of the dangers of having government involved in education. In the second of his two articles he "noted that the primary problem of free government was 'How to trust to fallible men enough power to govern, and yet prevent its perversion?' ... The very selfishness in them which makes them dangerous, Dabney maintained speaking of government officials, 'will be just as certain to prompt them to pervert the proposed check as to pervert any other public power.' He worried that with the power concentrated in the state school system those in control would be tempted to use the schools as 'propaganda for the rulers' partisan opinions ...'." [185] In short, he correctly perceived, as Jonathan Kozol wrote over a century later, that the "first goal and primary function of the U.S. public school is not to educate good people, but good citizens. It is the function which we call, in enemy nations, state indoctrination." [Kozol 1]

Dabney, it seems, never imagined that a free and virtuous society might function without the coercive institution known as the State. He never came near to embracing my oppositional principle to government. He opposed the operation of the State in specific areas of life, but he never wished to extirpate it entirely. In the mind of the voluntarist, the State is an invasive institution because it monopolizes certain public services in a given geographic area and because it obtains its revenues via taxation. The uniqueness of the voluntarist position within the dissenting tradition is that while it recognizes the deleterious effects of government involvement in specific areas of life, it goes further and questions the justice of taxation and the State itself. Thus, the question is not: "Is it right to spend public monies on religion or education, etc.,?", but rather: "Can taxation, as a coercive practice, be justified at all?" In other words, it doesn't matter how the State spends the money it coercively collects in taxes: taxation itself is theft and should be abandoned as a method of supporting social activities. Is the State a peaceful institution that society requires in order to survive, or is the State a parasitical and inherently criminal organization because it

confiscates property and/or imprisons people who choose not to contribute to its support? Are people who offer peaceful and voluntary methods of competing with the State's provision of schools, mail delivery, medical care, etc. to be called outlaws and imprisoned?

Inasmuch as the dissenting tradition originated in opposition to State control and State support of religion, Carper and Hunt emphasize the similarities in the arguments of those who argued for religious freedom centuries ago, and those who have argued or now argue for educational freedom. However, it seems they fail to recognize that every argument in favor of religious freedom and educational freedom can be equally applied to arguing against the existence of the State itself. Just as religious dissenters demanded that all religions and churches be supported by voluntary membership and voluntary giving, so the educational voluntarist demands that all schools be supported by voluntary participation and voluntary giving. Both groups oppose taxation for the purpose of maintaining a State religion or State educational establishment, and members of both groups resist compulsory attendance and/or compulsory membership in churches and schools. As Herbert Spencer recognized in 1842, the argument for religious freedom can be used to buttress the case of freedom in other spheres. The true basis of religious freedom is the natural rights of every man to his own person and property. The voluntarist insists that these natural rights be extended consistently to every sphere of peaceful human activity.

In fact, during the 1830s and 40s, there was a group of English voluntarists who urged free trade in education, just as they supported free trade in corn and cotton. Such leading voluntarists as Edward Baines, Jr. and Edward Miall "argued that government should have nothing at all to do with education." They believed that "government would employ education for its own ends," (teaching habits of obedience and indoctrination) and that government-controlled schools would ultimately teach children to rely on the state for all things. Baines, for example, noted that "[w]e cannot violate the principles of liberty in regard to education without furnishing at once a precedent and inducement to violate them in regard to other matters." He also argued that deficiencies in the then current system of education (both private and charitable) were no justification for State interference. Should freedom of the press be compromised because we have bad newspapers? "I maintain that Liberty is the chief cause of excellence; but it would cease to be Liberty if you proscribed everything inferior." [Smith 121-124] As advocates of the free market have constantly pointed out, schools that do not offer educational services that are satisfactory to their customers "will be forced out of existence by competition, because parents will not have to continue sending their children to those schools. Excellence will breed further excellence." [McCarthy, et. al. 133]

One of the chief aims of dissenters, both in England and North America was epitomized by William McLoughlin, author of *NEW ENGLAND DISSENT 1630-1833*, when he wrote that "the principal aspect of the struggle against the Puritan establishment" in America was "the effort to abolish compulsory tax support for any

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and all denominations.” But if religious taxes are coercive and to be resisted, why not school taxes, and every other form of taxation? The principle at work is the same regardless of the purpose behind the tax. Property must be forcibly taken from some people and applied in ways which they (the owners) would not ordinarily direct it. As McLoughlin wrote, taxes were justified because it was believed that “the authority of the church [wa]s as essential to the continued existence of civil society as that of the [S]tate.”

The question of support for religion was often compared to the responsibility of the state toward all institutions concerning the general welfare - the courts, the roads, the schools, the armed forces. If justice, commerce, education, religion, and peace were essential to the general welfare, then ought these not to be supported out of general taxation? It was no more inconsistent in the minds of most New Englanders to require a general tax for the support of religion than to require, as Jefferson advocated, a general tax for the creation and maintenance of a public school system.[McLoughlin 610]

Who was being inconsistent? Those who called for the cessation of religious taxes should have also called for the cessation of school taxes, as well as of all other taxes.

Thus, the voluntaryist does not argue for the abolition of school taxes, but for the removal of all taxes. The voluntaryist does not argue for separation of church and State or for the separation of schools and State, but rather for the abandonment of the State. These issues, by the way they are framed, assume that the State must, and should, exist. Freedom and men’s natural rights are of one piece. If they may be violated in one area of life, they may by the same reasoning be breached in another. So long as the State exists, it must necessarily violate the property rights of those over whom it rules. Religious freedoms, educational freedoms, commercial freedoms, are all endangered by the State. It is too bad that so few in the dissenting tradition have understood this truth. Carper and Hunt conclude their book with a plea for “disestablishment a second time.” As a voluntaryist I advocate “disestablishment for the last and final time.” Hopefully, Messrs. Carper and Hunt and my readers understand the import of what I mean: the abandonment of the State and its replacement by voluntary organizations once and for all.

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State Education Radically Wrong

by William Henry Ruffner

(From Issue 146, 3rd Quarter, 2010)

[Editor's Note: The excerpts below were written anonymously, and published in the PRESBYTERIAN CRITIC in 1855, and were reprinted in Volume 40 of the SOUTHERN PLANTER AND FARMER in April 1879. The author was born in 1824, and became an advocate of government schools in his home state of Virginia in the late 1860s. Despite his change of opinion, his argument that "education by the state 'steps in between the parent and child' severing these tender ties" and that "public school officials disrupt family relationships and harm 'family' government" are as

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true today as when he wrote them. For additional information see Walter Javan Fraser, Jr., WILLIAM HENRY RUFFNER: A LIBERAL (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, March 1970, pp. 466-472.)

Again, state education is but educational communism. They are based both upon the same philosophic fallacy, and are equally opposed to the nature of man. When the direct results of a man's labor are placed beyond his personal control, his great motive to exertion is taken away, and he feels but little inclination to labor at all. All can see how this is in the matter of property; why can they not see it in the matter of education? Let a man's children be fed and clothed by a public provision, and the proceeds of his labor be taken from him and thrown into a common stock; and it is easy to imagine that he will depreciate as a man, as a member of society. The same error is seen in the English Poor-Law system; and in all general State provision for the ordinances of religion. Pauperism in England grows by what it is fed upon. And when the State provides liberally for the religious wants of the people, the effect is corrupting upon the Church, collectively and individually; and that just in proportion as the provision is liberal. The whole system is calculated to withdraw the incentives to individual effort, and thus to weaken and emaciate the religious nature of the people. These have become familiar truths to us in America, and we are prone to wonder at the obtuseness of other nations on this subject. Why then will we shut our eyes to the fact that the whole fabric of State education rests upon the same sort of plausible argumentation that sustains the Church and State system of the Old World? They there say that religion is indispensable to the well-being of the State - and that the work of enlightening the masses is too great to be left to private means; ergo, the State must undertake it. The advocates of State education reason exactly so; education is indispensable to the well being of the State: the work of enlightening the masses is too great to be left to private means; ergo, the State must undertake it! If the latter argument is sound, the former is sound: but if the former is fallacious, the latter is fallacious! If a State provision for religion has proved an injury to the cause, and a curse to the people - so a State provision for education will prove an injury to the cause and a curse to the people.

The life of the State is in the life of its individual members. Take away from the head of a family all direct concern in the education of his children; let the school house be built for him, the teacher furnished, the whole routine of studies prescribed, length of session and hours of study all mapped out by commissioners, it being left to him only to take what is offered, to drive his children away from home early each morning, and to pay the tax-gatherer when he come round, and as certain as is the connection between cause and effect, his soul will be congealed, his interest in his family diminished, those ennobling affections which spring up spontaneously along the pathway of parental toil, will in a measure wither and die, and those tender solicitudes which were meant to divert his mind from sordid pursuits, will be turned in to deepen that love of money for its own sake, which they were designed to check. He toils not now to educate his children, but to pay his taxes and accumulate a

fortune. Were the money he pays a spontaneous offering for the good of his family, he would experience pleasure and enlargement of heart; but he instinctively hates a tax laid by government, even when he can but approve the object, and he is made a worse man by the visit of the sheriff. Of all taxes, that laid for an eleemosynary object is the most revolting because there is an instinctive feeling in the human breast that charity in every form ought to be free and not coerced; that it ought to be individual and not government.

The work of educating the entire population of our land is certainly a vast undertaking; but not as vast as the work of christianizing the same population. And the latter is, in every view, the more important work. Does that prove it to be the business of the State? ...

What Might Have Been - What Might Be

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 154, 3rd Quarter 2012)

[Editor's Note: The following article is the "Introduction" to my anthology, HOMESCHOOLING: A HOPE FOR AMERICA (2010). This 258 page softcover book is available from The Voluntaryists for \$20.00 postpaid.]

The responsibility of parents for the education of their children is deeply rooted in the spirit and history of America. In his book, IS PUBLIC EDUCATION NECESSARY?, Samuel Blumenfeld points out that there was no mention of education, much less "public/government" education in either the Declaration of Independence or the federal Constitution. Even if one were to argue that education fell within the jurisdiction of the states, rather than the national government, one is hard pressed to explain why only two of the constitutions of the original thirteen colonies (Pennsylvania and North Carolina) mentioned the subject. This absence of concern for what is today deemed to be one of the most central of government functions (both on the federal and state levels) is not too hard to explain.

Education, both before and after the American Revolution, was certainly not the responsibility of governments. The educational backgrounds of the signers of the Declaration and Constitution attest to the richness and diversity of the voluntary educational environment of the time. Their schooling encompassed "every conceivable combination of parental, church, apprenticeship, school, tutorial, and self-education." As Blumenfeld observes: "George Washington was educated by his father and half-brother, Benjamin Franklin was taught to read by his father and attended a private school for writing and arithmetic," and "Thomas Jefferson studied Latin and Greek under a tutor." [1] Charles Dabney, in his book UNIVERSAL

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EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH, reports that “a great advance in educational enterprises of a private and ecclesiastical character followed” the years after the American Revolution. “The wealthy established private schools. Academies and colleges were started wherever a few pupils could be gathered together and teachers found. A new ideal of education was in the making,”[2] In 1798, Joseph Lancaster opened his first free school in London, England, followed by its spread to New York City in 1805.[3] In short, the “men who founded the United States were educated under the freest conditions possible” and it would have been strange to most of them, indeed, to think that government should have been a provider of education. [4]

This is our ideal, the “what might have been” for American education, and our hope for what might be. Yet, as every 21st Century reader knows, educational freedom in America has been nearly destroyed, so much so that even the validity of homeschooling has been challenged in many states. This collection of eclectic articles from THE VOLUNTARYIST, which has been published since 1982, is designed to make you think about educational freedom and political statism. It takes the following points for its main theme:

... Government schools are paid for by compulsory taxes. (Why is it assumed that the majority of parents would not willingly pay for their children’s education? Why are they presumed guilty? At the very least, if taxes must be collected to pay for public schools, why not collect them only from those who refuse to educate their children and necessitate such schools?)

... Government schools depend on the coercion of compulsory attendance laws. (Why is it assumed that the majority of parents would not willingly educate their children? Why are they presumed guilty? At the very least, why not apply compulsory attendance laws only to those parents who refuse to educate their children? To teachers and state educators we ask: Do you think nobody would willingly entrust their children to you? Why do you have to collect your pupils by compulsion?)[5] ... Before the advent of government schools, parents were primarily responsible for the education of their children.

... The home has always been the main place where education occurred; and the parents were often the primary instructors of their children.

... Although restricted by every conceivable law and political regulation, it is the natural and common law right of the parents to direct the education of their children.

... Parents have a moral duty to educate their offspring. However, a child has no right to an education. (The common law held it as no offense for a parent not to educate his child.)[6]

... Government schools are designed to indoctrinate students in statolatry, in the worship of the State as the provider of all ‘good’ things. (A tax-supported educational system is the life-like representative of the totalitarian state.)[7]

... Someone or some institution must control the child. (Shall we have a free society with parental control of the child’s education or an authoritarian society with

state-controlled education?)[8]

... If there is any hope for America as a beacon of liberty and freedom it is to be found in home education.

How does voluntaryism relate to education? Voluntaryism is the philosophic doctrine that all the affairs of mankind should be voluntary. No one has the right to force another peaceful person to act as he or she wishes. Voluntaryism comes about naturally if no one does anything to prevent it. Voluntaryism was a term that originated in the early 1800s in England to identify those who advocated voluntary, as opposed to State, support of religion. It was later extended to those who opposed the coercive collection of taxes. Ultimately, those who shared this position realized that government would probably receive little revenue if it did not threaten jail time or confiscation of property to collect its taxes. In short, voluntaryists question the legitimacy of coercive political government because it initiates violence against those who would decline its protection because they want none, or would provide their own protection, or hire some other organization to provide them with protection. Furthermore, by its monopolization of services, government violates the rights of those individuals or groups of individuals who might choose to offer competing services to those offered by the government. Many voluntaryists see a parallel between government churches and government schools. If it is not proper to support a State church by compulsory attendance laws and coercive taxes, why should it be proper to support State schools in a similar manner? Why is one's spiritual health any less important than one's educational development?[9]

In a free society, no one owes anybody else food, shelter, clothing, medical care or spiritual or intellectual growth. Respect for individual rights means that some may have more than they need, some less, but each person is or should be secure in what is theirs. Only then, whether they have lots or little, may they be disposed to be charitable or miserly with what they have. Voluntaryism in education follows from each person's self-ownership and rightful control of their property. Parents nurture their children. Teachers, tutors and masters of apprentices offer their services. No coercive outside agency tells parents when, and where, and what and how to teach. This lack of any centralized agency directing education permits a tremendous variety of what to teach, as well as how to teach. Voluntaryism does not guarantee success, but it does allow for each family to experiment and find out what is best for them. Voluntaryism does not exhibit the one-size fits all approach of government schooling. There is nothing to prevent what works for one family to be imitated and copied, while a government monopoly almost assures us that mediocrity will rule. Parent-directed schooling, unlike government schooling, is not dominated by political considerations and compromises between competing interests and radically different constituencies.

All teaching and teachers are laden with values and beliefs.[10] Education can never be free of dogma. This is an inescapable fact of reality. Thus the question becomes: "Would one rather have a single educational monopolist deciding what is

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taught and how it is taught, or would one rather have each individual parent and family decide what they will teach or have taught to their children?" Family indoctrination may be just as thorough and enslaving as state indoctrination, but that situation would be far better than if "a universal education agency" were to have indoctrinated everybody in its dogma. As one advocate of diversity in indoctrination explained: if different families indoctrinate in different dogmas, "the dogmatic, indoctrinated product of one family's indoctrination will grow up to profess a different dogma than that of another family's indoctrinated offspring. Then, in social interactions among the various indoctrinated, differences of belief and lack of universality of dogma will become apparent to all, undermining in many the felt necessity of the dogmatic beliefs they were trained to hold." The fact that no monopolist can instill its dogma on a captive audience insures that whatever dogmas are taught will clash in a manner that will make many question their beliefs and lead them to rectify their mistaken beliefs, if they come to that conclusion. But "people in a society where universal indoctrination has been practiced would be less likely to discover the inhibition on their freedom since everyone, everywhere will attest to the putatively obvious truth of everything that person believes." [11] And in a society where government directs the people's education it is a certainty that the people will be taught that voluntarism in education is dangerous and that government education is best. Who could imagine the government criticizing itself?

Thus, it is readily apparent that the public school is a tool of the State; an idea going back at least as far as Plato. Those who direct the schools "control a character-producing institution" that is an instrument of the "ruling elite to maintain and enhance their power." [12] Public education is simply one of the primary means of molding American children into tax-paying, law-abiding American adults, who rarely question the nature and legitimacy of their own government. As Jonathan Kozol notes: "The first and primary function of the U. S. public schools is not to educate good people, but good citizens. It is the function which we call, in enemy nations, state indoctrination." [13] John Taylor Gatto expands on this theme calling government schools WEAPONS OF MASS INSTRUCTION:

[M]andatory public education in this country ... was useful in creating not only a harmless electorate and a servile labor force but also a virtual herd of mindless consumers. In time a great number of industrial titans came to recognize the enormous profits to be had by cultivating and tending such a herd via public education, School trains children to be employees and consumers. ... [W]ake up to what our schools really are: laboratories of experimentation on young minds, drill centers for the habits and attitudes that corporate [and political] society demand... . [I]ts real purpose is to turn them into servants. [14]

When homeschooling parents have been challenged in court for violating the

state's education law, rarely are the educational achievements of their children called into question. The accomplishments of the children (whether they have met the state requirements for their grade levels or not) are usually beside the point. The welfare of the child is not the concern of the State. The courts do not consider how well the child is educated, but only whether or not the child is receiving a government-approved education and if the appropriate rules and regulations were followed.[15] If the State were truly concerned with neglected and illiterate children, it would take corrective action to save those children which its own educational system has failed to teach to read or write.

It is likely that some children receive a worse education under a government regime than they would in the absence of political laws. This is consistent with the nature of government intervention. Even from the point of view of its supporters, government action often makes conditions worse than before it interfered. If we examine the "Six Political Illusions" enunciated by James L. Payne we can begin to understand how this happens:

1. Since government has no funds of its own, "money spent on government programs must be taken from citizens who have good and useful purposes for their own funds. Therefore, all government spending programs injure these good and useful activities."

2. Government is based on the exercise of physical force to accomplish its ends. "Its taxes and regulations rely on the threat of inflicting physical harm on those who do not cooperate."

3. Government programs "have high overhead costs. Goods or services provided through a tax and spend system end up costing several times as much as they would if citizens obtained these goods or services directly" on the market.

4. "Money is only one factor in success. If the motivation and abilities of recipients are not suitable ... government spending will be useless, or can do more harm than good."

5. "Government has no superior wisdom. Government officials are ordinary people, as prone to bias, intolerance, greed, and error as anyone" else.

6. Government would have us think that it is a problem-solving institution, but it cannot duplicate the "the creative actions of individuals, families, neighborhoods, groups, and businesses. Problem-solving efforts by government almost invariably impair the energy and capacity of the voluntary sphere." [16]

It is easy to see how every one of these illusions applies to government education, and why voluntaryists are more concerned with the means than the ends. Voluntaryists understand Mahatma Gandhi's insight that "if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself." If they rely on voluntaryism and don't use coercion to educate their children, they not only set their children a moral, non-violent example (not relying on tax funds which are forcibly collected), but they generally do at least as good, if not a much better, practical job of preparing their children for life than the State. Voluntaryism has no formal guidelines that will dictate what kinds of

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education will take place in a free society. So long as the means are peaceful and respectful of self-ownership and property titles, the ends cannot be criticized from the voluntaryist perspective. This is not to imply that the only standard of judging human behavior is whether or not it is voluntary. Certainly some behavior may be irrational, vicious, immoral, religious, irreligious, (etc., etc.) but the first question the voluntaryist asks is: Is it truly voluntary? This is why the voluntaryist objects to government provision of dispute settlement, police services, schools, etc. Such services may be essential to human survival, but it is not essential that they be provided by government on a coercive basis. There is no logical, epistemological, or societal justification for forcing goods or services upon unwilling customers. The political attempts of 2009-2010 to impose universal national healthcare is just the latest government-mandated service being forced upon people (those who have to pay taxes to support other people's medical care, and those who would prefer to make provisions for their own healthcare).

Education in a free society is the responsibility of every parent. Some parents will be irresponsible. Some will be responsible for the education of their own children. Others may choose to become responsible for the education of children that are not their own. That is the beauty of freedom. Each person must inevitably make their own choice or choose to make none at all (though indeed, they have no choice; reality will make it for them if they fail to make a choice themselves). The kind of character we develop individually goes far in determining what kind of collective society we shall have. But after all is said and done, the only thing we, individually, can do is "to present society with one improved unit." As Albert Jay Nock put it, "Ages of experience testify that the only way society can be improved is by the individualist method; ... that is, the method of each one doing his best to improve one." [17] This is the quiet or patient way of changing society because it concentrates upon bettering the character of men and women as individuals. As the individual units change, the improvement in society will take care of itself. In other words, if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.

What better description of homeschooling could one pen?

THE VOLUNTARYIST insight into education offers a unique and seldom heard point of view about children, schooling, and the State. Many of these essays may make you fume but please let them help you think through the issues. But above all else, as Shakespeare wrote: "To thine own self be true: And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man."

[Footnotes may be found in the book]

H. L. Mencken on Public Schools

(From Issue 172, 1st Quarter 2017)

[Editor's Note: The following excerpts are taken from Volume XXVIII, Number 110 of THE AMERICAN MERCURY (February 1933). They appeared in a column titled "What Is Going On In The World." See <http://www.unz.org/Pub/AmMercury-1933feb-00129>. Mencken begins his comments by pointing out that government expenditures on the public schools had grown from about \$5 per pupil in 1880 to \$100 per pupil in 1933 (now in excess of \$12,000). He then questions what these gun-run schools have accomplished. Contemporary critics of public schools present an ever more detailed view of their history and current effects. For example, see the work of Brett Veinotte at schoolsucksproject.com; Richard Grove's production of John Taylor Gatto's "Ultimate History Lesson" at www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQiW_l848t8, or John's website at www.johntaylorgatto.com. For John's article, "Why Schools Don't Educate," see issue 53 of THE VOLUNTARYIST, page 8, voluntaryist.com/backissues/053.pdf].

There is, indeed, very little evidence that they have ever actually earned the money they have demanded and got, either in 1914 or since. If their fundamental aim is to provide the country with an enlightened electorate, they have failed completely and miserably, for the electorate is no more enlightened today than it was before they were ever set up. On the contrary, there is plausible reason for believing that it has gone backward in intelligence, for it handles its business, not with increasing prudence, but with increasing imbecility. The American people of a hundred years ago, when public schools were still few and meagre, might have been described plausibly as notably political-minded: they were ardently interested in public affairs, and intervened in them, on the whole, with quick understanding and sound judgment. But today they are so lethargic that it takes a calamity to arouse them at all, and so stupid that it becomes more nearly impossible every year for intelligent and self-respecting men to aspire to public office among them.

I believe that it would be rational to argue that the public school, far from combating this immense increase in stupidity, has been very largely responsible for it. For the true aim and purpose of the pedagogue, and especially of the pedagogue who is also a bureaucrat, is never to awaken his victims to independent and logical thought; it is simply to force them into a mold. And that mold is bound to be a cramped and dingy one, for the pedagogue is a cramped and dingy man himself. The office he fills, in its potentialities, is an immensely important one, but in its daily business it is puerile and uninspiring, and so it is seldom filled by a man (or woman)

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of any genuine force and originality. In all ages pedagogues have been the bitterest enemies of all genuine intellectual enterprise, and in no age have they warred upon it more violently or to sadder effect than in our own. More than any other class of blind leaders of the blind they are responsible for the degrading standardization which now afflicts the American people. They would have done even worse, I believe, if it had been in their power. They failed only because a sufficient number of their victims have always been too intelligent to succumb to them, and because even the stupid majority yet preserves a saving skepticism about their ridiculous arcana. ...

The basic trouble with the public schools is that they have fallen into the hands of a well-organized and extremely ambitious bureaucracy, and that machinery for curbing its pretensions has yet to be devised. In every American municipality, though all of them are desperately hard up and many are hopelessly bankrupt, it has resisted every effort to cut down its demands on the public treasury, and in this black year of 1933 it will actually get a larger relative share of the public money than ever before. It has thrown the grotesque mantle of Service about its extortions, and convinced millions of the unthinking that they are essential to the public good. Let any rash fellow challenge it, and he is denounced at once as an enemy to the true, the good and the beautiful. Operating impudently and over a generation of time, it has deluded the great majority of Americans into accepting its brummagem values unquestioningly, and filled them with the superstition that if the public schools were shut down the country would at once go to pot. ...

The first grand effect of universal free education in the United States was to turn the American people, once so independent and self-reliant, into a race of shameless mendicants, looking to the government, as to some cosmic Santa Claus, for all their needs. And its second effect, now more horribly visible every day, has been to ram them all into a single mold, and that a mold shaped by silly babus, so that the test of Americanism comes to be the extent to which every American thinks and feels, aspires and exults like every other American, and all approach as closely as possible to the ideas and emotions, aspirations and exultations of a jackass. ...

The notion that they [the public schools] have done and are doing any ponderable good is mainly a delusion. What they have actually done is a lot of harm. They have taken the care and upbringing of children out of the hands of parents, where it belongs, and thrown it upon a gang of irresponsible and unintelligent quacks. They have filled multitudes of the uneducable with ideas that make them uncomfortable, and are useless to them, and unfit them for the inevitabilities of their lowly station. They have supported every sort of nonsense that has afflicted the country, from the hog-wallow imbecility of Prohibition to all the more florid and degrading varieties of patriotism. They are responsible, more than any other agency, for the present pathetic helplessness of the American people, stunned and made ridiculous by a common misfortune that other peoples tackle in a realistic and rational manner. Altogether, they have pretty well smeared the United States. It has been going downhill ever since the pedagogues grabbed their first billion [dollars].

Voluntaryist Critics of State Education

by George H. Smith

(From Issue 179, 4th Quarter 2018)

[Editor's Note: The author of this article is probably best known to readers of this newsletter as the person responsible for suggesting its title, THE VOLUNTARYIST. The following essay first appeared as the "Introduction" to an anthology edited by George H. Smith and Marilyn Moore, titled CRITICS OF STATE EDUCATION (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2017). The complete book is available as a free ebook at www.libertarianism.org/books. Permission to reprint given by Grant Babcock, Cato.Org; email of October 25, 2017, 3:30 pm. Sections III thru Section VI appear here, and Section VII will be published subsequently. Freedom and free-market competition in all spheres of life has been and is an on-going theme in these pages. Footnotes and other articles advocating freedom in education can be found at www.voluntaryist.com/homeschooling.]

III

The relationship between school and state in American liberal thought has a checkered past. Many traditional heroes of American individualism, such as Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, upheld some role for government in education, however minor that role is by today's standard. Even William Leggett, the radical Jacksonian and *laissez-faire* advocate who opposed nearly all kinds of government intervention, made an exception in the case of education.[31]

Radical individualism in America was a different matter. Josiah Warren, often regarded as the first American anarchist, warned in 1833 that national aid to education would be like "paying the fox to take care of the chickens," and said he feared the consequences of placing control of education in the hands of single group.[32] Gerrit Smith, a radical abolitionist who supported John Brown, upheld the separation of school and state. "It is justice and not charity which the people need at the hands of government," Smith argued. "Let government restore to them their land, and what other rights they have been robbed of, and they will be able to pay for themselves - to pay their schoolmasters, as well as their parsons." [33] William Youmans (an admirer of Herbert Spencer and a founder and editor of *Popular Science Monthly*) favored leaving education to "private enterprise." [34] And the Spencerian John Bonham vigorously attacked "the one true system" of Horace Mann that would impose a dulling uniformity and would extirpate diversity in education.[35]

The most thorough arguments against state education appeared in the writings of British (classical) liberals during the 1840s and 1850s. Calling themselves

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“Voluntaryists” - a label originally embraced by those who called for the complete disestablishment of the Church of England - these liberals launched a sustained campaign against state education in England that, though it was doomed to failure, produced a remarkable body of literature that has been largely ignored by historians.

The British Voluntaryist movement grew from the ranks of Dissenters, or Nonconformists (i.e., non-Anglican Protestants). After the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, Dissenters who refused to subscribe to the articles of the Established Church of England faced severe legal disabilities. Oxford and Cambridge were effectively closed to them, as were other conventional channels of education. Dissenters therefore established their own educational institutions, such as the dissenting academies of the 18th century, which one historian has described as “the greatest schools of their day.”[36]

Until 1833, elementary education in England progressed without substantial state aid or interference. Free education on an ambitious scale had been undertaken by Dissenters, or Nonconformists, with the establishment, in 1808, of the British and Foreign School Society (originally called the Royal Lancasterian Society). Funded primarily by Dissenting congregations, the society used the monitorial system, which employed abler students to help teach their classmates, to bring education to the working classes without government assistance.[37] These efforts motivated Anglicans to form the National Society, which established competing free schools for educating the poor.

Over the next decade, government funds were made available to both Dissenters and Anglicans. Each pound from voluntary contributions was matched by the government, up to £20,000 per annum. Because the Anglican schools were receiving more contributions than the Dissenting schools, the former received most of the government funds, so Dissenters began to learn the hard way that government aid to education would serve the prevailing orthodoxy.

Even by 1839, when the Melbourne administration proposed to increase aid to £30,000 pounds per annum, relatively few Dissenters expressed opposition. Most Dissenters approved of, or silently accepted, state funding if it did not favor one religious group over another and if it did not entail state interference. The one Dissenting deputy who argued that education “is not a legitimate function of the government” could find no support among his peers,[38] and a meeting of Dissenting ministers in 1840 expressed its “satisfaction” with government aid for education.

All this changed in 1843 after Sir James Graham, home secretary under the Peel administration, presented a bill to the House of Commons titled *A Bill for Regulating the Employment of Children and Young Persons in Factories, and for the Better Education of Children in Factory Districts*. Among other things, the bill required factory children to attend school for at least three hours each day, five days per week, and it placed effective control of those schools (to be financed largely from local rates) in the hands of the Established Church of England.[39] “The Church has ample security,” wrote Graham, “that every master in the new schools will be a Churchman,

and that the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, as far as the limited exposition may be carried, will necessarily be in conformity with his creed.”[40]

Dissenting opposition to Graham’s bill was swift and severe. It “set the whole country on fire,” according to one observer.[41] *Eclectic Review*, a leading Dissenting journal, declared:

From one end of the empire to the other, the sound of alarm has gone forth, and the hundreds of thousands who have answered to its call have astonished and confounded our opponents. The movement has been at once simultaneous and determined. The old spirit of the puritans has returned to their children, and men in high places are in consequence standing aghast, astonished at what they witness, reluctant to forego their nefarious purpose, yet scarce daring to persist in the scheme.[42]

Thousands of petitions with over 2 million signatures were presented to the House in opposition to the Factories Education Bill, whereupon Graham submitted amendments in an effort to appease the Dissenters. But to no avail. Petitions against the amended clauses contained nearly another 2 million signatures, and the measure was withdrawn.

It was during this agitation that support by Dissenters for state aid to education (provided it did not involve interference) transformed into opposition to all such aid. Edward Baines, Jr. - editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, the most influential provincial newspaper in England - described the transition:

The dangerous bill of Sir James Graham, and the evidence brought out of the ability and disposition of the people to supply the means of education, combined to convince the editors of the *Mercury* that it is far safer and better for Government not to interfere at all in the work; and from that time forward they distinctly advocated that view.[43]

The Voluntaryist philosophy crystallized quickly. In meetings of the Congregational Union held in Leeds (October 1843), Baines articulated the basic arguments against state education that he would develop in more detail over the next 20 years.[44] The Congregational Union officially declared itself in favor of voluntary education.[45] An education conference held at the Congregational Union in Leeds (December 1843) resolved that “all funds confided to the disposal of the central committee, in aid of schools, be granted only to schools sustained entirely by voluntary contributions.”[46]

By 1846 the majority of Congregationalists and Baptists supported voluntary education.[47] Leading newspapers and journals of the Dissenters - such as the *Leeds Mercury*, the *Nonconformist*, and the *Eclectic Review* - argued the case for Voluntaryism. Many Voluntaryists were active in the Anti-Corn Law League (which

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led a successful campaign to abolish import tariffs on grain), and they applied the principles of free trade to education. Voluntaryists energetically disputed reports that purported to show the deplorable condition of voluntary schools,[48] and they accused government committees of misrepresenting facts and distorting evidence to buttress their case for government interference.[49]

Not all Dissenters supported Voluntaryism, of course; some Nonconformist journals, such as the *British Quarterly Review*, attacked Voluntaryism vigorously. In addition, some Manchester free-trade advocates (most notably Richard Cobden) were active in the movement for state secular education, creating a serious rift among British liberals. Indeed, in 1848 Cobden remarked that “education is the main cause of the split among the middle-class Liberals.”[50]

In Leeds the question was whether the State should intervene at all, while in Manchester it concerned the form that intervention should take. ... Leeds imposed a prescriptive ban upon state education per se; Manchester sought to define the proper goals of a state education scheme that was both necessary and desirable.[51]

One important Voluntaryist was Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), the leading libertarian philosopher of his day. Although Spencer became an agnostic, he was home-schooled in Dissenting causes by his father and uncle. “Our family was essentially a *dissenting* family,” Spencer wrote in later life, “and dissent is an expression of antagonism to arbitrary control.” Much of Spencer’s first political article, written in his early 20s and published in the *Nonconformist* in 1842, was devoted to a critique of state education, and it possibly influenced the birth of the Voluntaryist movement in the following year.[52]

Other prominent Dissenters who campaigned for Voluntaryism were Joseph Sturge (1793–1859), a Quaker pacifist who played an important role in the antislavery movement; Samuel Morley (1809–1886); Andrew Reed (1787–1862); Henry Richard (1812–1888); Edward Miall (1809–1881); and the previously mentioned Edward Baines, Jr. (1800–1890). Of these men, Miall and Baines were the most important. Edward Miall founded and edited the *Nonconformist*, one of the most important Dissenting periodicals of its day. Miall was a tireless campaigner for both the separation of church and state and the separation of school and state. Edward Baines, Jr. - for many years editor of the influential *Leeds Mercury* - was the driving force behind Voluntaryism after 1843. Through Baines’s many pamphlets and articles, which combined theoretical arguments with detailed statistics, the case for Voluntaryism reached a wide audience throughout Britain.[53]

IV

Liberty was a basic concern of all Voluntaryists. Dissenters saw themselves in the tradition of John Milton, Algernon Sidney, and John Locke - defenders of individual rights and foes of oppressive government. Religious liberty in particular - freedom of

conscience - was viewed as the great heritage of the Dissenting tradition, any violation of which should call forth "stern and indomitable resistance." [54]

Liberty should not be sacrificed for a greater good, argued the Dissenting minister and Voluntarist Richard Hamilton: "There is no greater good. There can be no greater good! It is not simply means, it is an end." [55] Education is best promoted by freedom, but should there ever be a conflict, "liberty is more precious than education." "We love education," Hamilton stated, "but there are things which we love better." [56] Edward Baines agreed that education is not the ultimate good: "Liberty is far more precious." It is essential to "all the virtues which dignify men and communities." [57]

The preservation of individual freedom, according to most Voluntarists, is the only legitimate function of government. The purpose of government, wrote Herbert Spencer in "The Proper Sphere of Government" (1842), is "to defend the natural rights of man - to protect person and property - to prevent the aggressions of the powerful upon the weak; in a word, to administer justice." Edward Miall agreed that government is "an organ for the protection of life, liberty, and property; or, in other words, for the administration of justice." [58]

Government, an ever-present danger to liberty, must be watched with vigilance and suspicion. "The true lover of liberty," stated the *Eclectic Review*, "will jealously examine all the plans and measures of government."

He will seldom find himself called to help it, and to weigh down its scale. He will watch its increase of power with distrust. He will specially guard against conceding to it any thing which might be otherwise done. He would deprecate its undertaking of bridges, highways, railroads. He would foresee the immense mischief of its direction of hospitals and asylums. Government has enough on its hands - its own proper functions - nor need it to be overborne. There is a class of governments which are called paternal. . . . They exact a soulless obedience. . . . Nothing breathes and stirs. . . . The song of liberty is forgotten. . . . And when such governments tamper with education, the tyranny, instead of being relieved, is eternized. [59]

Government is "essentially immoral," wrote Spencer in *Social Statics*, and with this many Voluntarists agreed. A government has only those rights delegated to it by individuals, and "it is for each to say whether he will employ such an agent or not." Every person, therefore, has "the right to ignore the state." [60] The source of political authority is the people, argued Hamilton, and the people may revise or even "outlaw the State." [61]

Voluntarists' concern for liberty can scarcely be exaggerated. Schemes of state education were denounced repeatedly as "the knell of English freedom," an "assault on our constitutional liberties," and so forth. Plans for government inspection of

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schools were likened to “government *surveillance*” and “universal *espionage*” that display “the *police* spirit.” And compulsory education was described as “child-kidnapping.” Educational freedom is “a sacred thing” because it is “an essential branch of civil freedom.” “A system of state-education,” declared Baines, “is a vast intellectual police, set to watch over the young at the most critical period of their existence, to prevent the intrusion of dangerous thoughts, and turn their minds into safe channels.”[62]

Contrary to later historians, who were to portray Voluntaryism as a battle for narrow sectarian interests, the Voluntaryists insisted that crucial moral and political principles were at stake. “The crisis involves larger interests than those of dissent,” stated the *Eclectic Review*. The threat that state education poses to individual freedom is sufficient ground to “take up a position of most determined hostility to it.”[63] The Voluntaryists often drew parallels between educational freedom, on the one hand, and religious freedom, freedom of the press, and other civil liberties, on the other hand. As Baines noted, “We cannot violate the principles of liberty in regard to education, without furnishing at once a precedent and an inducement to violate them in regard to other matters.” He continued:

In my judgment, the State could not consistently assume the support and control of education, without assuming the support and control of both the pulpit and the press. Once decide that Government money and Government superintendence are essential in the schools, whether to insure efficiency, or to guard against abuse, ignorance, and error, and the self-same reasons will force you to apply Government money and Government superintendence to our periodical literature and our religious instruction.[64]

Baines realized that a government need not carry the principle inherent in state education to its logical extreme, but he was disturbed by a precedent that gave to government the power of molding minds. If, as the proponents of state education had argued, state education was required to promote civic virtue and moral character, then “where, acting on these principles, could you consistently stop?” He asked:

Would not the same paternal care which is exerted to provide schools, schoolmasters, and school-books, be justly extended to provide mental food for the adult, and to guard against his food being poisoned? In short, would not the principle clearly justify *the appointment of the Ministers of Religion, and a Censorship of the Press?*[65]

Baines conceded that there were deficiencies and imperfections in the system of voluntary education, but freedom should not be abrogated on this account. Again he pointed to the example of a free press. A free press has many “defects and abuses”;

certainly not all the products of a free press are praiseworthy. But if liberty is to be sacrificed in education in order to remedy deficiencies, then why not regulate and censor the press for the same reason? Baines employed this analogy in his brilliant rejoinder to the charge that he was an advocate of “bad schools”:

In one sense I am. I maintain that we have as much right to have wretched schools as to have wretched newspapers, wretched preachers, wretched books, wretched institutions, wretched political economists, wretched Members of Parliament, and wretched Ministers. You cannot proscribe all these things without proscribing Liberty. The man is a simpleton who says, that to advocate Liberty is to advocate badness. The man is a quack and a *doctrinaire* of the worst German breed, who would attempt to force all minds, whether individual or national, into a mould of ideal perfection, - to stretch it out or to lop it down to his own Procrustean standard. I maintain that Liberty is the chief cause of excellence; but it would cease to be Liberty if you proscribed everything inferior. Cultivate giants if you please, but do not stifle dwarfs.[66]

Freedom of conscience was precious to liberal Dissenters, and they feared government encroachment in this realm, even in the guise of “secular” education. The *Eclectic Review*, using arguments similar to those of Baines, stressed the relationship between religious freedom and educational freedom. Advocates of state education claimed that parents have the duty to provide their children with education and that the state has the right to enforce this duty. But parents have a duty to provide religious and moral instruction as well. “Are we then prepared to maintain . . . that government should interpose, in this case, to supply what the parent has failed to communicate? . . . If sound in the one case, it is equally so in the other.”[67]

To the many state-school advocates who pointed to the Prussian system as a model, Baines retorted: “Nearly all the Continental Governments which pay and direct the school, pay and direct also the pulpit and the press. They do it consistently.”[68] This is the potential “despotism” that Baines feared and loathed.

V

A common prediction of Voluntarists was that government would employ education for its own ends, especially to instill deference and obedience in citizens. The radical individualist William Godwin, author of *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), was among the first to express this concern. The “project of a national education ought uniformly to be discouraged,” he wrote, “on account of its obvious alliance with national Government [which] will not fail to employ it to strengthen its hands, and perpetuate its institutions.”[69]

With the consolidation of Dissenting opposition to state education, the Godwinian warning was frequently repeated and elaborated on. This passage from the *Eclectic Review* is typical:

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It is no trifling thing to commit to any hands the moulding of the minds of men. An immense power is thus communicated, the tendency of which will be in exact accordance with the spirit and policy of those who use it. Governments, it is well known, are conservative. The tendency of official life is notorious, and it is the height of folly, the mere vapouring of credulity, to imagine that the educational system, if entrusted to the minister of the day, will not be employed to diffuse amongst the rising generation, that spirit and those views which are most friendly to his policy. By having, virtually, at his command, the whole machinery of education, he will cover the land with a new class of officials, whose dependence on his patronage will render them the ready instruments of his pleasure.[70]

Government education, this writer feared, would produce “an emasculated and servile generation.” A possible advance in literacy would be purchased at the price of man’s “free spirit.” Elsewhere the *Eclectic Review* compared state schools to “barracks” and their employees to “troops.” “The accession of power and patronage to that government which establishes such a national system of education, can scarcely be gauged.”[71] Teachers paid by a government will owe allegiance to that government.

What a host of stipendiaries will thus be created! And who shall say what will be their influence in the course of two generations? All their sympathies will be with the powers by whom they are paid, on whose favor they live, and from whose growing patronage their hopes of improving their condition are derived. As constitutional Englishmen, we tremble at the result. The danger is too imminent, the hazard too great, to be incurred, for any temporary stimulus which government interference can minister to education. We eschew it as alike disastrous in its results and unsound in its theory - the criminal attempt of short-sighted or flagitious politicians, to mold the intellect of the people to their pleasure.[72]

Indoctrination is inherent in state education, according to Edward Baines. State education proceeds from the principle that “it is the duty of a Government to train the Mind of the People.” If one denies to government this right - as defenders of a free press and free religion must logically do - then one must also deny the right of government to meddle in education. It “is not the duty or province of the Government to train the mind of the people,” argued Baines, and this “principle of the highest moment” forbids state education.[73]

Herbert Spencer agreed. State education, he wrote in *Social Statics* (1851), will inevitably involve indoctrination.

For what is meant by saying that a government ought to educate the people? Why should they be educated? What is the education for? Clearly, to fit the people for social life - to make them good citizens. And who is to say what are good citizens? The government: there is no other judge. And who is to say how these good citizens may be made? The government: there is no other judge. Hence the proposition is convertible into this - a government ought to mold children into good citizens, using its own discretion in settling what a good citizen is and how a child may be molded into one.[74]

Indoctrination was an issue that troubled even some proponents of state education. A case in point is William Lovett, the Chartist radical who is frequently praised as an early champion of state education. In his *Address on Education* (1837), Lovett maintained that it is “the duty of Government to establish *for all classes* the best possible system of education.” Education should be provided “not as a charity, *but as a right.*” How was the British government to discharge this duty? By providing funds for the erection and maintenance of schools. Lovett desired government financing *without* government control: “we are decidedly opposed to placing such immense power and influence in the hands of Government as that of selecting the teachers and superintendents, the books and kinds of instruction, and the whole management of schools in each locality.” Lovett detested state systems, such as that found in Prussia, “where the lynx-eyed satellites of power . . . crush in embryo the buddings of freedom.” State control of education “prostrates the whole nation before one uniform . . . despotism.”[75]

Several years later Lovett became less sanguine about the prospect of government financing without government control. While still upholding in theory the duty of government to provide education, he so distrusted his own government that he called on the working classes to reject government proposals and to “commence the great work of education yourselves.” The working classes had “everything to fear” from schools established by their own government, so Lovett outlined a proposal whereby schools could be provided through voluntary means, free from state patronage and control.[76]

We see a similar concern with indoctrination in the work of the celebrated philosopher John Stuart Mill. Mill contended that education “is one of those things which it is admissible in principle that a government should provide for the people,” although he favored a system in which only those who could not afford to pay would be exempt from fees.[77] Parents who failed to provide elementary education for their children committed a breach of duty, so the state could compel parents to provide instruction. But where and how children were taught should be up to the parents; the state should merely enforce minimal educational standards through a series of public examinations. Thus did Mill attempt to escape the frightening prospect of government

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indoctrination. At this point, he began to sound like an ardent Voluntarist:

That the whole or any large part of the education of the people should be in State hands, I go as far as any one in deprecating. . . . A general State education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another: and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government . . . in proportion as it is efficient and successful, it establishes a despotism over the mind, leading by a natural tendency to one over the body.[78]

Dissenters who favored state education were also sensitive to the problem of indoctrination, but many thought that the danger could be avoided by confining state schools to secular subjects. The Voluntarists disagreed, and they repudiated all attempts at compromise. Government aid, however small and innocent at first, was bound to be followed by government strings. Government aid is “a *trap* and a *snare*,” declared the *Eclectic Review*. It is “a wretched bribe” that, if accepted, “will have irretrievably disgraced us.”[79] The question is not, “How can we obtain Government money?” wrote Algernon Wells, “but, How can we avoid it?” Wells continued with a fascinating observation:

[Dissenters] must ever be equally free to act and speak. They must hold themselves entirely clear of all temptation to ask, when their public testimony is required - How will our conduct affect our grants? The belief of many Independents is that, from the hour they received Government money, they would be a changed people - their tone lowered - their spirit altered - their consistency sacrificed - and their honour tarnished.[80]

Perhaps Edward Baines, Jr., best summarized the sentiment of the Voluntarists: “When Governments offer their arm, it is like the arm of a creditor or a constable, not so easily shaken off: there is a handcuff at the end of it.”[81] The lesson was clear. Educational freedom is incompatible with state support. If government control and manipulation of education are to be avoided, financial independence and integrity must be maintained.

VI

Another recurring theme of Voluntarism was the need for diversity in education. Voluntarists warned that state education would impose a dulling uniformity that would result, at best, in mediocrity. This lack of diversity in education was a primary concern of the 18th-century Dissenter Joseph Priestley. Education is an art, and like any art it requires many “experiments and trials” before it can approach perfection, he noted. To bring government into education would freeze this art at its present stage and thereby “cut off its future growth.” Education “is already under too many legal restraints. Let these be removed.” The purpose of education is not simply to promote the interests of the state but rather to produce “wise and virtuous men.” Progress in

this area requires “unbounded liberty, and even caprice.” Life - especially human life - requires diversity to improve. Variety induces innovation and improvement. “From new and seemingly irregular methods of education, perhaps something extraordinary and uncommonly great may spring.” The “great excellence of human nature consists in the variety of which it is capable. Instead, then, of endeavouring, by uniform and fixed systems of education, to keep mankind always the same, let us give free scope to everything which may bid fair for introducing more variety among us.”[82]

Godwin expressed similar concerns. State institutions resist change and innovation. “They actively restrain the flights of mind, and fix it in the belief of exploded errors.” Government bureaucracies entrench themselves and resist change, so we cannot look to them for progress. State education “has always expended its energies in the support of prejudice.”[83]

The deleterious effects of intellectual and cultural uniformity were also of great concern to Herbert Spencer, who developed a theory of social progress based on increasing social diversity. National education “necessarily assumes that a uniform system of instruction is desirable,” and this Spencer denied. Unlimited variety is the key to progress. Truth itself - “the bright spark that emanates from the collision of opposing ideas” - is endangered by a coerced uniformity. The “uniform routine” of state education will produce “an approximation to a national model.” People will begin to think and act alike, and the youth will be pressed “as nearly as possible into one common mould.” Without diversity and competition among educational systems, education will stagnate and intellectual progress will be severely retarded.[84]

According to Spencer, it is because individuals vary widely in their capacities, needs, and skills that we need a variety of educational systems from which to choose. The flexibility of competing systems allows the individual something suited to his or her individual requirements. This flexibility is provided in a free market where teachers are answerable to the public. Conversely, in a state system, teachers are “answerable only to some superior officer, and having no reputation and livelihood to stimulate them,” they have little motivation to consider the individual needs of their students. Education becomes uniformly gray. Hence “in education as in everything else, the principle of honourable competition is the only one that can give present satisfaction or hold out promise of future perfection.”[85]

Edward Baines also warned that a uniform state education would obstruct progress. It would serve to “stereotype the methods of teaching, to bolster up old systems, and to prevent improvement.” If we left education to the market, we would see continual improvements. “But let it once be monopolized by a Government department, and thenceforth reformers must prepare to be martyrs.”[86] Algernon Wells made a similar point:

How to teach, how to improve children, are questions admitting of new and advanced solutions, no less than inquiries how best to cultivate the soil, or to perfect manufactures. And these improvements cannot fail

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to proceed indefinitely, so long as education is kept wide open, and free to competition, and to all those impulses which liberty constantly supplies. But once close up this great science and movement of mind from these invigorating breezes, whether by monopoly or bounty, whether by coercion or patronage, and the sure result will be torpor and stagnancy. [87]

The *Eclectic Review*, protesting that the “unitive design” of state education “would make all think alike,” continued with a chilling account of uniformity:

All shall be straightened as by the schoolmaster’s ruler, and transcribed from his copy. He shall decide what may or may not be asked. But he must be *normalized himself*. He must be fashioned to a model. He shall only be taught particular things. The compress and tourniquet are set on his mind. He can only be suffered to think one way. . . . All schools will be filled with the same books. All teachers will be imbued with the same spirit. And under their cold and lifeless tuition, the national spirit, now warm and independent, will grow into a type formal and dull, one harsh outline with its crisp edges, a mere complex machine driven by external impulse, with its appendages of apparent power but of gross resistance. If any man loves that national monotony, thinks it the just position of his nature, can survey the tame and sluggish spectacle with delight, he, on the adoption of such a system, has his reward.[88]

Auberon Herbert also cautioned against the “evils of uniformity.” Like his mentor Herbert Spencer, he thought that “all influences which tend towards uniform thought and action in education are most fatal to any regularly continuous improvement.”[89] Imagine the effect of state uniformity in religion, art, or science. Progress would grind to a halt. Education is no different. “Therefore, if you desire progress, you must not make it difficult for men to think and act differently; you must not dull their sense with routine or stamp their imagination with the official pattern of some great department.”[90]

As a former member of parliament, Herbert was especially sensitive to the difficulty of implementing change in a bureaucratic structure. A free market encourages innovation and risk taking. An innovator with new ideas on education can, if left legally unhampered, solicit aid from those sympathetic to his views and then test his product on the market.

But if some great official system blocks the way, if he has to overcome the stolid resistance of a department, to persuade a political party, which has no sympathy with views holding out no promise of political advantage, to satisfy inspectors, whose eyes are trained to see

perfection of only one kind, and who may summarily condemn his school as “inefficient” and therefore disallowed by law, if in the meantime he is obliged by rates and taxes to support a system to which he is opposed, it becomes unlikely that this energy and confidence in his own views will be sufficient to inspire a successful resistance to such obstacles.[91]

VII

(From Issue 180, 1st Quarter 2019)

The 19th Century British Voluntarists prized social diversity (or what we call today a “pluralistic society”), and they believed that state education would impose the dead hand of uniformity. Rather than giving to government the power to decide among conflicting beliefs and values, they preferred to leave beliefs and values to the unfettered competition of the market. One must appreciate this broad conception of the free market, which includes far more than tangible goods, if one wishes to understand the passionate commitment of many liberals to competition and their unbridled hatred of governmental interference. They believed that coercive intervention, whatever its supposed justification, actually served special interests and enhanced the power of government. The various campaigns against government were therefore seen as battles to establish free markets in religion, commerce, education, and other spheres.

British libertarians had a long heritage of opposition to state patronage and monopoly, reaching back to the Levellers of the early 17th century. The Voluntarists, like their libertarian ancestors, believed that government interference in the market, whatever its supposed justification, actually served special interests and enhanced the power of government, thereby furthering the goals of those within the government. The various struggles against government intervention were seen by Voluntarists as battles to establish free markets in religion, commerce, and education. It was not uncommon to find the expression “free trade in religion” among supporters of church-state separation; when the editor of the *Manchester Guardian* stated in 1820 that religion should be a “marketable commodity,” he was expressing the standard libertarian position.[92]

When fellow free traders, such as Richard Cobden, supported state education, the Voluntarists took them to task for their inconsistency. Those who embraced free trade in religion and commerce but advocated state interference in education, argued Thomas Hodgskin (senior editor of *The Economist*) in 1847, “do not fully appreciate the principles on which they have been induced to act.”[93] “We only wonder that they should have so soon forgotten their free-trade catechism,” wrote another Voluntarist, “and lent their sanction to any measure of monopoly.”[94]

Before free traders ask for state interference in education, Hodgskin argued, “they ought to prove that its interference with trade has been beneficial.” But this, by their own admission, they cannot do. They know that the effect of state interference

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with trade has always been “to derange, paralyze, and destroy it.” Hodgskin maintained that the principle of free trade “is as applicable to education as to the manufacture of cotton or the supply of corn.” The state is unable to advance material wealth for the people through intervention, and there is even less reason to suppose it capable of advancing “immaterial wealth” in the form of knowledge. Any “protectionist” scheme in regard to knowledge should be opposed by all who understand the principle of competition. *Laissez-faire* in education is “the only means of ensuring that improved and extended education which we all desire.”[95]

The *Eclectic Review* posed the basic question: Can education “be best produced by monopoly or by competition?” - and it came down unequivocally on the side of competition. Education is a “marketable commodity,” and demand for it is “as much subject to the principles and laws of political economy, as are corn or cotton.” Government intervention, in education as elsewhere, causes market distortions.

How will it affect the balance between the demand and the supply; disturb the relations of the voluntary teacher, and misdirect the expectations and confidence of the market? Let a private teacher attempt to come into competition with such accredited and endowed agents of an incorporate system . . . and he will find himself in the same state with a merchant who ventures to trade without a bounty in competition with those whose traffic is encouraged by large public bounties.[96]

Voluntaryists predicted that state aid to education would drive many voluntary schools out of business. Market schools would find themselves unable to compete with schools financed from taxes, and philanthropists who had previously contributed to education would withhold their funds, believing that, because the state would provide education anyway, there was no need for charitable support. As state aid increased, market education would diminish, and this consequence would be used to support the contention that voluntary education had failed.

An educational bureaucracy, however tiny at its inception, would grow rapidly. An educational orthodoxy with employees answerable to the government would emerge. Costs would increase, and productivity would decrease. “Public servants,” wrote one Voluntaryist, “are sustained at the largest cost, and always are subject to the least responsibility.” The principle of the market, to produce “the best article . . . at the cheapest price,” would disappear in a state system. In an educational free market, on the contrary, a “real and effectual discipline” is exercised over educators by consumers.[97] Free-market schools must either satisfy their customers or go out of business.

In calling for *laissez-faire* in education, Voluntaryists squared off against the major economists of their day, most of whom advocated some role for government. [98] John Stuart Mill, for example, opposed leaving education to the market: “In the matter of education, the intervention of government is justifiable, because the case is

not one in which the interest and judgment of the consumer are a sufficient security for the goodness of the commodity.” Mill continued:

The uncultivated cannot be competent judges of education. Those who must need to be made wiser and better, usually desire it least, and if they desired it, would be incapable of finding the way to it by their own lights. It will continually happen, on the voluntary system, that, the end not being desired, the means will not be provided at all, or that, the persons requiring improvement having an imperfect or altogether erroneous conception of what they want, the supply called for by the demand of the market will be anything but what is really required.[99]

Voluntaryists responded impatiently to this elitist argument. They had encountered the same argument many times before during their campaigns for religious freedom. With man’s eternal soul at stake, defenders of a state church maintained that religion is far too important to be left to the untutored judgment of the masses. “It is the old dogma,” wrote the dissenting minister Algernon Wells, “the people can know nothing about religion and it must be dictated to them.”[100] Wells contended that the argument from incompetence, if used to defend state education, must also justify state interference in religion. The fact that some fellow libertarians failed to understand the ominous implications of Mill’s argument obviously annoyed the Voluntaryists.

In *Social Statics* (1851), Herbert Spencer dismissed Mill’s argument as “a worn-out excuse” that had been repeatedly trotted out to justify “all state interferences whatever.”

A stock argument for the state teaching of religion has been that the masses cannot distinguish false religion from true. There is hardly a single department of life over which, for similar reasons, legislative supervision has not been, or may not be, established.[101]

Spencer questioned whether parents are as incompetent to assess education as Mill alleged. Parents, far more than government, are concerned about the welfare of their children, and uneducated parents can seek advice from others whom they trust. Even granting problems in this area, however, it does not follow that the state should intervene. As a market for mass education developed, Spencer believed that consumers would gain the knowledge that comes with experience and thereby become more sophisticated in their choice of products. Social improvement takes time, and Spencer thought that “this incompetence of the masses to distinguish good instruction from bad is being outgrown.”[102]

Spencer contended that Mill’s argument is based on a false premise. Even if the interest and judgment of consumers are insufficient to guarantee educational quality,

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Mill assumed that the “interest and judgment” of a government *are* sufficient security. Mill, in other words, assumed that an identity of interests exists between rulers and the people they govern.

Spencer ridiculed this tacit belief. The English government desired “a sentimental feudalism,” a country where “the people shall be respectful to their betters” and an economy “with the view of making each laborer the most efficient producing tool.” The interests of a government differ from the interests of the people, and “we may be quite sure that a state education would be administered for the advantage of those in power rather than for the advantage of the nation.” Hence, even if we concede some inadequacies in free-market education, the problems inherent in state education are more serious and dangerous.[103]

As for the rejoinder that this objection may apply to current governments but not necessarily to an ideal government that may someday exist - a government that would presumably have the best interests of the people at heart - Spencer pointed out that Mill’s argument from incompetence depends on consumers “as they now are,” not on consumers as they might be in an ideal society. We should therefore consider Mill’s alternative - government - “as it now is,” not as it *should* be in a hypothetical paradise.

It will not do, notwithstanding that it is all too often done, to point out problems that might arise in an imperfect market and then offer government as a solution - as if that government were itself perfect, and as if government intervention will not generate its own unique and serious problems. Spencer was inviting Mill to descend from the clouds of political theory and take a hard look at the real world of governments. All things considered, in matters of education “the interest of the consumer is not only an efficient guarantee for the goodness of the things consumed, but the best guarantee.”[104]

R. C. Hoiles Revisited

(From Issue 146, 3rd Quarter 2010)

[Editor’s Note: Raymond Cyrus (R. C.) Hoiles (1878- 1970) was the founder of the Freedom Chain of newspapers. For more than 35 years, in conversations, columns, and editorials, he stated his belief that human beings can enjoy happier and more prosperous lives where force and threats of force are absent from human relations. Although he started out as a supporter of limited government, he evolved into an able proponent of voluntarism. One of his pet themes was the separation of State and education. For many years, he had a standing offer of \$500 for any school superintendent in areas where his papers were published. He challenged public school officials to explain to him how State schools accorded with the Golden Rule.

He was never seriously taken up on his offer. Hoiles also opposed the internment of Japanese- American citizens during World War II. He began as a printer's devil and operated 20 newspapers by the time he died. He presented a rare mixture of worldly practicality and principle, which marked him as a philosophical businessman. "A man should be free to make his own decisions," he used to say, "and to learn from his mistakes and to profit when his choice was wise and correct." The following was reprinted from an unsigned editorial in the Colorado Springs GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH, July 11, 1972, p. 6-A, and is offered to our readers in the spirit of recognizing one of the unsung heroes of the 20th Century libertarian movement. For further information see an article by R. C. in THE VOLUNTARYIST, Whole No. 17 ("Unlimited Voluntary Exchanges,") and "To Thine Own Self Be True: The Story of Raymond Cyrus Hoiles and his Freedom Newspapers," in Whole No. 18.]

Since the death of R. C. Hoiles (head of the Freedom Newspapers group), we have encountered a surprising number of individuals who have volunteered such remarks as, "Well, I used to think Hoiles was all wrong with the trend of events, I've about changed my mind;" "Hoiles was much closer to reality than many folks gave him credit. Some of his positions evoked emotional antagonism but the passing of time is proving him more and more correct;" "By God, he saw it coming. With government taxes consuming close to half of everything produced, who can argue with his warning?"

It would have been out of character for R. C. (as associates and friends called him), to have said, "I told you so," for his motive was never to be proven correct, but rather to stimulate people to see for themselves the consequences of ever-expanding government.

One can go back to the days when he authored a signed column, from about 1935 until the 1950's, and find repeated warnings about the approaching leviathan state. Even prior to World War II, he continually explained the dangers of government deficits, pointing out that the inevitable result would be expanding credit to finance the deficits with resulting inflation. As more and more the federal government incurred deficits and financed itself by, in effect, repudiating its debt with inflation, R. C. warned that this "painless" sleight-of-hand, continued indefinitely, would give birth to a monster that could collapse the nation.

R. C.'s most controversial position related to what he thought would be the inevitable (he always thought of consequences in the long run) effect of government schooling the young. This was wildly distorted as being "against teachers" and against "people of little means" and an endless list of other emotional reactions that begged his points, which were:

1. The control of the schools would inexorably drift away from the "local control" concept to more centralized government control as the local units obtained funds from the larger government units. (As the state government offers more subsidy to the local school district, it demands more control. Then come federal funds and also the control attending such grants.) It would be illogical to conclude that once

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gaining this power, it would not teach that big government is the primary source of virtue and truth in order to perpetuate itself.

2. The foundation of a sound social order is rooted firmly in moral and ethical education, rather than training, and the government must by nature follow one of two courses: (a) neutrality because of differing views on what is sound moral and ethical reality; or (b) the advocating of views which are offensive to some individuals who are forced to submit their children and/or pay to support such views. This dilemma was answered largely by assuming a stance of neutrality which tends to produce children who have little or no basic philosophy of life unless obtained elsewhere. The result has been a reversal of some 2,000 years of educational philosophy which held that education was primarily for the purpose of inculcating a rational morality. Whether or not our present era is reaping the result of this could be disputed, but there are more and more people who sense something is seriously wrong with the grounding of the young.

Again, this was not meant to imply that the people - who manned the government school system - were "failing" in their job, but rather that their job just did not include and could not by its nature include this preeminent phase of a child's rearing. The ancients well understood that the founding of a child in a sound morality is an almost full-time endeavor, with the most important place the educational process.

Further, he held it was just elementary justice that no one should be forced to support an educational system in which he did not believe, making no distinction between this and forcing people to support a religion they did not advocate.

Another position which R. C. clung to tenaciously was that it was immoral (in the sense of being out of harmony with natural order) for the government to tax some people for the benefit of other people. Call it welfare, subsidies, government sanctioned or encouraged monopolies, all these efforts were for the purpose of "robbing Peter to pay Paul." These are distributions of wealth on an involuntary basis and create consequences that in the long run are inimical to everyone, particularly the beneficiaries of the "booty."

R. C. ran it by thusly: if it is immoral for A and B, as individuals, to gang up on C and take his wealth by force, it is wrong for A and B to delegate to the government as their agent the right to rob C and split the loot with them. This was another way of saying what Mr. Jefferson meant when he contended "the same justice is owed from a million to one that is owed from one to a million."

More and more we witness the government becoming, as has been said, "an illusion by which everyone endeavors to live at the expense of everybody else," one out of six civilian employees is on the government payroll and by 1980 this ratio is supposed to drop to one in four.

Where will all this end?

One answer, possibly not far from the truth, is: "And the fall of Rome was mighty!"

But then, R. C. always held that the powers of regeneration are unbelievably

great and that eventually men will understand the folly of forcing their fellow-man to labor to their advantage just because they have the political power to enforce such an action.

As R. C. would say, “It took men thousands and thousands of years to understand the folly of chattel slavery and it is going to take quite a spell to get people to understand that it is just as disastrous, in the long run, to be the slave of an all-powerful government.”

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**Part VII:
Nonviolence, Strategy, and
Nonvoting**

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“The moment the slave resolves that he will no longer be a slave, his fetters fall. ... Freedom and slavery are mental states. Therefore, the first thing to say to yourself: ‘I shall no longer accept the role of a slave. I shall not obey orders as such but shall disobey them when they are in conflict with my conscience’.”

- M. K. Gandhi quoted in Gene Sharp, *THE POLITICS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION* (1973), p. 59.

Violence is not a sign of strength but of weakness. Whoever fails to win over hearts and minds tries to conquer with violence. Every show of force is proof of moral inferiority. ... An idea that needs weapons to survive will die on its own. An idea that can only maintain itself through violence is distorted. A living idea conquers by itself. Millions follow it spontaneously.

- Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko, Mass for the Country [of Poland], December 26, 1982, in Judith Kelly, *JUST CALL ME JERZY* (2016), p. 55.

What Can I Do? A Constructive Mission for Voluntaryists in a Government-besotted Age

by James L. Payne

(From Issue 133, 2nd Quarter 2007)

Those of us who are uneasy about the use of force to accomplish social goals have a hard time finding a positive role to play in our communities. Government's coercive systems have spread themselves across the land into practically every nook and cranny of civilized life, from opera to oncology. It sometimes seems to leave those who want to avoid force-based systems with little left to do but complain. Yet a complaining, negative stance hardly persuades others to share our beliefs. To his neighbors, the critic of the government approach can appear selfish and backward-looking, a troglodyte who is the enemy of art, science, and compassion.

And besides, it's not healthy for us to remain at home cooped up with our libertarian literature, throwing shoes at the TV screen and muttering to ourselves about the world going to hell in a handbasket. Human beings were designed to be active: to strive, to build, and to befriend.

As it happens, there is a way to play a positive, active role without compromising our opposition to the use of force. It is through supporting local voluntary organizations. In every community, creative, energetic individuals have formed associations to provide community services. These include private schools, youth sports organizations, Scout groups, community theaters, choirs, bands and orchestras, groups that provide social assistance in the form of shelters, housing help, and emergency food relief, and a wide variety of support groups. In addition, there are the established service groups - such as the Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, P. E. O., Beta Sigma Phi - as well as independent local service and philanthropic societies. All these groups are trying to make a contribution to their communities, and they are doing it the voluntary way, on the basis of generosity and persuasion, without relying on force.

Voluntaryists can find it rewarding to support these efforts in a number of ways.

Donate money. Whenever I see volunteers fundraising—sitting at table at Safeway, let's say - I always give them a small donation - \$5 or \$10 - just as a way of rewarding and recognizing their voluntary effort. Of course, I make an exception if the volunteers are raising money for some type of political campaign.

To make a major donation - say \$500 - I talk with one or more of the group's leaders to make sure they are well enough organized to use the money constructively. Usually just one phone call is enough to give me confidence in the group. Volunteer leaders often feel lonely and unsupported, even on the verge of giving up their efforts (and letting government do it!). When a big check arrives with a note, "Keep up the

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good work!” it can really boost their morale.

Take a leadership role in a voluntary group. Most volunteer groups are starved for leadership, for people who will play a continuous role in organizing and managing their activities. In most cases, they need committed, capable leaders even more than they need money. Playing a leadership role in a group also makes you a well-informed donor, able to know where your money is going and what good it is doing.

As a leader you do good, but more important, taking up a leadership role is good for you. It is one of life's greatest challenges, giving you the opportunity to learn new skills, from drafting press releases to accounting. You get to meet, and learn how to get along with, scores of people, you gain insights into how the world really works, and you live through - and are matured by - emotional highs and lows. Leadership in a volunteer group is, truly, life fully lived.

Though it sounds easy, being an effective volunteer group leader is a challenging, delicate job. Whereas politicians succeed by being loud and vain, the best volunteer group leaders are mild and self-effacing. Their job isn't to attract attention to themselves, but to empower others to use their efforts and talents. The newcomer who says, "Here's what you need to do" is starting out on the wrong foot. Instead, his opening line should be, "How can I help you achieve your purposes?"

Start a needed group yourself, even a one-person group. Every community has lots of unmet needs, and anyone can simply start to meet them on a voluntary basis. I know one elderly woman who walks around her ten-block neighborhood every morning picking up litter. In the private school where I'm involved, I found it possible to set up a scholarship system. I make home visits, explain ground rules, set up appropriate volunteer chores for participating families, and send around a fund-raising letter. Several years ago, a friend and I started a "Committee on Television Awareness," a group designed to alert the community, especially children, to the negative aspects of TV, and to coordinate local participation in the national TV Turnoff week. Lately - much to my delight - a group of high school youngsters have taken it over and run it.

Promote the voluntary sector in general. There are a number of ways to assist all voluntary groups in a community. One is to compile a directory of groups giving pertinent information about activities and the names of leaders. I have been doing this for the past five years in my community. The free directory - which lists 142 groups - is in demand at schools, the library, and at the local chamber of commerce because it identifies volunteer opportunities. A more ambitious way of helping voluntary groups is to establish a center that would provide groups with a low-cost (or no-cost) venue for meetings, telephone answering service, volunteer referrals, and bookkeeping and legal advice.

Any effort to assist the voluntary sector runs into the problem that many groups are to some degree involved with government and take some government funding. The voluntarist has to develop a way of drawing a line between predominantly coercion-based organizations and others that, while tainted, are mainly based on

generosity. In making my directory of voluntary organizations, for example, I include only those organizations that obtain the preponderance of their resources (cash, labor, and services) through voluntary means (as opposed to taxes). The voluntaryist needs to be aware that most of the world does not see a sharp line between tax money and donated funds, and therefore he needs to be circumspect about pointing to such a line. Indeed, most of the world is comfortable with government and embraces - or doesn't notice - its violent nature. Therefore, the voluntaryist who wants to be successful in the voluntary sector needs to be patient about expressing his anti-government views.

This patience is easy to achieve, I've found, by taking the long view. As I explain in *A HISTORY OF FORCE*, the world has been shaking off forced-based practices for several thousand years. We stand at just one moment in time in this broad movement. It is unrealistic to think that it is up to us to "change the course of history," or that we have in our own hands the power to redesign the world. Rather, it is enough to take satisfaction in tiny steps in harmony with history's larger design.

[Editor's Note: We should not forget that one of man's greatest services to others of his kind is the creativity and productivity required in for-profit businesses. Barter and trade—being always and necessarily of a voluntary nature - make every participant better off. Those in business profit only by serving the (willing) customer.]

[Jim Payne's latest book is *A HISTORY OF FORCE: EXPLORING THE WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT AGAINST HABITS OF COERCION, BLOODSHED, AND MAYHEM*. After teaching political science for twenty years, Jim left academia in 1985 and moved to Sandpoint, Idaho to become an independent writer and researcher. His local volunteer involvements have included leadership in the Unicorn Theatre Players, the Panhandle Animal Shelter, Habitat for Humanity, the Sandpoint Mural Society, and the Selkirk School. E-mail: jimpayne@nctv.com.]

Without Firing A Single Shot: Voluntaryist Resistance and Societal Defense

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 128, 1st Quarter 2006)

In his book review, "Security Without a State," David Gordon concluded that "The notion that only the [S]tate can provide an adequate defense is but one more statist myth - maybe the most dangerous one of all." [1] While I heartily endorse this statement, neither its author, nor the editor, nor the contributors to *THE MYTH OF NATIONAL DEFENSE* (the volume Gordon was reviewing) consider one important variant of non-state defense, namely, civilian-based nonviolence. [2] While pointing out that "some rough combination of [private] militias and 'insurance companies,'" and "mass-based guerrilla war[fare]" would suffice to defend an anarchist society,

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practically none of the current advocates of non-state defense strategies suggest civilian-based nonviolence.[3] What they overlook is the possibility of a non-state society defending itself “without firing a shot.”[4] The basic component of such a policy rests on the basic voluntarist insight: that all government and hierarchies depend upon the consent and cooperation of those whom they would rule over. Or as Gene Sharp put it, “When people refuse their cooperation, withhold their help, and persist in their disobedience and defiance, they are denying their opponent the basic human assistance which any government or hierarchical system requires. If they do this in sufficient numbers for long enough, that government or hierarchical system will no longer have power” or be able to function.[5]

The Strength of Bare Hands and Stubbornness[6]

To most people, the voluntarist perspective is both incomprehensible and inconceivable. There are relatively few numbers of people that view the State as an invasive institution, one which is based on territorial aggrandizement and coercive revenues. There are even fewer who might ask the question: Can there be an alternative mode of societal defense which is not based on military means? Nonetheless, nonviolent struggle is rooted in a deep human propensity (also evidenced in many domesticated animals) to be stubborn, to persist in doing what has been forbidden, and to refuse to do what has been ordered. As we all know, this stubborn streak is present in children: they refuse to eat or do as they are told, or engage in delaying tactics.[7] Adults, too, can be recalcitrant, but fortunately human stubbornness can be directed toward admirable goals. We can cooperate with other human beings to resist what we collectively view as evil or wrongdoing. Nonviolent struggle or voluntarist resistance is simply the widespread societal application of this obdurate trait for social, economic, or anti-political purposes.[8]

Revolutionary implications stem from the simple voluntarist insight that no ruler exists without the cooperation and/or acquiescence of the majority of his or her subjects to be ruled.[9] One might say that nonviolence is “the political equivalent of the atomic bomb.”[10] To call nonviolent resistance “passive” or “for sissies” is to totally misunderstand its import. As Hannah Arendt pointed out, the use of nonviolent resistance is one of the most active and efficient ways of action ever devised by human beings because it cannot be countered by fighting. Only mass slaughter will assure the violent opponent an ultimate victory, but even then “the victor is defeated, cheated of his prize, since nobody can rule over dead” people.[11] Furthermore, civilian resistance demands widespread unity of opinion among the population, and careful research and strategic planning; its adoption must be preceded by widespread preparation and training; and its execution calls for considerable courage and discipline.[12] Could an army be successful if its soldiers had no training? Nonviolent resistance is no different in this regard.

There are many advantages of nonviolent civilian-based defense. For one thing, a

nonviolent army is not limited to the physically fit. Children, seniors, people of every age and condition, even the infirm, are capable of refusing to do what they are told to do. For another thing, even though suffering and death are an inevitable part of any social struggle, nonviolent resistance minimizes both the numbers of casualties and the amount of destruction.[13] Another advantage of nonviolent resistance is that there is no such thing as final defeat, so long as a few people exist whose minds and spirits are not bent to the will of the ruler. For example “[a]fter more than forty years the Tibetans continue to resist the Chinese military occupation. ... [I]f the will to resist is maintained ... the defense cannot be defeated.”[14] Civilian-based defense would make a society and its institutions “indigestible to any invader” but such a society, itself, would be incapable of launching any foreign aggression or the invasion of another country since it possesses no weaponry and uses nonviolent resistance in a strictly defensive manner. If threatened with a nuclear attack, nonviolent defenders would have no nuclear deterrent with which to counter. They would have to be prepared to face down nuclear blackmail and be prepared to die for their cause, just as soldiers are prepared to die for their cause. If the global community was not prepared to ostracize and boycott a rogue government that possessed weapons of mass destruction until its nuclear threat was withdrawn, then little could be done except to let the bluff be called. “The would-be threatener would have little to gain from following through with his threat if it meant creating a wasteland of the territory he sought to control, for nothing of value would remain for him to exploit.”[15]

The Tradition of Nonviolence

The term “people power” is part of a surprisingly long and robust tradition of waging social conflict by nonviolent means. Probably the first recorded act of civil disobedience in history is the refusal of the Hebrew midwives to obey the Pharaoh’s order to kill male Hebrew babies in 1350 B.C. (Exodus 1:15-19) Those who have studied the history of nonviolent movements have cataloged a surprisingly long list of examples, often beginning with the American colonial boycotts, tax refusal, and acts of civil disobedience which culminated in the violent struggle for independence against Great Britain. The most pertinent observation about the American Revolution came from John Adams, who observed that the real revolution took place in the hearts and minds of the American colonists long “before the [official] war commenced” in April 1775.[16] Nonviolent resistance played a significant role during the 19th and 20th Centuries, being found in a wide variety of “political, cultural, and geographic conditions.” Gene Sharp lists some of the most prominent examples in his book, *SOCIAL POWER AND POLITICAL FREEDOM*. [17]:

Hungarian passive resistance to Austrian rule, 1850-1867

Finnish resistance to Russia, 1898-1905

Nonviolent resistance to the Tsardom during the Russian Revolutions of 1905

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and 1917

German general strike and non-cooperation to the Kapp Putsch in 1920

Resistance to the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr 1923-1925

The Indian independence movement led by Gandhi, 1930 - 1947

The Muslim Pashtun (Pathan) Movement of the North-West Frontier of India, 1930-1934 led by Badshah Khan

The resistance of over 14,000 Norwegian teachers and clergymen to Nazi rule during World War II

Czechoslovakian resistance to Soviet invasion, 1968-1969

The Intifada, the Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation, beginning in 1987.

Sharp concludes that “Much can be learned from these experiences” (of which the above are only a partial listing). For example, Badshah Khan’s organization of Pathans, known as the Khudai Khidmatgar, exploded the myth that nonviolence can only be followed by those who are gentle (the Pathans were known as some of the most violent fighters in the world) and that nonviolence had no place in Islam.[18] These examples also show that “resistance is possible in a wide variety of situations and conflicts, even in extremely difficult and repressive ones.” Nevertheless, Sharp also points out that nearly all of these historical examples of nonviolent resistance suffered from the absence of strategic planning, preparation, and training.[19] However, even where they failed, none of them invalidated the “proposition that all government, even totalitarian government, is based on the consent and cooperation of the ruled” and every one of them tended to prove that if the consent of the populace is taken away, then every regime, even the most ruthless, must collapse.[20]

But what of a Hitler or a Stalin: could such despotic dictators be resisted nonviolently? Does nonviolent resistance work against extremely ruthless opponents? Advocates of nonviolence have answered this question “Yes,” based on their understanding of the theory of nonviolent resistance and an examination of history. They have concluded that nonviolent resistance has never failed because it was ruthlessly suppressed; but rather it failed because it was never systematically and consistently used.[21] The key question is not how ruthless is the opponent, but rather how seriously are the practitioners of nonviolence committed to their strategy. Nonviolent struggles have a greater chance of success if they are strategically planned and systematically implemented. Even lacking this, nonviolent resistance “works” because it rests on a fundamental insight into the nature of political power.[22] As Gandhi said, there are no guarantees in life, but if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself. “All one can say with certainty about nonviolent... [resistance] is that it will not succeed unless the dependency of the ruler’s power is exposed and sucked dry.”[23] Every ruler depends not only on the obedience of his subjects, but also on the cooperation of his agents, such as the police and bureaucratic officials. If the acquiescence of any of these groups evaporates, for whatever reason, the ruthless

dictator is left high and dry. Finally as Mubarak Awad, the father of Palestinian nonviolence, observed, “There is no more assurance that a nonviolent struggle will be victorious than there is an assurance that armed struggle will achieve its end.”[24] After all, in half of the armed struggles that are conclusively ended, one-half of the opponents are victors; the other half losers.

The social conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis offers an actual example of a people trying to defend their homeland. Since its beginning in 1967, there has always been “two parts of the Palestinian resistance movement, the paramilitary and the civil.” Nonviolence has always been a critical component of the Intifada (Arabic for “to shake off”). This has included “strikes by schools and businesses, boycotts of Israeli-made products,” tax refusal, marches and demonstrations, and civil disobedience (including refusal to carry Israeli identity cards).[25] Awad has described how the Palestinians might nonviolently occupy settler land, plant olive trees, and declare the land Palestinian territory. He has also suggested how Palestinians might nonviolently surround Israeli checkpoints and block roads to the West Bank settlements. “The Israeli army would probably react with brutalities and casualties, though far fewer than in the current climate of terrorism or retaliation. Television [and the Internet] now ha[ve] global reach and the whole world would be watching. ... The Israelis know well how to fight an armed antagonist, yet they have little understanding of how to deal with massive nonviolent resistance. They expect, and in fact need, for Palestinians to be either submissive or violent. The violence has not worked; and submission is intolerable. Nonviolence is thus left as the only alternative.”[26]

“Endure unto the end, but violence to no man”[27]

The idea that nonviolence might be applied to the defense of a community was probably first elaborated by Charles King Whipple in his 1842 booklet, *EVILS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR*. Whipple, an abolitionist and “peace man” (pacifist in 20th Century terminology), challenged the assumption that “we could never have freed ourselves from British domination, except by war.” His thesis was that Americans could have attained their independence “as effectually, as speedily, as honorably, and under very much more favorable circumstances,” if they had not resorted to arms. Instead, Whipple maintained that Americans should have engaged in a “steady and quiet refusal to comply with unjust requisitions; publicly declar[ed] ... their grievances, and demands for redress; and patient[ly] endur[ed] ... whatever violence was used to compel their submission.”[28] Even if the signers of the Declaration of Independence had been executed for treason, even if hundreds or thousands of Americans had been jailed for their refusal to comply with British demands, Whipple believed that ultimately Britain would have tired of dealing with the contumacious Americans. After all, he points out, Great Britain was not so much defeated on the battlefield as much as “tired of fighting.”

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Whipple was the first of many observers who noted that nonviolence might be used as a means of national defense. Indeed, some of the most notable cases of nonviolent resistance were carried out against foreign powers (Hungary against the rule of the Austrian Empire, India against British rule, and Germany against France and Belgium in the Ruhrkampf).[29] In the midst of World War I, in August 1915, Bertrand Russell published an article in THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY. He wrote: "Let us imagine that England were to disband its army, after a generation of instruction in the principles of passive resistance as a better defense than war. Let us suppose that England at the same time publicly announced that no armed opposition would be offered to any invader, that all might come freely, but that no obedience would be yielded to any commands that a foreign authority might issue. What would happen in this case?"[30] First of all he noted that if England disbanded its army and navy, any would-be invader, such as Germany, would be hard-pressed to find a pretext for invasion. Suppose, however, that a German army invaded an England where no one offered violent resistance? After evicting the King from Buckingham Palace and taking over the Parliament building, what would the Germans do if all the existing British officials refused to cooperate?

Some of the more prominent would be imprisoned, perhaps even shot, in order to encourage the others. But if the others held firm, if they refused to recognize or transmit any order given by the Germans, if they continued to carry out decrees previously made by the English Parliament and the English government, the Germans would have to dismiss them all, even to the humblest postman, and call in German talent to fill the breach.

The dismissed officials could not all be imprisoned or shot; since no fighting would have occurred, such wholesale brutality would be out of the question. And it would be very difficult for the Germans suddenly, and out of nothing, to create an administrative machine. Whatever edicts they might issue would be quietly ignored by the population. If they ordered that German should be the language taught in schools, the schoolmasters would go on as if no such order had been issued; if the schoolmasters were dismissed, the parents would no longer send the children to school. If they ordered that English young men should undergo military service, the young men would simply refuse; If they tried to take over the railways, there would be a strike of the railway servants. Whatever they touched would instantly become paralyzed, and it would soon be evident, even to them, that nothing was to be made out of England unless the population could be conciliated. ...

In a civilized, highly organized, highly political state, government is impossible without the consent of the governed. Any object for which a considerable body of men are prepared to starve and die can be achieved by ... [nonviolent] means, without the need of resort to force. And if this is true of objects desired by a minority only, it is a thousand times truer of objects desired unanimously by the whole nation.[31]

Even though the 20th century was dominated by two horrendous world wars, several other theorists followed in the footsteps laid out by Bertrand Russell. As early

as 1931, Gandhi recommended a nonviolent defense policy to Switzerland, to Abyssinia in 1935, to Czechoslovakia in 1938, and to Britain in 1940. He even went so far as to suggest that “an invading army be met at some suitable place by a living wall of women and children, thus giving the invaders the choice of marching over them or of turning back. This advice ceases to seem so fantastic when one recalls that in Jena, on June 17, 1953, German women held up Russian tanks for half an hour by staging a sit-down in the street. A rifle volley in the air finally made the women flee, but special units trained in Gandhi’s methods would have refused to flee and would have forced the troops either to fire or mutiny. The invaders would have thus had to give in or to reveal their brutality to the world.”[32] “The Congress Party in India rejected his proposal for a nonviolent defense in 1939, and again in 1940.”[33] Gandhi recognized that India might use such a policy to defend itself from a possible Japanese invasion during World War II, and pointed out that if India were successful in driving out the British by nonviolent means, then India ought to be able to use nonviolence to defend her newly won independence.

“Potesto in populo” (Power lies in the people)[34]

Even in the midst of war, American pacifists gave thought as to how nonviolence might be used. One such thinker was Jessie Wallace Hughan, one of the founders of the War Resisters League. In her 1942 monograph, *PACIFISM AND INVASION*, Jessie Wallace Hughan asked: what if an unarmed United States should be invaded by a foreign foe?

[W]e contend that the country will not be under the necessity of submitting to the invader, but will have at its command the tactics of nonviolent non-cooperation, in other words, by a general strike raised to the nth power. Under this plan resistance would be carried on, not by professional soldiers but by the people as a whole, by refusing to obey the invaders or to assist them through personal services or the furnishing of supplies. ...

In the present discussion, however, we are disregarding the alternative of submission to any degree, and assuming a people firm in the determination to die rather than yield as individuals, or as a nation, to the demands of an invader. No surrender but resistance to the bitter end, is the national policy. ... [T]he soldierly virtue of enduring hardship and death for one’s country will have become the ideal, not of a single profession, but of an entire population.[35]

Near the beginning of the Cold War, in 1948, E. Stanley Jones, in a biography of Gandhi, presented a similar scenario. If Russia were to invade and conquer the United States, he asked, would all be lost? “No! We could organize every man, woman, and child in the United States in a nonviolent resistance. We could withdraw all co-

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operation with the conqueror. You cannot rule over a people if they will not let you. We could break the will of the conqueror in five years. ... If the objection is raised that this has not happened in the lands where Russia has overrun the country, the answer is that this method of nonviolent resistance has not been applied.”[36] Jones concludes his discussion by noting that nonviolent resistance makes a nation “invincible.”

Authors of two books published in the late 1950s supported the contention that nonviolent civilian-based defense could take the place of armies. Cecil Hinshaw, in his *NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE: A NATION’S WAY TO PEACE*, and Bradford Lyttle, in his *NATIONAL DEFENSE THRU NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE*, both asked what would happen if the United States “had demilitarized herself,” and was then occupied by a Russian expeditionary force landing on our shores? They believed that every part of American culture would resist: Labor union members and unorganized laborers would refuse to cooperate with the Russians; managers, engineers, and administrators would do likewise; American policemen would refuse to enforce Russian rules and regulations; teachers would refuse to teach; commerce would be closed to the Russians unless they forcibly confiscated food, shelter, and clothing; the media would support the nonviolent resisters; and organized religion would bolster the spirit of the resistance, challenging the moral right of the occupying forces. “Such a total non-cooperation resistance would force the Russians to resort to a policy of total enslavement if they wished to exploit America.” The Russians would have to resort to direct coercion if they wished any American to work for them. After a few months, or years, the Russians would be worn down by the American attitude of resisting to death without fear or hatred, and recognize that their invasion had been an “abortive effort and withdraw their forces hastily.”[37]

During the 1960s, the idea of nonviolent resistance drew attention from a larger audience. Not only was nonviolence a prominent part of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, but prominent defense theorists in Great Britain (and elsewhere) began to question the efficacy of national defense by conventional armies. Stephen King-Hall in *POWER POLITICS IN THE NUCLEAR AGE* reinforced the point made by earlier advocates of nonviolent resistance, namely, that “it is impossible to make any profit out of an occupied country unless there is collaboration by the inhabitants.”[38] King-Hall noted that in conventional military thinking, occupation by enemy forces represents the end of the war and victory for the enemy. However, in the case of nonviolent resistance, such thinking was wrong: contacts between the enemy and the civilian population “provide an opportunity of winning the second and maybe decisive battle,” if the resistance is nonviolent in character.[39] Noting that if the professional armed forces of a State have failed to keep an invader out, it is unlikely that “ill-equipped and untrained civilians” will succeed in using violence to expel an enemy King-Hall went on to write that

What the civilian population must do is to shift the area of conflict

into the sphere of nonviolence, since (assuming the civilians have been trained in advance) this involves techniques in which the occupying troops have not been trained. ... These tactics require a nation trained in their use from school age upwards; they require staff colleges for teaching non-violent techniques and the production of handbooks.[40]

Adam Roberts, editor of a 1967 British book, *THE STRATEGY OF CIVILIAN DEFENCE* explained that civilian-based defense was designed not only to change the will of the opponent (by wearing him down), but “to make it impossible for him to achieve his objectives.[41] Non-cooperation with an opponent’s orders; obstruction of his actions; defiance in the face of his threats and sanctions, attempts to encourage non-compliance among his troops and servants; and the creation of parallel institutions to serve the country are some of the methods that could be used to resist an occupying force.

A similar study was published by the American Friends Service Committee in the United States in 1967. Titled *IN PLACE OF WAR: AN INQUIRY INTO NONVIOLENT NATIONAL DEFENSE*, this Quaker tract pointed out that civilian-based defense “is based upon confidence in nonviolent methods rather than a belief in nonviolence in principle.”[42] Most of the nonviolent struggles of the past have involved masses of people who were not pacifists.[43] In other words, practitioners of nonviolence need not be pacifists nor Quakers. It also compared the differences and similarities between nonviolent resistance and guerrilla warfare. Though both modes of fighting attempt to win the hearts and minds of the people, the latter, depends on secrecy and sabotage; the former on openness and non-cooperation. Guerrillas would blow up the train tracks; nonviolent resisters would block the train by standing on the tracks or by convincing the train crew to refuse to fuel or operate it.[44] It was the studied opinion of the authors of this report that measures and policies based on nonviolence could provide an effective means of national defense for the United States.

“An army can beat an army, but an army cannot beat a people.”[45]

The final discussion of nonviolent resistance which will be considered here is a fictional account written by Harry Browne in 1974. In “A Visit to Rhinegold,” Browne painted the picture of a country without political borders or political leaders which was invaded by the Germans during World War II.[46] Since the Rhinegolders had no “government,” there were no “leaders” for the Germans to capture. The Rhinegolders ignored the Germans and went about their own business. The Germans, on their part, realized that they would require as many soldiers as there were Rhinegolders in order to force them to obey. Even the Germans saw the futility of such an approach. Browne’s description of Rhinegold illustrates the point noted by a number of theorists: “the more that control over society is centralized in a single

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command center, the easier it is for an invading enemy to conquer the entire nation by conquering that command center.”[47] In other words, a nation with a centralized military and political defense mechanism is in far greater danger of being “taken over” than a nation where members of the civilian population have been taught to think for themselves and have been instructed in the basics of nonviolent resistance.

This observation about “capturing centralized command posts” brings to mind Randolph Bourne’s insightful essay “War Is the Health of the State.” Writing after World War I, Bourne noted the distinction between state and country: “[W]e have the misfortune of being born not only into a country [i.e., one’s homeland], but into a State, and as we grow up we learn to mingle the two feelings into hopeless confusion.” It is States that make wars, not countries. “War is a function of this system of States.” Countries do not make wars upon other countries. Bourne continues:

They would not only have no motive for conflict, but they would be unable to muster the concentrated force to make war effective. There might be all sorts of amateur marauding, there might be guerrilla expeditions of group against group, but there could not be that terrible war *en masse* of the national States, that exploitation of the [country] in the interest of the State, the abuse of national life and resources in the frenzied mutual suicide which is modern war.[48]

As Bourne and others have noted, the State establishes a compulsory monopoly of defense services over a certain geographic area and obtains its revenues coercively. Thus, to maintain that the State might defend itself nonviolently from a threatened invasion, as some pacifist theorists have maintained, is both inconsistent and contradictory. Since the State is an inherently invasive institution, it would be impossible for it to defend itself nonviolently. Will government agents “force” you to be nonviolent? Will you be thrown violently in jail if you refuse to pay your taxes? How could a State violently enforce a nonviolent defense against foreign occupation? Furthermore, what State would be silly enough to instruct its own population in the means of nonviolent resistance? Couldn’t enraged subjects turn nonviolently on their own State if they perceived it to be overstepping its legitimate authority? Would any national government wish to place such a weapon in the hand of its own people?[49]

Voluntaryist Resistance

Voluntaryist resistance, which I have previously discussed in an article by that title, is not a matter of repelling violence, but rather that of enlightening deceived subjects. People must be prepared mentally, spiritually, and physically (in the sense that a strong, healthy body, leads to a strong, healthy mind) to resist the demands of the illegitimate State, whether it be a foreign occupation force, or a domestic

government. As Mubarak Awad has written, “You cannot stop people when they want to be liberated The greatest enemy of the people and the most powerful weapon in the hands of the authorities is fear. [Those] who can liberate themselves from fear and who will boldly accept suffering and persecution without fear or bitterness or striking back have managed to achieve the greatest victory of all.” They have achieved self-control. “They have conquered themselves” when they recognize that they, as oppressed people, “have the option of refusing to cooperate if they are willing to pay the price.”[50]

A stateless country is far more likely to maintain its independence and remain free of threats of foreign occupation. For one thing, such an amorphous country would pose no threat to its neighbors since it would have no military establishment. For another, its development of nonviolent resistance as a means of societal defense, would make it exceedingly costly to be invaded by another State. Not only would such a strategy be less threatening to neighbors, and more daunting to would-be invaders, it would give “better results than war and at a lesser cost, and with a higher moral coefficient.”[51] Furthermore, for even such a community to exist, its members would have had to accept the idea that no State, whatever or wherever, has any legitimacy. Much as the Rhinegolders, their answer to the demand “Take me to your leader,” would be to go home to their wives and families. Such a people would not even comprehend, much less begin to obey, demands that they answer to some “legitimate” political power.

The central lesson here is that even when threatened by government violence and government weapons, there is still that something which governments cannot seize. No government, foreign or domestic, can obtain the voluntary compliance of the citizenry without their consent. The Nazis found this out much to their dismay in Berlin in February 1943. A protest lasting several days on Rosenstrasse, involving over 600 women of mixed Jewish marriages, caused the Gestapo to release some 1500 prisoners. Some of those released had been scheduled to be shipped off to Auschwitz, and were the husbands of the protesting women. It was a novel experience for the Nazis to face unarmed men, women, and children offering nonviolent resistance.[52]

Although the Berlin protesters were unharmed, the refusal to consent may be costly, dangerous, and even lead to death. Nevertheless the fact remains: Without the cooperation of the populace “maintaining power becomes costly or even impossible. All that is necessary to prevent” government domination “is to let the citizenry come to know its own strength. Or, in the timeless words of LaBoetie, ‘I do not ask that you place hands upon the tyrant to topple him over, but simply that you support him no longer; then you will behold him, like a great Colossus whose pedestal has been pulled away, fall of his own weight and break into pieces.’”[53]

Such a stance against a government who has thousands, if not millions of soldiers, and millions of dollars invested in the latest technological armaments may seem foolish, even insane. However as Leo Tolstoy noted, those who choose to resist

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“have only one thing, but that is the most powerful thing in the world – Truth.”[54]
And in the truth of nonviolence we find the following pearls of wisdom:

“[T]he prim[ary] human obligation is to act fearlessly and in accord with one’s beliefs; that one should withdraw cooperation from destructive institutions; that this should be done without violence ... ; that means are more important than ends; that crimes shouldn’t be committed today for the sake of a better world tomorrow; that violence brutalizes the user as well as his victim; that the value of action lies in the direct benefit it brings society; that action is usually best aimed at one’s immediate surroundings and only later at more distant goals; that winning state power” should be eschewed; that freedom begins with one’s self because freedom is self-control; that freedom is oriented toward a love of truth; and that all power depends upon the consent of the governed.”[55]

[Footnotes available on request. See www.voluntaryist.com.]

“If It’s Right, Do It!”

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 144, 1st Quarter 2010)

In EVERYTHING I WANT TO DO IS ILLEGAL, retail farmer, composter, homeschooler, Christian, and herb-healing environmentalist Joel Salatin takes off where Walter Block left us in DEFENDING THE UNDEFENDABLE. Joel doesn’t want to do the roguish things that our society usually frowns upon, like dope dealing, pot growing, or being a slum lord or pimp. Instead Joel, the owner and operator of Polyface Farm in Swope, VA describes the innocent, peaceful, and consensual activities that have led to his confrontations with “the law.” Like Joel, if you have ever employed under-age children, erected a shed or a house without a building permit or government-approved materials, butchered and sold beef, poultry, or pork for off-the-farm consumption, taught your children or others at home without government permission, sold uninspected eggs or raw milk to a neighbor, or simply gone about your business in complete disregard or ignorance of government rules and regulations, then you will appreciate the comic gravity and wholesome stoicism of the author. As Joel puts it, he has that rare ability to make conservatives, liberals, socialists, and Greens all mad at him at the same time: that is because he is fed up with government intervention in his affairs, in what he consumes, in what he sells, and in how he treats the land under his stewardship.[24]

Joel’s grandfather was a charter subscriber to ORGANIC FARMING, and his

parents bought a 550 acre parcel of land on the edge of the Shenandoah Valley in 1961. Joel has lived there since then, and in later years has been joined by his children and grandchildren. Joel has been one of the most vocal and ardent leaders of the homesteading and “back to the family farm” movement, developing profitable methods and local markets to survive in an increasingly agribusiness world. His approach, as found in his books PASTURED POULTRY PROFITS, HOLY COWS AND HOG HEAVEN, SALAD BAR BEEF, and FAMILY FRIENDLY FARMING, has been to raise “animals that require very low inputs but return very high profits.” By focusing on his competitive advantage, which Joel describes as “our ability to manage the land with intensive, controlled grazing and direct marketing,” he and his family have been able to double and even triple the income potential of their land.[I-2] Joel has also been a constant contributor to and supporter of such publications as ACRES USA (dedicated to Organic Farming, Homesteading, Specialty Crops, Ecological Farming, Natural Health, and Eco-Living) and STOCKMAN GRASS FARMER.

I think Joel would describe himself as a libertarian. When asked in an interview after the publication of his book: “Would you let people smoke dope and buy penicillin without a prescription? What would happen if people were turned loose that way?” he responded,

Yes, they would become *responsible* or they would *die* of irresponsibility. ...We create a responsible populace by giving them responsibility. Take responsibility away and you create a lethargic mentally sleeping populace. People smarten up quickly about responsibilities [they] have to make decisions for. [III-4]

Many other libertarian proclivities are apparent throughout the book. Joel says he currently opposes, and would have opposed from their inception, all child labor laws. “A willing worker and a willing employer should be able to come to agreement without governmental intervention.”[190] Children should be encouraged to learn and hone their skills by engaging in productive work, especially on the farm, under the supervision of their parents and relatives. He goes so far as to claim that making child employment illegal (as we almost do today) amounts to cultural abuse because children are prevented from coming into direct contact with the world around them.

Joel rejects the idea of having a federal and/or state-level Food and Drug Administration for a number of reasons. First, he realizes that the functions performed by government bureaucrats in the areas under their jurisdiction could be accomplished by private inspection and certification agencies. Government bureaucrats have little to lose when their inspections fail and an outbreak of disease occurs. Independent farmers put their reputations on the line when they market their own farm-grown food to the consumer. Private inspection agencies have the same positive incentives. In addition, both the farmer and the private inspection agency are liable to those to

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whom they cause provable harm. Since when is the bureaucracy responsible for its failed actions? Furthermore, government programs, after they start, take on a life of their own, whether they do a good job or not. “[T]he inertia to keep ... [them] going is stronger than anything else.”[122] Joel realizes that no system of food protection, government or free market, is perfect. However, since personal integrity and accountability can never be legislated, he would prefer the latter.[69,142]

Joel is a proponent of total freedom in the food trade. He wants the farmer to have the freedom to grow what he wants and the freedom to sell to whomever he pleases. He wants every American to have the right “to decide what to eat,” from whatever source he or she chooses. “In other words, people would sign a ‘I Am Responsible for My Food’ waiver that would give them the right to opt out of government-sanctioned food,” much as they have the right to opt out of the government public schools, by either home schooling, or sending their children to private schools. Without specifically identifying it, Joel wholeheartedly embraces the libertarian self-ownership axiom.

What good is the freedom to worship, the right to keep and bear arms, and freedom of the press if we don’t have the freedom to choose what to feed our bodies so we can go sing, shoot and speak? The only reason the founding fathers did not grant [us] the freedom to choose our food was because it was such a basic, fundamental personal right that they could not conceive that special protection would be needed. Granting citizens the right to choose their food would have been similar to granting them the right to see the sun rise, or to breathe.[230]

Joel talks about being at the dedication of a new public school building a few years ago. In the course of his address, the speaker said that “Every child belongs to the state.”[288] He was shocked but no one else was, but that also explains why many of his opinions shock others. All government regulation and control is premised on the idea that the citizen belongs to the state and must be protected from himself or herself as well as from others. That is why Joel is in favor of legalized drugs and alcohol.

As he explains:

The same thinking that assumes it’s okay for the government to keep me from smoking dope to protect me against myself - also justifies the government to regulate my use of Vitamin C or homeopathy [or raw milk, uninspected chicken or homemade cookies]. My fundamentalist Christian friends go apoplectic when I say such things, but I would rather a few people blow their brains with cocaine than that my uncle be denied an unconventional medical treatment of his choice.[314]

As soon as the freedom for me to choose one thing I can ingest

becomes a government issue, then that oversight can consistently be extended to any and all of my ingestion choices. If we can't own our own bodies, then what can we own? When I hear people say, 'We need a law' to correct some perceived life risk or supposed societal avarice, I cringe. Just like technology [which] can be used for good or evil, the political process is the same way. And my experience teaches me to be dubious whenever the power of government is invoked as a cure.[314-315]

Although I disagree with Joel's assertion that the political process might be used for good, there are many other libertarian themes in EVERYTHING I WANT TO DO IS ILLEGAL, and I will give a few of them only passing mention. One is the observation that all government regulation aims to stifle competition to the benefit of those companies that have current market share. Another is that the political rationale for food safety regulations is that we are property of the state. Third is that government regulations, building codes, etc. deny us the right to experiment with new methods of production and new products. "The only safety [there is] comes in our communities, our homes, our families, from the bottom up. And these institutions must be free to experiment, to innovate." [316] We can never know "how many farms and how much good, locally produced food is unavailable because of" government regulations.[180] Another is to distrust all official government pronouncements by bureaucrats or "experts," because they are usually either wrong or full of self-serving propaganda.[III-14]

Perhaps we have proved that Joel Salatin is a libertarian, albeit one who stops short of totally abandoning government the way voluntaryists do. Voluntaryists surely wish that he had a firmer grasp on the importance of property rights. For example, he never points out that all government regulations violate the property rights of peaceful people to produce, use, and trade their property as they wish. Government regulations which inhibit the sale of raw milk, butter, moonshine, or hemp, cocaine, or marijuana are all violations of the producers' rights to buy, sell, or trade their products. Indeed, many back country moonshiners "didn't feel like the government should tell them what they should do with their property, or what they should do with the products from the land. ... [T]hey felt that they had the right to do as they pleased with their own land and the products of their own labor." [Moore, 153]

Surely one of Joel's main differences with voluntaryism is found in his discussion of "Taxes" (Chapter 18). Never once does he point out that taxes are theft. At one point he asks "How high should taxes be?" assuming that taxes are necessary to a civilized society. His answer, based on Genesis and the story of Joseph and the Israelites in Egypt is 10%. Hence his conclusion: "all taxes are too high," and, being a farmer, he thinks they fall unfairly on farmers. Just as he fails to see that property rights are violated when governments regulate property, so he fails to realize that property rights are violated when governments coercively take money from their citizens. Indeed, the very existence of government negates property rights.

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Perhaps he will see this one day. In the meantime, however, Joel Salatin says that his farming “is not just a business, it is a sacred calling, a sacred ministry, serving people who seek truth and are willing to travel dirt roads to get it.”[59-60] He chides those who would follow his advice to farm and homestead, yet hesitate because they fear some of their commercial activities would not be legal. In his response we find the kind of disrespect for government that voluntaryists want to inculcate:

Who *cares* if it’s legal? If it’s right, do it. We’ve raised a culture of people who want to ask permission to scratch their nose[s]. We need to examine what is *right*, then ... *do* it.[II-4]

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Laying the Axe to the Root of the Tree: Voluntaryist Strategies to End Human Slavery

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 164, 1st Quarter 2015)

In the Fall of 2013, I received a direct-mail campaign piece from The Foundation for Economic Education which was accompanied by a DVD titled AMAZING GRACE. The DVD told the story of the efforts of William Wilberforce and the British abolitionists to outlaw the slave trade. Their primary focus was on getting enough

votes in the House of Commons and the House of Lords to make it a criminal act for any British subject or British-owned ship to transport slaves within the empire. When this goal was finally achieved in 1807, the abolitionists realized that they needed to undertake another campaign, this time to outlaw the ownership of slaves within the British dominions. Finally, in 1833, both houses of Parliament passed an emancipation bill which made the slaves apprentices until 1838, when they would become officially free. In addition, the British government awarded the owners of these slaves 20 million pounds in government bonds to compensate them for the loss of their “property.”[1]

Watching AMAZING GRACE got me thinking. Although most civilizations have had some form of slavery, historically, what were some of the non-political ways that the slaves had been freed? How might slavery have been abolished in a voluntarist society where there was no central government to decree what was legal and illegal? Although it is clear that slavery and voluntarism are incompatible, it is still likely that some form of slavery would occur in a voluntarist society, but it would not be a socially acceptable institution. Slavery is the total violation of a person’s self-ownership rights. Indeed, some abolitionists referred to slavery as “man stealing.” Under a system of chattel slavery, slave owners not only buy and sell their slaves like beasts of burden, but the children of slaves are the slave owner’s property, too. As David Brion Davis wrote in *THE PROBLEM OF SLAVERY IN WESTERN CULTURE*, “the slave has three defining characteristics: his person is the property of another man, his will is subject to his owner’s authority, and his labor or services are obtained through coercion.”[2] In most cases, this requires the existence of a government and laws to define the rights of the slave owner, laws against manumission, laws that create compulsory slave patrols and, above all else, the use of the government police power to force the return of runaway slaves.[3]

Even though advances in technology and the Industrial Revolution and human understanding were making slavery less justifiable and less economically sustainable before the American Civil War, the big question still remained: Was it right or wrong for one person to own another? Many early American abolitionists believed that it was necessary “to convince [their] fellow citizens ... that slave-holding [was] a heinous crime,” but they shared different opinions about the proper way to bring about its cessation.[4] William Lloyd Garrison and his followers, for example, were opposed to involvement in politics. Whether it be office holding or participating in political parties, they did not want to support a government which permitted slavery. To Garrison’s way of thinking the end could not justify the means. They sought “a change in the moral vision of the people.”[5] “In seeking to reform the public sentiment that lay behind laws and constitutions and that inspired them, the Garrisonians struck at the source of the problem.”[6] Moral suasion (as they called it) laid the axe at the root of the tree. Their task was “to awaken public opinion to the horror of slavery and to stimulate it to take action against the evil. ... Without public opinion on their side, the abolitionists could accomplish” very little. Using moral

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persuasion, they had to concentrate on “awakening consciences [and] disseminating the truth” that slavery was evil.[7] Lydia Maria Child, a cohort of Garrison, pointed out that even if slavery were outlawed by Congress “great political changes ... without corresponding changes in the moral sentiment of a nation, [would be] worse than useless.” The evils of slavery would reappear “in a more exaggerated form.”[8]

It is clearly wrong to think that the only way slavery could have been eliminated in the United States is by having fought the Civil War. As Jim Powell wrote in the conclusion to his book, *GREATEST EMANCIPATIONS: HOW THE WEST ABOLISHED SLAVERY*, “a peaceful, persistent, multi-strategy process of eroding slavery would have made it much less difficult to arrive at a point where blacks could be both emancipated and safe, flourishing with equal rights in a free society.”[9] Voluntaryists reject violent means, such as those used by John Brown and the armies of the North. Violence only begets violence and certainly does not change minds. Voluntaryists also reject governmental solutions to the problem of slavery. They would not become involved in party politics or government emancipation programs. What voluntaryists would have done is to constantly emphasize that slavery was an unmitigated evil and dispel the assumption that “blacks were incapable of living in freedom.”[10] Voluntaryists would have supported the establishment of trade and vocational schools and colleges that would help blacks demonstrate that they were as capable, hard-working, frugal, and enterprising as their white counterparts. People like Frederick Douglass, Doctor James McCune Smith, William Wells Brown, and Booker T. Washington were shining examples of what could be achieved.

In a letter written about March 1, 1837, the sisters, Sarah and Angelina Grimke pretty much summarized what they described as “The definite, practical means by which the North can put an end to Slavery in the South.” They purported to set forth the sins of the North, and then “showed what Northerners c[ould] do to overthrow the great Prison House of the South.” Although they endorsed petitioning Congress and refusing to vote for pro-slavery Congressmen, they emphasized the voluntaryist, non-political means of undermining slavery:

Let the northern churches refuse to receive slaveholders at their communion tables, or to permit slaveholding ministers to enter their pulpits. ... Let northern men who go to the South to make their fortunes, see to it that those fortunes are not made out of the unrequited toil of the slave. ... Let northern manufacturers refuse to purchase cotton, for the cultivation of which the laborer has received no wages. Let the grocer refuse to buy the rice and sugar of the South, Let the merchant refuse to receive the articles manufactured of slave grown cotton, and let the consumer refuse to purchase either the rice, sugar or cotton articles ... which has cost the slave his unpaid labor, his tears and his blood. Every northerner may, in this way, bear a faithful testimony against slavery at the South, by withdrawing his pecuniary support. ...

If Northerners were to do all we have marked out, can anyone doubt the powerful influence which it would produce on southern conscience and Southern interest? Could slavery live a single year under such an organized, disinterested, noble opposition to it? No, it would wither and die, never to be revived again. If Northerners were to purify their hearts and cleanse their hands from the sin of slavery, then would their tongues be loosed, and they would unceasingly pour into the ears of Southerners, the calm remonstrance, the brotherly rebuke, the earnest entreaty "to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke." ... Oh no! He still has the heart of a man, and that heart would soon break under the hammer of truth.[11]

However, some major ideas were missing from the Grimkes' letter, such as mounting a major tax refusal campaign against any government which supported slavery; and encouraging the slaves, themselves, to stop work and confront their oppressors with their refusal to cooperate.[12] Whether one believes that northern declamations against slavery and the religious, social, and economic boycott of slave-owning Southerners would be effective, history shows that these and other nonviolent means of weakening and undercutting slavery did exist, and in many cases, were at least partially successful, in accomplishing their goal.

In the case of England, the British abolitionists undertook a massive public relations campaign to arouse the public against the slave trade. As Alexis de Tocqueville observed, it was "something absolutely without precedent in history." [13] To begin the massive job of changing public opinion, the British abolitionists used every means at their disposal. They used popular forums, like the debating societies (where women often took part), to argue the demerits of slavery. They collected many thousands of signatures on petitions. They printed and distributed letters reporting on the status of their campaign and solicited contributions to support their cause. They publicized and utilized a logo and medallion created by Josiah Wedgewood and his workers, which read "Am I not a man and a brother?" They encouraged people to boycott the use of slave-grown sugar. They issued the first widely distributed political poster showing the inhumane conditions existing in ships engaged in the slave trade. They organized local committees under the umbrella of a national organization, and they put an ex-slave, Olaudah Equiano, on tour to publicize his autobiography, which rapidly became a best-seller.[14]

The sugar boycott in Britain reached its climax during the year 1792, when it was estimated that 300,000 men, women, and children abstained from using slave-grown sugar. A tract written and published in the same year argued that since neither the slave dealer nor planter had any moral right to control the slave or the products of his labor, they could not convey good title. Anyone who bought from them only had a criminal possession; by receiving the produce of the slave's labor a person became an

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accessory to robbery, after the fact. The advocates of the boycott argued, that “If we purchase the commodity, we participate in the crime.”[15] A 20th Century researcher on “slave sugar boycotts and female activism” noted:

[A]bstention became a matter of conscience, a way of purifying oneself from pollution by the sin of slavery, ...; [and] it was a way of rooting antislavery in domestic culture; and it was a means of promoting economic systems based on waged rather than unwaged labor. But it had another important significance. It was promoted as a way of bringing about the downfall of the slave system as rapidly as possible, without awaiting the results of parliamentary deliberations. ... [A]bstention encouraged universal participation. .. [A]bstention campaigners recognized that their effectiveness depended on gaining the widest possible public participation, and thus actively solicited the support of children, of the poor, and most, notably, of women. ... [P]rivate abstention became an expression of public anti-slavery opinion. ... [A]bstention was direct action by the masses.

[In 1824,] Quaker pamphleteer, Elizabeth Heyrick, asserted that slavery was a question in which we are all implicated. [The West Indian planter, and the people of this country, stand in the same moral relation to each other, as the thief and the receiver of stolen goods.] There was no neutral ground: “the whole nation must now divide itself into the active supporters, and the active opposers of slavery.” ... Abstention was thus linked to an unwillingness to rely on governmental action. ... [I]f government would not take action the people must bring about the end of the slave trade themselves by putting economic pressure on the planters and slave traders. ... Government could be by-passed and, through abstention, ‘We, the people, the common people of England - we ourselves will emancipate’ [the slave]. Abstention campaigns were thus about the people taking things into their own hands rather than relying on the authorities.[16]

Although the sugar boycott only reduced the price of sugar by one penny per pound, this alarmed the West Indian slave owners “more than all the alarm that had been produced by moral and legislative action.”[17] Midgley concludes that the boycott’s “direct impact on sugar production in the West Indies was very limited. ... [A]bstention’s significance lay rather in its vital role in creating a national anti-slavery culture in Great Britain.”[18]

American abolitionists, with the active participation of many Quakers, created their own Free Produce movement. In 1839, Thomas Branagan published his tract, **BUYING STOLEN GOODS SYNONYMOUS WITH STEALING**. He argued that “Slavery depends on the consumption of the produce of its labour for support. Refuse

this produce, and slavery MUST cease. Say not that individual influence is small. Every aggregate must be composed of a collection of individuals. It is only by such collected individual influence, that any important end is attained; any great design is accomplished by man. The power of numbers supplies the want of sufficient force in the individual;”[19] Elihu Burritt (1810-1879), the Learned Blacksmith, noted in Reason Seven of his pre-Civil War tract TWENTY REASONS FOR TOTAL ABSTINENCE FROM SLAVE-LABOUR PRODUCE, “It is a measure that does not trench upon any principle of free trade. It asks the interference of no legislation against the introduction or use of slave-labour produce. It requires no petitions to parliaments, diets, national assemblies, cortes, or congresses. It involves nothing but the free, voluntary legislation of the individual conscience upon the articles of household or personal consumption.”[20] The Quaker-led American Free Produce Association called the boycott “one of the most efficient means of peacefully abolishing the system of slavery.”[21]

The Quakers did not limit their abolitionist activities to the free produce movement. In fact, their opposition to slavery began much earlier. The Quakers became the only major religious denomination that would not allow its members to own slaves.[22] They eventually voluntarily abolished slavery and slaveholding among the members of their religion. Those who refused were disowned from the Society. In 1758, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting resolved to exclude members who bought or sold slaves. “Those who persisted in violating the rules by purchasing Negroes were ... subjected to discipline. ... [They] could not have the unity of Friends” if they continued to own slaves.[23] The Quakers asserted that slaves were “prize” goods, that is, captives of war, violence, cruelty, and oppression, of theft and robbery of the highest nature. The use of prize goods or any goods obtained through illegitimate means was inconsistent with their testimony towards peace and nonviolence. Therefore it was only consistent that they forego the purchase and services of human beings who had been captured in Africa, even though they themselves had not been involved in the original violence.

Not only did most Quakers manumit their slaves, but they actually paid reparations to their former slaves, as compensation for their past unpaid services. In this sense, they may have been the only “ruling class” ever to voluntarily relinquish their power over others.[24] One of the earliest Quakers to attack slavery was Elias Hicks (1748-1830), who manumitted his own slaves in 1778. In 1811, he published his OBSERVATIONS ON THE SLAVERY OF THE AFRICANS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS, AND ON THE USE OF THE PRODUCE OF THEIR LABOR. “Hicks insisted that all men were free under the laws of God; that no one had a moral right to enslave his fellows for any reason whatever. Users of the products of slave labor shared in the guilt of the slaveholders, he believed; they were equally culpable in the sight of God. No man-made law sanctioning slavery could remove this guilt, nor could slaveholders rightfully refuse to emancipate their slaves. On the contrary, they owed their slaves wages for the work which had unjustly been required of

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them.”[25]

Many Quakers were active in the Underground Railroad, and stood ready to help runaway slaves. But as Harriet Tubman and other contemporaries noted, the slaves had to want to be free. She is reputed to have said, “I freed a thousand slaves, but I could have freed a thousand more if they had only known they were slaves.” No external authority could make them free. This was exactly the point that the nonviolent Garrisonians clung to before John Brown’s raid and the outbreak of the Civil War. Violence was not a permanent solution to the problem of slavery. Violence would not make the slaves want freedom; violence would not convince the slaveholders that their ownership of slaves was a moral wrong; and violence would not change public sentiment. Slavery and governments and violence were so intertwined that the Garrisonians believed that it was foolish to believe that violence exercised by governments could be used to end slavery.

Furthermore, as the nonviolent critics of John Brown pointed out, a war against slavery would be almost as bad as slavery itself.[26] Parker Pillsbury expressed a basic pacifist insight when “he said, ‘We cannot cast out the devil of slavery by the devil’ of war.”[27] Adin Ballou asked, “[I]f the slaves were freed by rebellion what is to be done with them for the next one hundred years? It would take at least a century to educate them out of the ferocity engendered by such conflict. How are they to be employed, trained for liberty, and organized into well ordered communities? And above all how is this work to be accomplished with the great mass of whites in the country full of horror, loathing, and revenge toward them? ... Can’t we wait the operation of a more peaceful process? Can’t we content ourselves with holy efforts to bring about a change in public sentiment, so that this thing may be accomplished, without resorting to such horrible measures? It may seem hard to wait, but if we do not wait, we shall do worse.”[28] Ballou claimed that there were “vast differences between a people trained for liberty and self-government through a century and a half, and the millions of long crushed slaves, schooled to servility and studiously kept in ignorance[.] Such a people need all the help and benefit of a peaceful emancipation.”[29] William H. Furness, Philadelphia Underground Railroader and Unitarian pastor summarized the damage that Brown’s raid did to abolitionism. “In resorting to force” he injured the cause of abolitionism. “He did not take into account the undeviating law that violence produces violence. ...Revolutions effected by force always end, sooner or later, in reestablishing the tyranny they undertake to overthrow.”[30]

After the war, there were a few nonviolent abolitionists who realized that the Northern victory was hollow. They disagreed with Garrison’s belief that government-forced emancipation was a success. “H.C. Wright [had] repeatedly said that only ideas, not bullets, could permanently settle the question of slavery. ... Ezra Heywood pointed out that a government that could abolish slavery as a military necessity had no antislavery principles and could therefore reestablish slavery if circumstances required it.” Indeed, the federal government initiated military conscription during the war (1862), even before Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.

“Abby Kelley Foster ... predicted flatly, if the slave is freed only out of consideration for the safety of the Union, [then] ‘the hate of the colored race will still continue, and the poison of that wickedness will destroy us as a nation’.” At least a few of the nonviolent abolitionists “had not forgotten their fundamental belief that to achieve humanitarian reform, particularly if it was to be thorough and permanent reform, the methods used to achieve it must be consistent with the nature of the reform.”[31] “What [most pro-war] abolitionists often chose to brush aside was that after the [fighting] most blacks would still be living in the South among ... Confederates” who were opposed to their emancipation.[32] What the critics of war saw was that “[W]ar as a means to end the oppression of Negroes was to be little more than tragic futility.”[33]

In predicting the success of forced emancipation as a result of war, Thomas Wentworth Higginson noted that in reality “freedom of the slave ultimately had to be the work of the slave. He stated frankly in a private letter: ‘The great obstacle to anti-slavery action has always been the apparent feebleness and timidity of the slaves themselves.’ ... Nonresistants held similar sentiments. One of them repeated Lord Byron’s often-quoted line, ‘Who would be free, themselves must strike the first blow.’ The antislavery movement could help in removing ‘the outward forms of bondage,’ but it was up to the Negroes to raise themselves in the scale of civilization.” As Adin Ballou put it, “To put an end to slavery by emancipation will not materially elevate the character of the race,” nor make them free. The slaves have to want to free themselves; otherwise efforts by others to free them would ultimately fail.[34]

Douglas Lorimer in his article “Black Slaves and English Liberty” concluded that it was this attitude of desiring freedom and taking responsibility for one’s own self which actually brought freedom to the slaves in England. “[A]ided by free blacks and sympathetic whites ... [they] established their own liberty.” The slaves simply voted with their feet and chose to become free servants.[35] Since English law of the mid to late 1700s did not take cognizance of a person’s skin color (“the law took no notice of a negro”), common law processes applied to those slaves that were brought to England by their masters.[36] In 1772, in what became known as the Somerset decision, Lord Mansfield removed the greatest threat to blacks in England: they could not be forcefully deported to a foreign country (where their slave status would be legally recognized).[37] Slaves in England were subject to the writ of habeas corpus. A Negro could not be held as a slave against his will, since there was no positive law sanctioning slavery within England. However, as Lorimer emphasized, the end of slavery in England came about, not from the decisions of the courts, but from the actions of the slaves.

One of the ways that some American slaves struck their first blows for freedom was by arranging to buy themselves. This was done by the slave purchasing himself from his master.[38] It is impossible to calculate the number of slaves who were freed by purchase, though historical records show it was in the hundreds, if not thousands. Often times, the self-purchase movement went forward in spite of the legal

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restrictions imposed by all of the slave states. It was most prevalent in the industrialized cities, where slaves usually had more opportunities to earn money. In cities, such as Charleston, SC, self-purchase arrangements were sometimes made through churches. In other places, already freed slaves were used as intermediaries and/or trustees to hold title to slaves who bought themselves. The self-purchase movement helped to undermine the system of slavery by refuting the argument that slavery was justifiable and necessary because Negroes were inferior beings. It demonstrated that Negroes could attain their freedom in the face of overwhelming obstacles. Furthermore, it aroused envy and discontent among those who were still slaves by showing what could be accomplished by free Negroes.[39]

So what would laying the axe to the root of the tree mean in terms of voluntaryist strategy? Ultimately, it would mean influencing public opinion to such an extent that slavery would no longer be tolerated. Society and culture would gradually dry up the support for slavery.[40] This is what happened in at least one northern state. “[B]y the time of the first United States Census, in 1790, no slaves were officially listed in Massachusetts.”[41] Indeed in examining how slavery was ‘dried up’ in Massachusetts, in 1795, “Jeremy Belknap ... claimed that public opinion was chiefly responsible for the wane of slavery. Summarizing the instances in which slaves had sued for and obtained their freedom before the Revolution, he noted that the process became easier after the ratification of the [state] Constitution of 1780, when many Negroes asked for their freedom and got it, while others simply absconded and depended upon the weight of public opinion to sustain them in their behavior.”[42] Thus, “When public opinion would no longer tolerate slavery it disappeared”[43] No war, no violence, no government legislation nor emancipation proclamations were necessary. When public opinion turns against slavery, support for slavery collapses, and the slaves simply become free.

The nonviolent campaign to abolish slavery holds many lessons for the voluntaryist who wants to abandon taxation and the state. As I noted in my anthology, *RENDER NOT: THE CASE AGAINST TAXATION*, the arguments against taxation are very analogous to the arguments against slavery. As I explain there, taxation is not only theft - it is slavery. If voluntaryists are to learn anything from the movement to abolish the slave trade and slavery it should be that they must lay the axe at the root of the tree and convincingly demonstrate that the premise behind taxation is that the State owns the citizen. When public opinion no longer tolerates the coercive monopolization of public services exercised by the State, the State will disappear. No war, no violence, no government legislation, nor government tax holidays will be necessary. When public opinion turns against taxation, support for the State will collapse, and the citizenry will simply become free.

Footnotes

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Put Up Thy Sword into The Sheath

by W. H. Furness

(From Issue 169, 2nd Quarter 2016)

[Editor's Note: William Henry Furness (1802-1896) was a Unitarian minister, a non-resistant abolitionist, a station master on the Underground Railroad, and a critic of John Brown. The following excerpts are taken from "A Discourse delivered before Theodore Parker's Society at the Music Hall, Boston, Sunday, March 11, 1860," and was published by R. F. Wallcut later that same year. John Brown's strategy was to capture the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, and start "a liberation movement among enslaved African Americans" by establishing armed guerrilla bands in the west Virginia mountains. Brown was convicted of treason against the Commonwealth of Virginia, and hung in Charles Town, Virginia on December 2, 1859. Page numbers of the original text are indicated in parentheses. The title of the piece is taken from the NEW TESTAMENT in John xviii. 11.]

[W]hile I heartily honor John Brown for his generous purpose and for his heroic courage ... I see that in resorting to force, in drawing the sword for the slave, he was wrong, and that the means which he employed tended to hurt the cause which it was in his great heart to serve. (14) ... He did not take into account the undeviating law, that violence produce[s] violence, and that the force, which he intended to employ very guardedly and under the stead[y] restraint of a watchful humanity, would look, in the eyes of those against whom it was directed, like nothing but what it was, pure, untempered, brute force, and so would be sure to arouse a force in them which would regard no restraints. (15) ...

The sword can only kill and wound the body, and upon the mind it can have no effect, but to madden it with rage or drive it wild with terror; thus, so far from convincing the understanding, or strengthening the sense of Justice, or breathing into men the spirit of repentance and humanity, closing both heart and understanding against Truth. Every body knows this. Every body knows that a blow is not an argument, that stabbing and shooting prove nothing, that physical force displaces the greater force of Truth. (17) ...

Therefore, because the Truth is so great, let the sword be put back into the sheath. We need something stronger than that, and Truth is much more effectual than any brute force, ... (18) ...

As I see the immeasurable superiority of intellectual and moral power over all the revolvers and rifles and artillery that have ever been or ever will be devised, as I hold this superiority of power of the mind over the force of the body to be as true as the

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shining of the sun in the heavens, I believe that unless men lose their senses, and are bereft of the commonest faculties of discernment, they must sooner or later, recognize this truth, recognize it, too, so clearly that they will be at a loss to conceive how men, laying claim to any civilization, could have ever been so absurd as to undertake the fight against evil with physical force, when the invincible Sword of the Spirit is always within reach. ... But there is a far higher courage, there is a far more daring spirit than his who knows how to fight. There is a braver [one] than he. It is the man who knows how to die, who, never thinking to insult the Truth by employing in her behalf any weapons but her own, speaks her message (19) in love, and without fear, prepared to suffer violence, but never to commit it; who, in a word, is so brave that he holds it cowardly to draw the sword. (20) ...

Revolutions effected by force always end, sooner or later, in reestablishing the tyranny they undertake to overthrow. And our boasted American Revolution is no exception to this truth, but an impressive instance of it.

It is high time that the savage attempt to convert men by killing them, by wholesale murder, should come to a full end. (21)

A Skeptic's View of One's Right to Defensive Force[1]

by Spencer Heath MacCallum

(From Issue 169, 2nd Quarter 2016)

My brother and I scrapped a lot as kids. Since he was a couple of years older and I was a brattish younger brother, I was on the receiving end of a lot of rough behavior which I usually knew how to provoke to a point just short of really getting hurt. In the years since then I've given a lot of thought to the question of force, especially when asking the question, what is social behavior?

Years later at my alma mater, Princeton, a sociology professor once told his beginning class that social behavior was "anything involving lots of people interacting together." My grandfather, Spencer Heath, had been invited to sit in on the class. He asked if war was an example of social behavior. "Preeminently so," said the professor. "Then if war is an example of social behavior," Heath replied, "would you give the class an example of *anti-social* behavior?"

The professor wasn't taking into account the *quality* of relations among people. Heath's view, on the other hand, was that it is useful to define society not merely as population, but as that fraction of a population - its boundaries ever permeable - engaged in voluntary, reciprocal kinds of behavior such as trading in the market place. The violent behavior to be found in the excluded fraction outside of society, he would say, including most notably that practiced by the state, is indicative of a failing, a lack of, or immaturity of social organization.

Part VII: Nonviolence, Strategy, and Nonvoting

My subject here is not social behavior, however, but its antithesis, force. Doubtless force, or violence, will always be with us in a degree, since we are limited, finite beings. But if we want to enlarge the fraction of the population that constitutes society, it behooves us to ask if there are some ways of thinking about force that are more conducive to that end than others. Are there ways that might tend to damp it out rather than inflaming and escalating it?

Many libertarians I've known don't oppose violence as such; they are not pacifists. They distinguish aggressive and defensive force and eschew the one, but are entirely comfortable with the other. Most of them strongly advocate using force "under the right circumstances," and I've known many who spend a great deal of time carefully defining what those circumstances are.

Make no mistake, I'm not suggesting that anyone not stand up for her or his legitimate interests. I am not one to meekly turn the other cheek or supinely give in to the aggressor. Gandhi, who was often misunderstood on this score, set the record straight in these words:

He who cannot protect himself or his nearest and dearest or their honour by nonviolently facing death, may and ought to do so by violently dealing with the oppressor. He who can do neither of the two is a burden. He has no business to be the head of a family. He must either hide himself, or must rest content to live forever in helplessness and be prepared to crawl like a worm at the bidding of a bully.[2]

The question is simply whether it is conducive to our purpose to say that one *has a natural right* to defensive violence. To speak in such terms is to launder violence; it is to say that, *exercised under the right circumstances*, it is good and just - perhaps even akin to the angels - rather than a leftover from our animal heritage that we must resort to sometimes when we can't think of a more intelligent alternative.

The reluctance of many libertarians to critically examine what they hold to be their "natural right" to defend themselves violently is wholly understandable. For they are the holy keepers of an iridescent dream — and the dream is one in which they believe violence has its proper place.

The dream is to live in a world devoid of the state, its taxation, compulsions, and war, releasing human energy for creative play from the inmost world of the human psyche to the farthest reach of the cosmos. But immediately comes a question. Absent government exercising a monopoly of violence, who will protect people from theft and other aggressions? Libertarians normally answer that this is the responsibility of each individual person, who must be prepared to forcibly defend himself or to delegate his 'natural right' to private agencies from whom he'll purchase protective services. Consequently, he must defend to his last breath that 'right.'

But there is little agreement as to precisely how this force should, would, or could be handled. Some argue, as did Bob LeFevre, against using any force at all,

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while others argue for heavily arming themselves and retaliating on the slightest provocation. Fundamental to the argument for privatizing defensive violence is the distinction between *initiated* and *defensive* force. Libertarians condone only the latter, but how to distinguish the two in real-life situations is no simple matter. Aggression itself is ill-defined. Moreover, how much violence is justified by a given kind and degree of trespass is subject to many interpretations, the most extreme of which would simply brand any aggressor at all “fair game.” David Friedman has written a compelling critique of the natural-rights argument for defensive violence, showing the utter inadequacy of most libertarian theory in this regard.[3]

May not this problem arise, not from the need for individuals to look out for themselves, but from their gratuitously assuming in the first place a “natural right” to respond violently to what they perceive as aggression?

This question of self-defense is a thorny distraction from the merits of the libertarian position. Many who at first find themselves attracted to libertarianism subsequently abandon that overarching vision for the more limited dream, which to them appears more realistic, of minarchy, or limited government. To them, their former fellows are impractical or self-deceiving in supposing that everyone could rely on self-help in this regard and the situation not degenerate into endless feuding, strife, and confusion. They themselves, however, while suffering the stinging accusation of having compromised their ideals, must now contemplate the conundrum - the veritable riddle of the Sphinx - of how to police the policeman.

The irony is that all such discord is needless. If libertarians and minarchists were to modify their thinking in just two ways, the problem might evaporate as dew from the morning grass. These two ways which I offer as propositions may at first seem unlikely. But I offer them in the spirit of Emerson, who observed that “senates and sovereigns can confer no honor like the presenting of a worthy thought and presupposing its intelligent consideration.”

The first would be to relinquish the idea that anyone possesses a natural right or moral obligation to use any kind of interpersonal violence in any situation whatsoever, even defensively.

The second would be to make the *productive assumption* that, for any conflict situation, there are always non-violent solutions.

Bear with me as I elaborate these points and explain how, together, they may offer a strategy for greatly diminishing reliance on violence in human affairs and so promoting cooperation, expanding that fraction of a population Heath called “society.”

First: Defensive Force

As noted, Friedman and others have pointed out both practical and theoretical problems with a natural-rights approach to defensive force. What alternative approaches might there be? A beginning to finding an alternative approach would be to cultivate a more dispassionate, clinical, non-judgmental attitude by looking at

interpersonal force from a *functional* rather than either a moral or a legalistic viewpoint, seeing it as neither good nor bad in itself but accepting it for the limited purpose it sometimes serves as *response to crisis*.

All right, you may say, but what is a crisis? For this discussion, a crisis will be a situation perceived by someone as demanding action, but where the person doesn't know *what* action is appropriate to achieve her or his objective. In such a case, the person may run away if it's that kind of a situation, or he may try to dominate it by forcing it to his will. For a simple example of the latter, the television goes crazy during the last game of the World Series and the viewer doesn't know the least thing about fixing it. What shall he do? He may try kicking it; that at least is doing something. Such response is irrational in that it involves no understanding of how a television works and, consequently, has no assured outcome. Still, it might work. But kicking the set is a desperate sort of an act. It may or may not serve any purpose at all, and it will often prove to be counterproductive.

While force is distinctly second-best to acting from understanding, it nevertheless allows a person to respond in a situation demanding action, even if he can't act so as to control the outcome with any degree of assurance. In some situations, the mere fact of responding can have value. It is nature's primitive way of responding to an urgent situation in the absence of understanding.

Looked at in this light, force need no more be condemned than any other natural function. A simple example: when I was but a couple of years old, I had observed my nanny turning my pajamas right side out by a maneuver that, to me, looked like simply shaking them; I had yet to master the understanding that one reaches into the leg and takes hold of the cuff to pull it through. The next time the pajamas were inside out and nanny wasn't there, I shook and shook *and shook* them. I applied a lot of force, and got no results.

Our examples of television sets and pajamas are harmless, because they involve only things. The situation can become enormously more complex and dangerous where other people are involved.

Do crises exhaust all possible occasions for force? What of the deliberate criminal who sees the use of force as simply a tool for acquiring the good things of life? His lack of those good things may be perceived by him as serious, but our definition of crisis requires that he not know how to respond appropriately. Ask him, and he'll say he knows perfectly well what to do and is skilled in the tools of his trade. There is clearly no crisis. But if wealth is the goal, the entrepreneur has infinitely greater potential for obtaining it in the marketplace than the criminal has by stealing. The criminal is acting inappropriately for his goal - out of ignorance.

Force or submission - fight or flight - is ignorant behavior, inappropriate behavior. But we all engage in ignorant behavior. Such behavior doesn't demand moral condemnation of the perpetrator. Where is the culpability in someone not being smart enough to cope adequately with a situation at hand? Looked at in this light, the person has simply fallen short. He is finite as are we all and, as with each and every

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one of us, there are other situations where he excels. If any emotional reaction at all is in order, it is *compassion* for someone who is unequal to her or his immediate situation.

If the goal is to see cooperation increase and conflict diminish, a supreme advantage in adopting such a purely functional perspective is that it no longer is necessary to differentiate between kinds of force. No longer is it necessary to distinguish aggressive from defensive violence. All is now seen in the same light, whether the violence be one's own or the other fellow's.

Not having to make such a distinction has a number of advantages. One is that in real-life situations, it is unrealistic to demand of anyone that he distinguish accurately and consistently between *kinds* and degrees of force in order to determine the rightness or wrongness of a strong action he may be about to undertake. We are finite beings, limited in all our faculties - as each of us is all too often and painfully reminded. Consequently our judgment is imperfect; we can't know or take account of all the factors in any real-life situation. Due to each person's unique makeup and background and the different filtering and reinforcing effects of his own experiences, no two observers perceive a given situation alike.

A second advantage is that we are often called upon to act on the basis of our imperfect observations at stressful times - times when our powers of discrimination and judgment are least available to us. When threatened, the body mobilizes its energies for action, whether fight or flight, by shutting down the higher brain functions so as not to be distracted by reflective thought. Have you noticed that our most creative thoughts often come when we are lying down - our least likely position for confrontation? It is no accident that many people must learn to think on their feet. Yet it is precisely at the most stressful times that legalistically minded people demand of themselves and others fine discriminations of the sort that juries might deliberate for months without reaching agreement.

Add to this that we are rationalizing creatures, and the difficulty soars. Being conscious and self-aware, we interpret our own behavior in ways consistent with our need for self-esteem. Hence, the common observation that there are two or more sides to most questions. We never escape the necessity of interpreting experience, but because we are finite beings, our information is necessarily incomplete. Accordingly, we always have some and often a great deal of latitude in the interpretations we make. Naturally we'll give ourselves the benefit of all reasonable doubt. As goal-seeking creatures whose all-encompassing goal is to live as fully and as effectively as we can, we would hardly do otherwise given any option at all - and our imperfect observation and information almost always give us the option.

Judging Others

If now to this volatile mixture we add a fourth, wholly optional, ingredient, that of moral condemnation, the volatility rises dangerously.

The passing of moral judgment on others is a tricky and dangerous matter at best.

Judgments are properly applied not to persons but to behavior, and most especially one's own behavior. Because of the uncertainties of life and the finitude of our knowledge, however, any of us is bound on occasion to rub the fur of our fellows the wrong way, and vice versa. We may then be inclined to resort to force if we know of no alternative. Under these circumstances it is all too easy to judge the other fellow. The act of judging removes one's normal self-restraint. It is *prelude to force*. Fortunately, it's an option we control; we are never under necessity of judging others. It is always our choice.

But when we do choose to condemn persons as morally bad, we alter the situation for the worse in at least four ways:

The first thing that we do is *reduce the likelihood of discovering a non-violent course of action*. For moral condemnation shuts off deliberation, suspends conscience. Social amenities no longer govern. The antagonist is thrust beyond the pale, becomes the stranger, the witch. He is a threat to be combated; for the logic of morality requires combat with evil. There is no compromise, no place for discussion. Battle lines are drawn. None has a choice but to be for or against - to be one of us or one of them. To engage in moral condemnation is to equip oneself with blinders like those put on the war-horse going into battle lest he be distracted by happenings to his right and left.

Secondly, we increase the probable *intensity* of the violence. Despite its frequent use by professed followers of established religion, moral condemnation is a mind-set for combat, not reverence. It is a powerful propaganda aid to brand the other fellow "immoral" and therefore deserving whatever might befall. Not only does it justify violence; it encourages it by *de-personalizing* the other fellow - by labeling him, reducing him to a symbol, and a symbol of evil, at that. We no longer identify with him as a fellow human being. Such lack of identification with the victim is well-known to predispose toward violence. During World War II, Americans who were horrified when Hitler killed several thousand Allied civilians by bombing Rotterdam showed little concern for the more than 100,000 so-called "enemy" civilians who died in the Allied fire-bombing of Dresden.

Thirdly, we lessen the chance of *learning anything* from the experience that might help avert future violence. Consider a hypothetical instance: The intended victim of a mugging has succeeded in knocking his assailant unconscious and is walking away. He has used violence and hurt a fellow human, perhaps disabling him for life. What is the burden of his self-talk? How will it be affected by the presence or absence of a judgmental attitude? The staunch moralist might be oblivious of any involvement in a human tragedy. He might be preoccupied, instead, with classifying the event as one in which he was within his rights to retaliate, rationalizing his resort to force in the name of natural justice. In his self-talk, he would be saying the fellow asked for it; if it happened again he'd give it to him even better. The tone might well be self-congratulatory.

The non-moralist, on the other hand, feeling no compulsion to justify himself by

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analyzing the matter in abstract categories, would simply be confronted by what had happened. He would be far more likely than the moralist to see the tragedy in the situation and to search his mind to think how he could have avoided the encounter or, failing that, handled himself differently in it. *Which of the two would be more likely to learn something from the encounter and less likely to find himself in another like it?*

Fourthly, adding yet more to the flammability of our mixture is the moralist's conviction that, in combating evil (defined as any violation of his abstract 'rights'), his action was not only justified, but commendable. If we entertain in our mind a class of situations in which violence is not only morally justified but virtuous, we will surely rationalize our experience to fit that ever-so-convenient category. Indeed, the moral involvement so distorts perception that at times it becomes difficult even to recognize violence. Blumenthal's 1972 study of attitudes of American men toward violence illustrates this. He found that only thirty-five percent of American males defined "police shooting looters" as violent, whereas fifty-eight percent thought "burning a draft card" was violent.[4]

A dividend, finally, from adopting a non-judgmental attitude toward a perpetrator of violence is that it takes the machismo out the situation. What is more macho than judging people as morally bad and dishing out to them their "just deserts?" How different it might be in the world if *compassion* or *pity* replaced admiration among the emotions commonly expressed when talking about violent people. If they were seen as objects of compassion, could bullies and war hawks then strut about?

The wise man of Galilee was blunt in his admonition to his followers, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." For those inclined toward exegesis, consider also the following. Of the two fruit trees in the garden, one was forbidden to man. But the other was not. The tree that was forbidden to Adam and Eve, and that they ate of, was the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil*, which is to say, the tree of moral judgment. The other tree was not forbidden. It was called the tree of *life*. The message could scarcely be put more plainly than in this Old Testament image.[5]

Second: A Productive Assumption

Thus far, I have argued for adopting a nonjudgmental approach toward persons behaving violently by conceiving of interpersonal force as simply a natural response to crisis. That may be good so far as it goes, but it is not enough. A second important step is called for. The second step is to make a productive assumption in such situations. That assumption is that *there are always appropriate alternatives to violence* (appropriate, that is, to our objectives).

It can't be proved, of course, that there will always be such alternatives, but it is productive to make the assumption. Science gives us ample precedent. Causality cannot be proven. The scientist cannot prove that the universe is rational, that it is a cosmos and not a chaos. But she or he assumes it is, and that assumption, that article of faith, makes exploration and discovery possible. That powerful assumption underlies the whole of modern science and all the technology derived from it.

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We may not always be able to think of an appropriate, non-violent solution when a crisis is thrust upon us. But the act of assuming that there are any number of solutions will increase the odds of our discovering one, and our self-talk after the experience will work in the direction of discovery and new understanding that will serve us in the future. A personal story from my family illustrates what a difference this can make.

When World War I broke out, my grandfather was manufacturing airplane propellers in Baltimore. He had just developed the first machine-mass-production of propellers, replacing the workman who stood at a bench and carved them out by hand. Because his was the only plant at the time that could turn out propellers in volume, he produced more than three-quarters of the propellers used by the Allied governments in that conflict.

Not all of the propellers made in his plant during the war were of his design; frequently the War Department ordered propellers made to its own specifications. One morning specifications for a large government order came in, and my grandfather detected a design flaw that would cause the blades to have a tendency to break up in the air. He studied the problem with great care, came up with the least modification that would make the blades safe, and went to the War Department with a revised design.

My grandfather had never enjoyed a warm rapport with the War Department. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was then Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and my grandfather had strongly resisted his introduction of cost-plus contracting on defense orders on grounds that it created the wrong incentives and led to featherbedding and corruption. Consequently the War Department was not now sympathetic toward his suggestion of altering a propeller specification and assumed the attitude that he was a “war profiteer” attempting in some way to line his pockets. But my grandfather persisted. Finally, the dialogue was brought to a stop with blunt words: “Mr. Heath, this is wartime. You make those propellers, or we’ll shoot you.”

What would a reasonable person do in such a situation? What would you do? The answer isn’t obvious; so think carefully. Would you have made the propellers as specified and endangered the lives of the pilots? (And you know who would be blamed after the war, the propellers having been made in your plant.) Or would you have risked disobeying orders in wartime?

My grandfather made the propellers exactly according to the faulty specifications. When he was telling me this story, I interjected at this point, “Popdaddy, you didn’t!” He said, “Hear the rest of it.”

The propellers were completed as ordered and were crated and stacked on the loading dock to go out on the early train the next morning. That night, after hours, my grandfather and a workman came back with crowbar, hammer and nails. Together they opened every crate and, with a rubber stamp he had prepared ahead of time, stamped the hub of each propeller. Then they nailed up the crates, and in the morning the shipment went out on schedule.

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Years later, altogether by chance, my grandfather learned that the propellers had never gone overseas. Someone had discovered the stamped hubs before shipment, and the entire lot had gone to a warehouse in Texas where, for all we know, they are still. That original rubber stamp is still in my possession. It reads:

MADE UNDER PROTEST CONDEMNED BY MANUFACTURER

Had my grandfather assumed that he had but two options, both of them unacceptable, he would have been caught on the horns of a dilemma of his own making. But he didn't let himself be trapped in that false alternative; he wasted no time there. He had no assurance that he would think of a solution, or think of one in time. But his assuming that any number of favorable options existed was his first putting out of energy toward the discovery of one or several of them.

How does all this translate into a workable personal philosophy? The path toward greater life and wider opportunities entails, among many other things, eschewing force of any kind, while realizing that there will be times when it can't be avoided. Gandhi recognized that. When it happens, we must not be hard on ourselves but, as with others, take a nonjudgmental attitude. We must recognize that we did what we could and now must learn from the experience. My grandfather, of Quaker background, disavowed the use of force. When someone said to him, "But suppose a bear caught you at the wrong end of a box canyon? Would you fight then?" "Yes," he said, "and with a right good will to win. But when the fight was over and I'd climbed out of that canyon, if I survived, I'd do some long thinking about how to avoid getting caught in a situation like that again!"

Conclusion

Granting that force sometimes may serve in a crisis, albeit precariously, I have challenged the idea that it can ever be a dependable tool or an appropriate or rational behavior for accomplishing desired ends. It is most especially inappropriate in interpersonal relations. Because categories are slippery, perceptions always imperfect and subjective, and our minds and memories never what they ideally might be, especially under stress, problems will tend to arise when the use of force is institutionalized or 'legitimized' in any social situation whatsoever. In more poetic words, our use of interpersonal force is "Cain's mark" on each one of us, ever reminding us of our own fallibility.

On the positive side, I've suggested promoting peace in today's world by altering two ways in which we habitually think and talk about interpersonal force or violence. Discard the idea of there ever being a *natural right* to the exercise of force in any situation - even in defense of one's life - and make the *productive assumption* that that there are always peaceful alternatives to be found.

I am not suggesting by any means that rights are unimportant. The appropriate

place for discussion of rights is in connection with property. Property rights in one's self and one's possessions are the building blocks of social organization - of means of cooperation among people. Here we have been discussing crisis situations, and discussion of rights in this context is altogether misplaced.

This departure from conventional libertarian thinking is not offered as a cure for the problem of violence in human affairs. That would indeed be Utopian. - but it can't be a bad place to begin.

Editor's Addendum:

From his skeptical perspective, Spencer MacCallum urges us to consider the alternatives to defensive violence. I have previously written on this topic in "A Way Out - Victory Without Violence," in which I discussed what I would do if a violent person threatened my family. As I mentioned in that article there are numerous nonviolent ways of dealing with interpersonal violence and/or its threat. These range from pretending to faint, disarming the attacker emotionally, offering the assailant sanctuary or more than he or she demands, etc. In recently reading the biography of David Hartsough, I found another true-to-life response to threatened violence. On June 11, 1960, Hartsough was participating in a sit-in at a People's Drug Store in Arlington, Va., hoping to persuade the management to drop their segregation policy. "Late in the evening of the second day," Hartsough writes,

I was reading from a pocket New Testament I had with me. I had turned to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, ... "Love your enemies ... Do good to those who hate you."

I was meditating on those words when I heard a voice behind me say, "You nigger lover. Get out of this store in two seconds, or I'm going to stab this through your heart." I glanced behind me at a man with the most terrible look of hatred I had ever seen. His eyes blazed, his jaw quivered, and his shaking hand held a switchblade - about half an inch from my heart.

Loving my enemy was suddenly more than just a discussion in Sunday school. ... For a fleeting moment I doubted that Jesus meant to include a man so hateful among those who deserved to be loved. I just had seconds to respond to him, and I was grateful for those many hours of role playing and practice the previous two days.

I turned around and tried my best to smile. Looking him in the eye, I said to him, "Friend, do what you believe is right, and I will still try to love you." Both his hand and his jaw dropped. Miraculously, he turned away and walked out of the store.

That was the most powerful experience of my twenty years of life. It confirmed my belief in the power of love, the power of goodness, the power of God working through us to overcome hatred and violence. I had

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a profound sense that nonviolence really worked.[pp. 19-20]

Hartsough's story also reminds me of Gandhi's observation that "nonviolence is not of the weak but of the strong." It takes guts and forethought to respond to a violent situation nonviolently. There is no guarantee that either defensive violence or nonviolence will be successful in overcoming potentially violent situations. But I think it is safe to say that there will be far fewer deaths and casualties resulting from the use of nonviolence. As William Henry Furness in his 1860 critique of John Brown put it, "violence produces violence," and it requires "a far higher courage" to respond nonviolently than to fight an opponent violently.

I urge readers of *The Voluntaryist* to consider nonviolent alternatives to violence. Below is a short list of pertinent reading material.

David Hartsough, *WAGING PEACE: GLOBAL ADVENTURES OF A LIFELONG ACTIVIST*, Oakland: PM Press, 2014.

Carl Watner, "A Way Out - Victory Without Violence," in Issue 38, *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, June 1989, p. 3.

Carl Watner, "Voluntaryist Resistance," in Issue 125 of *THE VOLUNTARYIST* (2nd Quarter 2005). Especially see Section V, pp. 4-5.

John Yoder, *IF A VIOLENT PERSON THREATENED TO HARM A LOVED ONE ... WHAT WOULD YOU DO?*, Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1983.

End Notes

[1] The author, a social anthropologist, first tried out these ideas at the Libertarian Party State Convention in Los Angeles, February 14-17, 1986. The silence, he remembers, was deafening. Twenty-five years later he offered them again in this talk at the second annual Libertopia Conference in San Diego, California, October 21-23, 2011. This time the ideas got a very different reception, the author receiving many comments and several requests for copies. Were there significant changes in public attitude during that period of time?

[2] *YOUNG INDIA*, November 10, 1928.

[3] Friedman, David, *THE MACHINERY OF FREEDOM: GUIDE TO A RADICAL CAPITALISM* (Second Edition). LaSalle, IL 1989: Open Court Publishing Company, pp.167-176.

[4] Blumenthal, M.D., "Predicting Attitudes Toward Violence," *SCIENCE*, 23 June 1972, pp. 1296-1303.

[5] Nothing in this argument as developed so far impugns the notion of morality understood as a guide to one's own actions. Even there, however, if we follow the cautionary lesson of Genesis, a more suitable standard of behavior might be the aesthetic. What behavior do we find beautiful? What behavior inspires? And, especially for this discussion, is there ever a need for the inspired person to be admonished? This is a pregnant line of thought developed in the philosophy of

Spencer Heath.

Abolitionism and Modern Voluntaryism

by George H. Smith

(From Issue 181, 2nd Quarter 2019)

[Editor's Note by Carl Watner: As many readers of THE VOLUNTARYIST know, this newsletter was begun by George H. Smith, Wendy McElroy, and me. This note and the following essay offer details about the origin of modern day voluntaryism. I have previously shared some of my own personal background in "Something To Do with the Search for Truth: How I Became a Libertarian" in Issue 155, and I now offer the following in conjunction with George's personal reminiscences of some of the events that led to the founding of THE VOLUNTARYIST.

I made my first contact with Wendy McElroy and George Smith, as early as October or November 1978 when I met George at a Center for Libertarian Studies Scholar's Conference at Princeton, New Jersey. I continued to stay in touch with them throughout the following years. In January 1981, Wendy sent me a copy of George's "Party Dialogue." In May 1981, I stayed with them at their apartment in Los Angeles, while attending the Future of Freedom Conference in Long Beach. Later that year, at the end of July, I attended another scholar's conference at Bates College in Maine, where George was one of the lecturers. It was there that he first suggested the idea of forming an organization to focus on the truly anti-political nature of libertarianism. This was the germ of the initial idea for The Voluntaryists. It was George who suggested using the word 'voluntaryist' to describe those libertarians who eschewed electoral activity. While researching the history of education in the English-speaking world, George had discovered that this word had been used to label the opponents of government-provided education in Great Britain during the mid-19th century.

The first issue of THE VOLUNTARYIST newsletter was distributed in October 1982, and the next year was a busy one for voluntaryists. After the movie "Gandhi" came out in December 1982, Chuck Hamilton had the idea of co-sponsoring, with The Voluntaryists, a conference on nonviolence. Chuck lined up Gene Sharp, as the keynote speaker, and this took place in New York City on February 26, 1983. A few weeks later, I flew to the west coast, to participate in a debate on the validity of electoral politics in Vancouver. On the same trip, I also made a presentation to the Puget Sound Libertarian Forum (supper club), and helped Peter Walters start his League of Non-Voters. Later that year, I attended a Rampart Institute conference on non-voting and gave two workshops at the Future of Freedom Conference in late October 1983. During 1984, I attended the "Libertarianism and War" conference in Los Angeles (March 30-April 2, 1984). In October 1984, I made the acquaintance of

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Robert LeFevre, the main teacher and founder of Freedom School and Rampart College. It was at this time that Bob engaged me to write his biography, based on his voluminous autobiography which he shared with me. My biography of Bob was self-published by The Voluntarists in late 1988 under the title ROBERT LEFEVRE: TRUTH IS NOT A HALF-WAY PLACE.

For those interested, George also published a series of articles in Issues 1, 2, and 4 of THE VOLUNTARYIST (1982-1983) on "The Ethics of Voting." Here follow his remarks on "Abolitionism and Modern Day Voluntarism."

[D]uring the late 1970s and early 1980s [Wendell] Phillips's monograph [CAN ABOLITIONISTS VOTE OR TAKE OFFICE UNDER THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION? (1845)] influenced my own thinking about the morality and the wisdom of political action for modern libertarians. But I had already embraced the voluntarist opposition to political action before then, and my position was based on principles not found in Phillips. (I first proposed "voluntarism" as a label for anti-political libertarianism in 1982, and the label has stuck.) One of the first public presentations of my anti-political views was a speech I gave for the Orange County Libertarian Supper Club in 1980. Titled "Party Dialogue," this speech was subsequently printed in Sam Konkin's periodical NEW LIBERTARIAN and later by Carl Watner for The Voluntarist. I vividly recall the first comment at the Orange County Supper Club. Robert LeFevre (1911-86) a venerated figure in the modern libertarian movement (especially in Southern California) who had long opposed political action, stood up and announced that my presentation was the best lecture he had ever heard, aside from his own lectures.

LeFevre's humorous endorsement was not shared by the majority of libertarians. Even many libertarian anarchists were not pleased with my views. This became evident to me at the 1980 National Convention of the Libertarian Party (in Los Angeles), where I was invited to give a talk on my objections to the Libertarian Party. I was favorably impressed by the invitation, since rare indeed is the political party that will solicit talks on why that party should not exist. But this was a formative period of the modern libertarian movement - a time when basic ideas about strategy were being hammered out and when many libertarians were interested in ideas for their own sake, quite apart from what their practical implications may be. But not all attendees at the 1980 convention welcomed my appearance; quite the contrary. While at the convention but before my talk, I learned that a petition was being circulated that protested my invitation to speak. The petition reportedly had hundreds of signatures, including that of John Hospers. In addition, large white protest buttons were passed out that simply read "Why" - curiously, the button omitted the question mark - and I saw many attendees at my well-attended talk wearing those buttons. (Somewhat flattered by being the object of a formal protest, I obtained a button and proudly displayed it in my home for many years.) Unlike those abolitionists who were victims of mob violence, no anti-Smith mobs were formed at the convention, and I felt perfectly safe walking the halls of the Century City Hotel and riding its spectacular

elevators.

I mention these personal stories because of the obvious parallels between the no-voting stance of contemporary voluntaryists and the Garrisonian wing of abolitionism. Voluntaryism is a minority wing of the modern libertarian movement, just as the Garrisonians comprised a minority in the broader antislavery movement. For many years historians of abolitionism tended to treat the anti-political position of Garrison and Phillips as an eccentric glitch that harmed the antislavery cause, or at the very least retarded its progress. But two magnificent and highly regarded books helped to turn the tide to a more favorable view: *MEANS AND ENDS IN AMERICAN ABOLITIONISM: GARRISON AND HIS CRITICS ON STRATEGY AND TACTICS* (1968), by Aileen S. Kraditor; and *RADICAL ABOLITIONISM: ANARCHY AND THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD IN ANTISLAVERY THOUGHT* (1973), by Lewis Perry.

A major merit of these scholarly accounts is that they take the anti-political views of Garrison, Phillips, and their followers seriously, instead of dismissing them out of hand as too absurd for serious consideration. The anti-political arguments are considered on their own terms, as they appeared to the abolitionists themselves, rather than from the perspective of those modern historians who cannot conceive how any significant social or political changes could come about except through the ballot box. But whether one agrees with the Garrisonian position or not, it is virtually impossible for contemporary libertarians to read the extensive abolitionist debates over this controversy without being impressed by how detailed and thoughtful they are. Modern libertarians have said very little if anything about the pros and cons of voting and other political activities that was not said over 150 years ago by the abolitionists. In short, there is a good deal that libertarians can learn from studying abolitionist literature on this topic, whatever our ultimate conclusions may be.

Consider the presidential oath of office: “I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.” This and similar oaths of office were the major sticking point for Wendell Phillips and other anti-political abolitionists who viewed the Constitution as a proslavery document. How could any sincere abolitionist swear to “preserve, protect, and defend” a document that sanctioned the enslavement of human beings? And how could any sincere opponent of slavery seek to appoint, through voting, an agent who would publicly commit to the preservation and protection of slavery?

Back in the late 1970s, when I first became seriously interested in abolitionism, it quickly became clear that public oaths were regarded far more seriously in earlier times than they tend to be today. I therefore took a detour to study the history of oathtaking, and it was a fascinating journey. One story, which I read in a history of the French Revolution (I no longer recall the title or author), pertained to a problem experienced by Louis XVI when he was preparing for his coronation. The king’s oath contained items that he could not endorse, such as a pledge to persecute Protestants,

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so Louis sought the advice of Turgot (one of the better libertarians of his day). Turgot supposedly advised Louis to mumble those parts of the oath to which he could not honestly and sincerely commit. I do not know if Louis took Turgot's advice, but this "mumble theory of oath-taking," as I subsequently called it, was eerily similar to the rationalizations offered by those political libertarians who were criticizing voluntarism. I was told that libertarians who could not support the Constitution (especially the taxing power vested in the federal government) could nonetheless swear under oath to "preserve, protect, and defend" that selfsame Constitution. Why? Well a variety of reasons were offered by my critics, and it is quite remarkable that Phillips discussed virtually all of these in CAN ABOLITIONISTS VOTE OR TAKE OFFICE UNDER THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION? Moreover, all seemed variants, in one form or another, of Turgot's mumble theory of oath-taking.

[This essay first appeared on Libertarianism.org on March 24, 2017, as Part 7 of a very interesting series by George. See <https://www.libertarianism.org/columns/abolitionism-modern-voluntarism>. Permission to reprint granted by Grant Babcock of the Cato Institute, email of August 11, 2017, 1:21 PM.]

Non-Voting

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 173, 2nd Quarter 2017)

In his ON THE DUTY OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE (1849), Henry David Thoreau asked:

How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today? I answer that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. ... What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.

Readers of "Strike The Root" recognize that there are two principal demands that their governments make upon them: pay your taxes and vote. (Of course, there are many other 'demands', such as military service, send your children to school, have a driver's license, etc., but many of these are ancillary to the primary means of government survival, which is the collection of taxes.)

Now, of these two principal demands, taxation carries criminal sanctions: pay your money or we imprison your body and/or confiscate your property. However, as yet in most nations of the world, failure to vote in government elections carries no penalty.

Governments, like all other hierarchical institutions, depend upon the cooperation

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and, at least, the tacit consent over those whom they exercise power. In other words, government soldiers and police can force people to do things they don't want to do, but in the long run - in the face of adamant opposition - such coercion is either too expensive or too futile to accomplish its goals of subjugating entire populations. It is far simpler to motivate people to do what you want them to do, rather than forcing them to do it by pointing guns at them all the time. As Boris Yeltsin supposedly said, "You can build a throne with bayonets, but you can't sit on it long."

Educating generations of parents and children in government schools and teaching them to be patriotic and support *their* government in political elections is one of the fundamental ways governments garner public support. Citizens are taught that it is both their right and duty to vote. But all this is done with an ulterior motive in mind. As Theodore Lowi, in his book *INCOMPLETE CONQUEST: GOVERNING AMERICA* pointed out:

Participation is an instrument of [government] conquest because it encourages people to give their consent to being governed. ... Deeply embedded in people's sense of fair play is the principle that those who play the game must accept the outcome. Those who participate in politics are similarly committed, even if they are consistently on the losing side. Why do politicians plead with everyone to get out and vote? Because voting is the simplest and easiest form of participation [of supporting the state] by masses of people. Even though it is minimal participation, it is sufficient to commit all voters to being governed, regardless of who wins.

Not voting in government elections is one way of refusing to participate; of refusing to consent to government rule over your life. Non-voting may be seen as an act of personal secession, of exposing the myth behind "government by consent." There are many reasons, both moral and practical, for choosing "not to vote," and they have been discussed in my anthology, *DISSENTING ELECTORATE*. To briefly summarize:

Truth does not depend upon a majority vote. Two plus two equals four regardless of how many people vote that it equals five.

Individuals have rights which do not depend on the outcome of elections. Majorities of voters cannot vote away the rights of a single individual or groups of individuals.

Voting is implicitly a coercive act because it lends support to a compulsory government.

Voting reinforces the legitimacy of the state because the participation of the voters makes it appear that they approve of their government.

There are ways of opposing the state, other than by voting "against" the

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incumbents. (And remember, even if the opposition politicians are the lesser of two evils, they are still evil.) Such non-political methods as civil disobedience, non-violent resistance, home schooling, bettering one's self, and improving one's own understanding of voluntaryism all go far in robbing the government of its much sought after legitimacy.

As Thoreau pointed out, "All voting is a sort of gaming, like chequers or backgammon, Even *voting for the right* is *doing* nothing for it." So whatever you do, don't play the government's game, Don't vote. *Do something for the right.*

[This article appeared at www.strike-the-root.com/node/23564 and was first posted in late December 2009.]

Is Voting an Act of Violence?

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 103, April 2000)

This short article was sparked by my work on a forthcoming anthology on non-voting, tentatively titled THE NON-VOTERS ARE RIGHT! Hans Sherrer, a subscriber to THE VOLUNTARYIST, sent me an essay entitled "Voting Is An Act of Violence," which began with the statement "Voting is the most violent act someone can commit in his lifetime." How true is this?

First, let us define our terms.

The kind of voting referred to in this article is electoral voting, meaning the act of choosing a particular person for a particular political office. To vote in an electoral election (federal, state, or local) one must first register (after meeting certain age and residency requirements) with the appropriate governmental agency. Then on a given day, all registered voters are given the opportunity to make their choices (in secret) at a government polling place. At the conclusion of the day, the votes are tallied, and the person who received the most votes for that political office is deemed the winner, and eventually sworn into office.

The kind of violence referred to in this article is physical force (shooting guns with intent to kill or maim, imprisoning recalcitrants, confiscating property) exercised by employees or agents of the state (policemen, court marshals, militia men, and soldiers) who wield this force against those who disobey State laws and regulations (referred to as "refuseniks," later in this paper). Usually the threat of arrest and imprisonment is enough to make most people docile and obedient; but the ultimate sanction held by the State and its personnel is "death" to those who refuse to cooperate. The most recent and prominent examples of these deaths are Randy Weaver's wife and child, those incinerated at Waco, and John Singer, the Mormon homeschooler, shot by a Utah "law enforcement" officer in January 1979.

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Now what connection is there between electoral voting and those who act violently in the name of the State? Why does the State want large numbers of people to participate in electoral voting? There are two primary reasons for this. First, those who act in the name of the State can use the fact that many people vote as evidence that they are acting in the name of “the people.” Widespread voting is cited as evidence of “consent.” State agents, such as legislators, presidents, and judges need an aura of legitimacy if their actions are to be viewed as right and proper by a large majority of the population. Second, governments - especially democratic ones - have discovered that as the proportion of the citizenry which holds the government in esteem increases, the less force the government requires to keep the balance of the population (those who view the government as illegitimate) under control. In other words, the more legitimacy that a government attains the less it needs to exercise outright violence against its opponents. A government which continually had to resort to violence to achieve its ends would soon be seen for exactly what it was: a criminal gang.

So, given that a successful State requires legitimacy and that one of the easiest ways to achieve legitimacy is through widespread voter participation, what is the responsibility of the voters for the actions of its government?

By voting, it is clear that each voter endorses the governmental system under which he or she lives. By the act of voting, each voter is saying: It is right and proper for some people, acting in the name of the State, to pass laws and to use violence to compel obedience to those laws if they are not obeyed.

Clearly, the voter - by pulling down a handle in a voting booth - has not used violence personally. Voting is not the same as pulling the trigger on a gun pointed at a refusenik. The voter has not used force, any more than a lawmaker, president, or judge does when they pass or sign a law, or issue a judicial decree. Yet all of these people have either supported or participated in a system of governance which ultimately results in people being bullied or forced into obedience.

In legal parlance, we would have to say that the voters, office holders, and other participants in government have “aided and abetted” (incited, encouraged, countenanced) the police, soldiers, and jailers who actually commit the physical aggression required in order to bring about submission of the refuseniks. Various war crime tribunal decisions since World War II have established that both elected officials and dictatorial heads of state are legally responsible for the commission of crimes that are committed under their orders, but not by their own hands. In other words, those giving the instructions to soldiers to kill innocent civilians are responsible, even though they do not personally hold the weapons or pull the triggers. Although this principle of liability has never been extended backwards from political leaders to those who participate in elections, it should be clear from this analysis that the chain of responsibility extends from those who exercise the actual violence, to those who give the orders that the violence be used, to those who participate in elections which result in those political leaders being elected.

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Now let us return to the initial question of this article: What truth is there to the statement “Voting is the most violent act someone can commit in his lifetime.”? Let this question be answered by assuming that one is not a serial murderer or does not engage in any type of overt criminal activity. In other words, let us assume that most people who vote in electoral elections otherwise lead peaceful, innocent lives. Is voting the most violent act that they will commit in their lifetimes? Based on the argument in this article, the answer must be “Yes.” Each person, by voting, sanctions the violence used by agents of the State. The link in the chain of responsibility for that violence surrounds each voter when he pulls down the lever in the voting booth. Voting is an act of presumptive violence because each voter assumes the right to appoint a political guardian over other human beings. No individual voter or even a majority of voters have such a right. If they claim to possess such a right, let them clearly explain where that right comes from and how it squares with the self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence “that all men are created equal, [and] that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights” of “Life, Liberty,” and Property.

It was with good reason that Henry David Thoreau in his essay on “Civil Disobedience” called for a total abstinence from the ballot box. “When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished.”

Against Woman Suffrage

by Lysander Spooner

(From Issue 103, April 2000)

Women are human beings, and consequently have all the natural rights that any human beings can have. They have just as good a right to make laws as men have, and no better. AND THAT IS JUST NO RIGHT AT ALL. No human being, nor any number of human beings, have any right to *make laws*, and compel other human beings to obey them. To say that they have is to say that they are the masters and owners of those of whom they require such obedience.

The only law that any human being can rightfully be *compelled* to obey is simply the law of justice. And justice is not a thing that is *made*, or that can be unmade, or altered, by any human authority. It is a *natural* principle, inhering in the very nature of man and of things. It is that natural principle which determines what is mine and what is thine, what is one man’s right or property and what is another man’s right or property. It is, so to speak, the line that Nature has drawn between one man’s rights of person and property and another man’s rights of person and property.

But for this line, which Nature has drawn separating the rights of one man from

the rights of any and all other men, no human being could be said to have any rights whatever. Every human being would be at the mercy of any and all other human beings who were stronger than he.

This natural principle, which we will call justice, and which assigns to each and every human being his or her rights, and separates them from the rights of each and every other human being, is, I repeat, not a thing that man has *made*, but is a matter of science to be learned, like mathematics, or chemistry, or geology. And all the *laws*, so called, that men have ever *made*, either to create, define, or control the rights of individuals, were intrinsically just as absurd and ridiculous as would be laws to create, define, or control mathematics, or chemistry, or geology.

Substantially all the tyranny and robbery and crime that governments have ever committed—and they have either themselves committed, or licensed others to commit, nearly all that have ever been committed in the world by anybody - have been committed by them under the pretense of *making laws*. Some man, or some body of men, have claimed the right, or usurped the power, of *making laws*, and compelling other men to obey; thus setting up their own will, and enforcing it, in place of that natural law, or natural principle, which says that no man or body of men can rightfully exercise any arbitrary power whatever over the persons or property of other men.

There is a large class of men who are so rapacious that they desire to appropriate to their own uses the persons and properties of other men. They combine for the purpose, call themselves governments, *make what they call laws*, and then employ courts, and governors, and constables, and, in the last resort bayonets, to enforce obedience.

There is another class of men, who are devoured by ambition, by the love of power, and the love of fame.

They think it a very glorious thing to rule over men; to make laws to govern them. But as they have no power of their own to compel obedience, they unite with the rapacious class before mentioned, and become their tools. They promise to *make such laws* as the rapacious class desire, if this latter class will but authorize them to act in their name, and furnish the money and the soldiers necessary for carrying their laws, so called, into execution.

Still another class of men, with a sublime conceit of their own wisdom, or virtue, or religion, think they have a right, and a sort of divine authority, for *making laws* to govern those who, they think, are less wise, or less virtuous, or less religious than themselves. They assume to know what is best for all other men to do and not to do, to be and not to be, to have and not to have. And they conspire to *make laws* to *compel* all those other men to conform to their will, or, as they would say, to their superior discretion. They seem to have no perception of the truth that each and every human being has had given to him a mind and body of his own, separate and distinct from the minds and bodies of all other men; and that each man's mind and body have, by nature, rights that are utterly separate and distinct from the rights of any and all other men; that these individual rights are really the only *human rights* there are in the

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world, that each man's rights are simply the right to control his own soul, and body, and property, according to his own will, pleasure, and discretion, so long as he does not interfere with the equal right of any other man to the free exercise and control of his own soul, body, and property. They seem to have no conception of the truth that, so long as he lets all other men's souls, bodies, and properties alone, he is under no obligation whatever to believe in such wisdom, or virtue, or religion as they do, or as they think best for him.

This body of self-conceited wise, virtuous, and religious people, not being sufficiently powerful of themselves to *make laws* and enforce them upon the rest of mankind, combine with the rapacious and ambitious classes before mentioned to carry out such purposes as they can all agree upon. And the farce, and jargon, and babel they all make of what they call government would be supremely ludicrous and ridiculous, if it were not the cause of nearly all the poverty, ignorance, vice, crime, and misery there are in the world.

Of this latter class - that is, the self-conceited wise, virtuous, and religious class - are those woman suffrage persons who are so anxious that women should participate in all the falsehood, absurdity, usurpation, and crime of making laws, and enforcing them upon other persons. It is astonishing what an amount of wisdom, virtue, and knowledge they propose to inflict upon, or force into, the rest of mankind, if they can but be permitted to participate with the men in *making laws*. According to their own promises and predictions, there will not be a single natural human being left upon the globe, if the women can but get hold of us, and add their power to that of the men in making such laws as nobody has any right to make, and such as nobody will be under the least obligation to obey. According to their programme, we are to be put into their legislative mill, and be run through, ground up, worked over, and made into some shape in which we shall be scarcely recognized as human beings. Assuming to be gods, they propose to make us over into their own image. But there are so many different images among them, that we can have, at most, but one feature after one model, and another after another. What the whole conglomerate human animal will be like, it is impossible to conjecture.

In all conscience, is it not better for us even to bear the nearly unbearable ills inflicted upon us by the laws already made, - at any rate is it not better for us to be (if we can but be permitted to be) such simple human beings as Nature made us, - than suffer ourselves to be made over into such grotesque and horrible shapes as a new set of lawmakers would make us into, if we suffer them to try their powers upon us?

The excuse which the women offer for all the laws which they propose to inflict upon us is that they themselves are oppressed by the laws that now exist. Of course they are oppressed; and so are all men - except the oppressors themselves - oppressed by the laws that are *made*. As a general rule, oppression was the only motive for which laws were ever made. If men wanted justice, and only justice, no laws would ever need to be *made*; since justice itself is not a thing that can be *made*. If men or women, or men and women, want justice, and only justice, their true course is *not to*

make any more laws, but to abolish the laws - all the laws - that have already been made. When they shall have abolished all the laws that have already been *made*, let them give themselves to the study and observance, and, if need be, the enforcement, of that one universal law - the law of Nature - which is “the same at Rome and Athens” - in China and in England - and which *man did not make*. Women and men alike will then have their rights; all their rights; *all the rights that Nature gave them*. But until then, neither men nor women will have anything that they can call their *rights*. They will at most have only such liberties or privileges as the laws that are made shall see fit to allow them.

If the women, instead of petitioning to be admitted to a participation in the power of *making more laws*, will but give notice to the present lawmakers that they (the women) are going up to the State House, and are going to throw all the existing statute books in the fire, they will do a very sensible thing, - one of the most sensible things it is in their power to do. And they will have a crowd of men - at least all the sensible and honest men in the country to go with them.

But this subject requires a treatise, and is not to be judged of by the few words here written. Nor is any special odium designed to be cast on the woman suffragists, many of whom are undoubtedly among the best and most honest of all those foolish people who believe that laws should be *made*.

[AGAINST WOMAN SUFFRAGE was originally published in J. M. L. Babcock’s periodical, NEW AGE, February 24, 1877 and later reprinted in Benjamin R. Tucker’s Liberty, June 10, 1882.]

Non-Voting as an Act of Secession

by Hans Sherrer

(From Issue 114, 3rd Quarter 2002)

In 1776, the Declaration of Independence made it plain that in America, “Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive..., it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it,...” The consent theory stated by the Declaration is standard fare in American politics. The Declaration, however, failed to address a very important question: How do individuals express their disapproval of a political regime and/or withdraw their consent from a government that they deem “destructive?”

There are several methods that Americans have used to demonstrate their lack of consent. One way is to renounce allegiance to an existing political order. The colonists in North America seceded from the British empire by successfully waging the Revolutionary War. On the other hand, the eleven Confederate states removed

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themselves from the federal union from 1861 to 1865, before being forcibly reintegrated back into the United States.[1]

A second way someone can express a lack of consent is to move to a different country. This is what several commentators have called “the exit option.”[2] History teaches that the last resort of the individual against tyranny is to escape from its jurisdiction. The Jews left Egypt; the Separatists fled England. History is replete with examples of people who “voted with their feet.”

A third way people express a lack of consent is by not voting. Although political pundits might not call it a withdrawal of consent, the fact is that millions upon millions of Americans show their displeasure with their government by not registering for and/or casting a ballot in political elections. Non-voting represents an exit from political society. It is a silent form of “social power” that speaks volumes. Choosing not to vote may be a form of apathy, but it is simultaneously an expression of “what I perceive is best for me.” In other words, millions of non-voters are implicitly stating that voting is a meaningless and unimportant activity, so far as it applies to them and their loved ones in their own lives. After all, government programs, and spending and tax policies will continue regardless of how anyone votes. Furthermore, for those thinking individuals who understand that the government must “get out the vote,” the choice not to vote is a form of personal empowerment and a psychologically life-affirming act.[3] Those men and women who consciously choose not to participate in politics expose the lie behind the myth of “government by consent.” They have not consented to anything. In other words, their decision not to vote is form of personal secession - the form of secession that is most readily available to them.[4]

This choice is exercised by many millions of Americans because they understand that elections are nothing more than tugs-of-war between Tweedledum Democrats and Tweedledee Republicans. Both parties seek the mantle of power to impose their agendas on society. Politicians of every political party want to continue the flow of tax money into the treasury and to pass laws allowing the government to increasingly invade the social spheres of daily life. As social commentator, one-time political candidate, and author Gore Vidal once noted: there is really only one political party in this country, and it has two incestuously related branches.[5]

Whether based on intuition or practical understanding, non-voters realize they only have a subservient role in the political structure described by Vidal. Without money, position or connections, they are disenfranchised from having any meaningful say in the government’s impact on their lives. Yet, in spite of this handicap, choosing not to vote can have a dramatic and positive effect on society. This is because a government’s survival is dependent on having a sufficient number of people grant it the appearance of legitimacy to act and elicit obedience.[6]

Whether it is an explicit intention or an implicit result, the decision not to vote is a way of decreasing governmental legitimacy. As Vladimir Bukovsky, the Russian dissident put it: “Power rests on nothing other than people’s consent to submit, and each person who refuses to submit to tyranny reduces it by one two-hundred-and-

fifty-millionth, whereas each who compromises [with it] only increases it.”[7] Finally, there reaches a point at which a government no longer has enough consensus to act under any authority other than the exercise of raw, naked power. Once the mirage of legitimacy is gone, a government must become openly despotic to remain in power. This, in turn, tends to turn even more people away from supporting it, and can put its continued existence in doubt.

This isn’t armchair speculation. History records that variations of this scenario have occurred numerous times.[8] Who would have predicted that the Marco regime would fall from power in the Philippines? Who ever expected that the Communist government in Poland would be succeeded by Solidarity? Who ever thought that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics would “splinter apart” in what seemed like the blink of an eye? However, it is usually a surprise to the “experts” when it happens, because it occurs quickly and at a time when a State appears, from the outside, to be at the height of its power.

This phenomenon of seemingly sudden social change is explained by physicist Per Bak’s theory of self-organizing criticality.[9] This theory, for example, explains how millions of grains of sand can methodically be added to a seemingly stable sand pile until a “point of criticality” is reached. At that point, adding only one more grain of sand will trigger an avalanche. Professor Bak’s theory has been used to help understand such diverse things as traffic flow and the trading of stocks. It is equally applicable to the delegitimizing impact any one non-voter can have on a political regime.

It is within the realm of possibility that some day the illegitimacy of the government of the United States might reach the point of criticality. What would happen if impassioned non-voters used the many methods of modern communications to express their ideas and dissatisfaction to others? At first thought it might seem preposterous to seriously consider that government in the United States could become delegitimized. It isn’t. As sociologist Sebastian Scheerer has observed: “[T]here has never been a major social transformation in the history of mankind that ha[s] not been looked upon as unrealistic, idiotic, or Utopian by the large majority of experts even a few years before the unthinkable became reality.”[10]

For a variety of reasons which the French author, Jacques Ellul, outlined in his book, *THE POLITICAL ILLUSION*, non-voters choose to dispel the myth that the voters control the political process.[11] Instead of debasing themselves and dignifying the elections that have no positive impact on their lives, over a hundred million Americans regularly choose to distance themselves from the voting process and the political regime legitimized by it. They do so by selecting the option of not voting. The non-voters are right, and they are winning every election held in America.

Footnotes

[1] It should be noted that the Confederate States successfully seceded, and that

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each state had to reapply for admission to the United States. The States were occupied by federal troops in order to coerce them into complying with these conditions. If the use of coercion to obtain their “consent” was illegal and immoral (as it would be in obtaining a signature on an ordinary contract), then what does this say about the status of these states today?

[2] See Albert O. Hirschman, *EXIT, VOICE, AND LOYALTY: Responses to Decline in firms, Organizations, and States*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970.

[3] See “Remarks on the Psychological Aspects of Totalitarianism,” in Bruno Bettelheim, *SURVIVING AND OTHER ESSAYS*, New York: Vintage Books, 1980, pp. 317-332.

[4] Carl Watner, editor of this anthology, first suggested this concept to me.

[5] See “Homage to Daniel Shays,” in Gore Vidal, *HOMAGE TO DANIEL SHAYS: Collected Essays 1952-1972*, New York Random House, 1972, pp. 434-449.

[6] See Herbert C. Kelman and V. Lee Hamilton, *CRIMES OF OBEDIENCE: Toward a Social Psychology of Authority and Responsibility*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, p. 116.

[7] Vladimir Bukovsky, *TO BUILD A CASTLE – MY LIFE AS A DISSENTER*, New York: The Viking Press, 1977, p. 240.

[8] See Kenneth E. Boulding, “The Impact of the Draft on the Legitimacy of the National State,” in Sol Tax (ed.), *THE DRAFT*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 191-196. Also see Joseph A. Tainter, *THE COLLAPSE OF COMPLEX SOCIETIES*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 (reprint edition).

[9] Per Bak, *HOW NATURE WORKS: The Science of Self-Organized Criticality*, New York: Springer-Verlag, 1996.

[10] Sebastian Scheerer, “Towards Abolitionism,” in *CONTEMPORARY CRISES*, Vol 10, p. 7; quoted in Thomas Mathiesen, *PRISON ON TRIAL: A Critical Assessment*, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1990, p. 156.

[11] Jacques Ellul, translated by Konrad Kellen, *THE POLITICAL ILLUSION*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967.

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Jeremiah's Job

by Gary North

(From Issue 151, 4th Quarter 2011)

Sooner or later, those who are interested in the philosophy of liberty run across Albert J. Nock's essay, "Isaiah's Job." Taking as an example two Old Testament prophets, Isaiah and Elijah, Nock makes at least two important points. First, until society seems to be disintegrating around our ears, not many people are going to listen to a critic who comes in the name of principled action. The masses want to get all the benefits of principled action, but they also want to continue to follow their unprincipled ways. They want the fruits but not the roots of morality. Therefore, they refuse to listen to prophets. Second, Nock pointed out, the prophet Elijah was convinced that he was the last of the faithful, or what Nock calls the Remnant. Not so, God told the prophet; He had kept seven thousand others from the rot of the day.

Elijah had no idea that there were this many faithful people left. He had not seen any of them. He had heard no reports of them. Yet here was God, telling him that they were out there. Thus, Nock concludes, it does no good to count heads. The people whose heads are available for counting are not the ones you ought to be interested in. Whether or not people listen is irrelevant; the important thing is that the prophet makes the message clear and consistent. He is not to water down the truth for the sake of mass appeal.

Nock's essay helps those of us who are used to the idea that we should measure our success by the number of people we convince. We are "scalp-hunters," when we ought to be prophets. The prophets were not supposed to give the message out in order to win lots of public support. On the contrary, they were supposed to give the message for the sake of truth. They were to witness to a generation which would not respond to the message. The truth was therefore its own justification. Those who were supposed to hear, namely, the Remnant, would get the message, one way or the other. They were the people who counted. Lesson: the people who count can't be counted. Not by prophets, anyway.

A Sad Message

The main trouble I have with Nock's essay is that he excluded another very important prophet. That prophet was Jeremiah. He was a contemporary of Isaiah, and God gave him virtually the same message. He was told to go to the highest leaders in the land, to the average man in the street, and to everyone in between, and proclaim the message. He was to tell them that they were in violation of basic moral law in

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everything they did, and that if they did not turn away from their false beliefs and wicked practices, they would see their society totally devastated. In this respect, Jeremiah's task was not fundamentally different from Isaiah's.

Nevertheless, there were some differences. Jeremiah also wrote (or dictated) a book. He was not content to preach an unpleasant message to skeptical and hostile people. He wanted to record the results of their unwillingness to listen. His thoughts are preserved in the saddest book in the Bible, the Book of Lamentations. Though he knew in advance that the masses would reject his message, he also knew that there would be great suffering in Israel because of their stiff-necked response. Furthermore, the Remnant would pay the same price in the short run. They, too, would be carried off into captivity. They, too, would lose their possessions and die in a foreign land. They would not be protected from disaster just because they happened to be decent people who were not immersed in the practices of their day. He wrote these words in response to the coming of the predicted judgment: "Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people" (Lam. 3:48). He knew that their punishment was well deserved, yet he was also a part of them. The destruction was so great that not a glimmer of hope appears in the whole book.

What are we to conclude? That everything is hopeless? That no one will listen, ever, to the truth? That every society will eventually be ripe for judgment, and that this collapse will allow no one to escape? Is it useless, historically speaking, to serve in the Remnant? Are we forever to be ground down in the millstones of history? One key incident in Jeremiah's life gives us the answer. It appears in the thirty-second chapter of Jeremiah, a much-neglected passage. The Babylonians (Chaldeans) have besieged Jerusalem. There was little doubt in anyone's mind that the city would fall to the invaders. God told Jeremiah that in the midst of this crisis, his cousin would approach him and make him an offer. He would offer Jeremiah the right, as a relative, to buy a particular field which was in the cousin's side of the family. Sure enough, the cousin arrived with just this offer. The cousin was "playing it smart." He was selling off a field that was about to fall into the hands of the enemy, and in exchange he would be given silver, a highly liquid, easily concealed, transportable form of capital - an international currency. Not bad for him, since all he would be giving up would be a piece of ground that the enemy would probably take over anyway.

Long-Range Planning

What were God's instructions to Jeremiah? Buy the field. So Jeremiah took his silver, and witnesses, and balances (honest money) and they made the transaction. Then Jeremiah instructed Baruch, a scribe, to record the evidence. (It may be that Jeremiah was illiterate, as were most men of his day.) Baruch was told by Jeremiah to put the evidences of the sale into an earthen vessel for long-term storage. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land" (32:15). God explained His purposes at the end of the chapter. Yes, the city would fall. Yes, the people would go into captivity. Yes, their

sins had brought this upon them. But this is not the end of the story. “Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (32:37-38). It doesn’t stop there, either: “Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans” (32:42-43).

What was God’s message to Jeremiah? There is hope for the long run for those who are faithful to His message. There will eventually come a day when truth will out, when law will reign supreme, when men will buy and sell, when contracts will be honored. “Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the Lord” (32:44). In other words, business will return because the law of God will be understood and honored.

God had told them that they would be in captivity for seventy years. It would be long enough to make certain that Jeremiah would not be coming back to claim his field. Yet there was hope nonetheless. The prophet is not to imagine that all good things will come in his own day. He is not to be a short-term optimist. He is not to conclude that his words will turn everything around, making him the hero of the hour. He is told to look at the long run, to preach in the short run, and to go about his normal business. Plan for the future. Buy and sell. Continue to speak out when times are opportune. Tell anyone who will listen of the coming judgment, but remind them also that all is not lost forever just because everything seems to be lost today.

The Job Is to Be Honest

The prophet’s job is to be honest. He must face the laws of reality. If bad principles lead to bad actions, then bad consequences will surely follow. These laws of reality cannot be underestimated. In fact, it is the prophet’s task to reaffirm their validity by his message. He pulls no punches. Things are not “fairly bad” if morality is ignored or laughed at. Things are terrible, and people should understand this. Still, there is hope. Men can change their minds. The prophet knows that in “good” times, rebellious people usually don’t change their minds. In fact, that most reluctant of prophets, Jonah, was so startled when the city of Nineveh repented that he pouted that the promised judgment never came, making him look like an idiot - an attitude which God reproached. But in the days of Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah, the pragmatists of Israel were not about to turn back to the moral laws which had provided their prosperity. It would take seven decades of captivity to bring them, or rather their children and grandchildren, back to the truth.

Invest long-term, God told Jeremiah. Invest as if all were not lost. Invest as if

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your message, eventually, will bear fruit. Invest in the face of despair, when everyone is running scared. Invest for the benefit of your children and grandchildren. Invest as if everything doesn't depend on the prophet, since prophets, being men, are not omniscient or omnipotent. Invest as if moral law will one day be respected. Keep plugging away, even if you yourself will never live to see the people return to their senses and return to their land. Don't minimize the extent of the destruction. Don't rejoice at the plight of your enemies. Don't despair at the fact that the Remnant is caught in the whirlpool of destruction. Shed tears if you must, but most important, keep records. Plan for the future. Never give an inch.

A prophet is no Pollyanna, no Dr. Pangloss. He faces reality. Reality is his calling in life. To tell people things are terrible when they think everything is fine, and to offer hope when they think everything is lost.

To tell the truth, whatever the cost, and not to let short-term considerations blur one's vision. The Remnant is there. The Remnant will survive. Eventually, the Remnant will become the masses, since truth will out. But until that day, for which all prophets should rejoice, despite the fact that few will see its dawning, the prophet must do his best to understand reality and present it in the most effective way he knows how. That is Jeremiah's job.

[This article first appeared in the March 1978 FREEMAN, pages 144-148.]

Part VIII:
How I Became a Voluntaryist

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Waste no more time arguing about what a good man should
be; just be one!

- Marcus Aurelius

Nobody Cares About Hoiles, Everybody Cares About Freedom

by Carl Watner

From Issue 105, August, 2000

R.C. Hoiles didn't start out his newspaper career with the goal of putting together one of the greatest devices ever conceived in support of human liberty and human dignity. In fact, it took him nearly sixty years to hone his philosophy and come to the realization that he was a libertarian, more exactly - a voluntaryist - which was the term he was to prefer in his later years.

For the first half of his life, the business of newspapering dominated his activities. The success of his business enterprises, not his philosophy, was what consumed him. R.C. Hoiles (1878-1970) wasn't born into a family of libertarians or even raised around people of particularly independent thought. He grew up like much of the rest of his generation, attending government schools, getting a high school diploma, and then graduating from Mt. Union, a Methodist college in Ohio. He began as a printer's devil, working for his brother, looking for a way to support himself and his family

During the 1920s, when his newspaper career began in earnest, he started questioning the effects of government intervention in his own life. He and his brother had been co-owners of several Ohio newspapers until his brother refused to criticize the local labor unions. R.C. thought that the government gave the unions special privileges which allowed them to engage in violent strike activity. The two brothers separated their business interests so R.C. would be free to take an editorial stance against the unions, something he was to maintain the rest of his life.

In 1930, R.C. sold his two Ohio newspapers and took a five year sabbatical from business during which "he began reading books on history, government, morals, and economics," according to his son Harry Hoiles. One of the last things he did during this interlude was to take a stab at politics. According to the Mansfield (Ohio) NEWS of June 9, 1934, Hoiles sought the Republican nomination for congressman from the 17th Ohio district. Hoiles based his candidacy on "a new tax plan" which he called the "graduated consumers' tax" which combined elements of both a sales and luxury tax. After he lost the nomination, R.C. saw an opportunity to purchase the Santa Ana REGISTER in California and did so in 1935.

R.C. continued his intellectual evolution in Orange County. Whether he and his newspaper made the county "conservative" might be subject to debate, but by the late 1940s, TIME Magazine reported that one of his critics said that Hoiles had "a Stone-Age philosophy," and then added, "That [wa]s an injustice to the Stone Age ..."

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Hoiles was against tax-supported, compulsory education, social security, and child labor laws. He opposed taxes and all tax-supported public services, such as the police, post office, public libraries, the Army, Navy, and Air Force. He was hostile to the United Nations and to labor unions. He was quoted by THE NEW YORK TIMES as saying, "It doesn't make much difference who is President. What is important is the attitude of the American people." He was one of the few people who spoke out against the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. He was against FDR and all the New Deal stood for, strongly believing that the federal government should have nothing to do with money or credit, because he had personally suffered a loss of some \$240,000 during the New Deal era when the dollar was devalued and the Supreme Court nullified the gold clause.

Clearly R.C. was more concerned with the rightness of his thinking and his actions than what other people thought of him. It was once said that it was a good thing that Mr. Hoiles owned some newspapers, because no independent publisher would have ever accepted anything he had written. Was he really just a negative backslider and curmudgeon or did he actually stand for anything positive? Why did R.C. think the way he did? What was behind his criticisms of our American government? Why did he contend for over thirty years, through conversation and the written word, "that human beings can enjoy happier, more prosperous lives in a voluntary society where force or threats of force are absent from human relationships?" How did he come to believe that a single standard governed all our activities: that neither the lone individual nor any group of people (even if it were a majority and called itself the government) had any right to initiate force against other peaceful individuals?

The closest R. C. ever came to an autobiographical sketch of his life was a three-part series he wrote for his "Better Jobs" column which appeared in the GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH during December 1955. R. C. explained that he had grown up in the country across from a "little red school house." Both his parents had attended government schools themselves, so it was natural for them to want to send him to a government school. His father, a prominent citizen, was usually a member of the local school board. R.C. thought that the handicap he had received from his public education was the belief that the State, or a majority of citizens, had the right to use taxation to support the public school system.

I never once read in any book or heard any professor in the high school explain the basic principle that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the individual; that the government had no right to do anything that each and every individual did not have the right to do. Instead, they had to teach that the government or the local school district, if the majority so willed, had a right to force a Catholic parent, or a childless person, or an old maid, or an old bachelor to help pay for government schools. ...

The textbooks did explain the error in the belief in the divine right of kings. But they never explained the error in the divine right of the majority. It simply substituted the divine right of the majority for the divine right of the kings.

Of course, I never found any textbook or teacher that believed taxation was a violation of justice and of moral law, as set forth in the Commandments “Thou shalt not steal” and “Thou shalt not covet.” In other words, the government school I attended made no attempt to be consistent and teach me to recognize contradictions. [Dec. 16, 1955, p. 26]

R.C.’s experiences in high school were repeated in college. Never once was he exposed to a person who thought government taxation was immoral or improper. Finally, after he graduated college he came across the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, which aroused his interest in liberty and limited government. The essays on “Compensation,” “Politics,” and “The Uses of Great Men,” stimulated Hoiles’ desire for a better understanding of the political and economic world around him. After Emerson, some of the works of Herbert Spencer whetted his curiosity, particularly the ones that questioned “the morality of the government schools and the myths that existed in most of the organized religions.”

“Then a Socialist told me that Frederic Bastiat made the best explanation of the disadvantages that come from the protective tariff. That interested me. I got his *SOPHISMS* and was so fascinated that I bought his *HARMONIES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY*, and even had some of his essays translated that had not been translated into English. He [Bastiat] was the first man who awakened me to the errors, taught in government schools and most Protestant colleges, that the state doing things that were immoral if done by an individual made these acts become moral. In other words, he was the first man that pointed out [to me] that there was only one standard of right and wrong - the same standard for the state [and the same] standard for the individual. [December 18, 1955, p. 2]

Besides Bastiat, some of the authors that Hoiles described as having influenced his thinking were Henry Link and John Rustgard, but the most important was Rose Wilder Lane, whose “*GIVE ME LIBERTY*” (1936) fascinated R.C. because it explained that government schools were the “primary tyranny.” It was Lane who suggested that he read Isabel Paterson’s *THE GOD OF THE MACHINE* (1943), and of course R.C. read Lane’s book *DISCOVERY OF FREEDOM* that appeared around the same time. Though he was fond of quoting her statement that “freedom is self-control, no more, no less,” R.C. penned a devastating critique of Lane’s book. He pointed out that she assumed it was government protection of private property which made private property possible. R.C. claimed that this couldn’t be true, because the State was the major violator of property rights.

Neither Lane nor Paterson had been exposed to much public schooling (Lane for

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six months, and Paterson for two years when she was a young girl). Hoiles believed that it was the absence of exposure to government indoctrination and propaganda that made it possible for them to arrive at an unbiased opinion of government. R.C. was so impressed with the view that government-controlled schooling was one of the major causes of statism that he had an outstanding offer of \$500 to any school superintendent or official who was willing to stand up (as in a court of law) and defend the “gun-run” public school system as being consistent with the Golden Rule. He never had any serious takers.

R.C. once related that Isabel Paterson had personally confided to him “that she did not write a chapter on taxation because she had not thought it through.” Neither had he. Then one day during the late 1940s or early 1950s, he had a discussion with Frank Chodorov, who later wrote *THE INCOME TAX: ROOT OF ALL EVIL* (1954).

“Taxes are all right ,” Hoiles used to say before his conversation with Chodorov, “as long as people pay them voluntarily; I believe in voluntary taxes.”

“That’s a contradiction in terms,” Chodorov replied. “The one thing that distinguishes taxes from voluntary contributions is the element of force. There’s no such thing as voluntary taxes.” [sic] [*THE FREEMAN*, May 1955, p. 483]

That’s how R.C. came to disbelieve in taxation as a means of paying for government services.

What R.C. really believed in, he called voluntarism. In the later part of 1958 and the early part of 1959, he gave several public talks to such groups as the Unitarian Fellowship of Orange County and the Exchange Club of Santa Ana. The subject of these presentations was “voluntarism.” He chose this theme because he sincerely thought that to the degree that more and more people believed in and practiced voluntarism “the more they will increase their happiness, their physical and spiritual health, their peace of mind, and their prosperity.” He preached “the superiority of voluntary competitive human endeavor over compulsory activity.” He really woke people up when he stated that he had no more right to vote for the members of a local school board than he would have the right to vote for the trustees of a city-owned brothel. Most Americans, he admitted, could not comprehend a nation without tax-supported schools, but he always pointed out that Americans have no tax-supported churches. Isn’t education just as important as religion? Why should Americans embrace voluntarism in one and not the other? Americans don’t conscript their policemen and firemen, so why should they draft men into the military? Why is there any difference, he demanded to know?

According to R.C, there were no exceptions to the rule that all goods and services must be furnished on a competitive and voluntary basis. This meant that free enterprise associations or voluntary defensive associations would sell protection of

life and property, much like an insurance company. Once he challenged Ludwig von Mises, a well-known free market economist, on Mises' contention "that we have to have monopolistic, local, state, and federal governments to protect our lives and property" In 1962, R.C. directed a letter to von Mises, asking him to reconsider his rejection of voluntary defense agencies. R.C. said that he saw von Mises doing so much good on behalf of free enterprise and free market economics, that he hated to see von Mises "continue to advocate any form of socialism, or any form of tyranny." R.C. argued,

I would buy from a protective association protection for my life and property ... that would give me the most for the money, just as I buy life and fire insurance from an association that I believe is the soundest. ...

I must have the right to discontinue buying from one agency and buy from one I think will give me the most for my money. In other words, there must be competition or the threat of competition in order to have a true value of the worth of the service. When there is no competition there is no true value, as in the case when the government has the right to arbitrarily confiscate a man's property and call it a tax. ...

Competition would be the protection as to the agency overcharging me. I hear the objection that the protective agencies would come in conflict. I do not believe there would be nearly as much conflict when the insured had the right to dismiss an agency and the agency had the right to refuse the individual who was too great a risk

We have conflicts between competitive arbitrary monopoly governments now. [We call them wars.] [GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH, October 30, 1956, p. 21]

R.C. believed that the heart of a newspaper was its editorial page and that its purpose was to get people to think. "The editorial page of a newspaper, which is kept open for contrary points of view, and which is well prepared and thoughtfully assembled [is] a daily school room made available to its subscribers," whether "rich or poor, young or old, and without the duress of taxes nor the compulsion of forced attendance." During the mid-1950s, R.C., his son, Harry, the publisher of the GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH, and Robert LeFevre, its chief editorial writer and founder of Freedom School, strove to make all the Freedom newspapers one consistent voice for human liberty and human freedom. Before R.C. died in 1970, THE REGISTER of Santa Ana, California published a policy statement entitled "Here Are the Convictions That Led To Our Belief in a Universal Standard of Right," which said in part:

The Register believes in a system of universal natural law. ...
[W]e believe that moral facts are no less concrete and timeless than physical facts. The law of gravity does not change with seasons; atomic

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behavior is not subject to the good intentions of man. For physical facts are not capable of change; else they would not be facts.

And so we believe it is with moral facts, which stem from the same source as physical laws.

Let's take two facts, one physical and one moral.

1. Water seeks its level.
2. Stealing is wrong.

It is commonly accepted that the first fact is not subject to amendment. A change in political administration, a vote of the people, a petition of the Society of Learned Mathematicians of the World cannot change it. It exists as a fact.

The second law, we believe, is no more subject to amendment than the first. The majority might wink at it, try to reconcile it with some base or unsound conviction. But that does not affect the law - only the people who must live by it. Jumping out of a five story building to flout the law of gravity will hardly bring about a suspension of that law. Neither will disregarding moral law bring about its abolition. ...

Thus we believe:

1. That every man is born with equal unalienable rights to take moral action to make more secure his property which includes first his life, then his liberty and all he produces.
2. That these rights are the endowment of the Creator and not the gift of any government.

Since we believe these facts are expressed in this guide of human conduct, we do not believe any man has the moral right to curtail the rights of his brother. That is, no man has the right to initiate force against his brother. Every man, to be sure, has the right to resist the initiation of force, but should not initiate it. ...

These moral laws do not make exceptions for groups. They do not say, "Thou shalt not steal except at the desire of the majority." They say "Thou shalt not steal," period. And a man's association with a group does not relieve him of the burden of these laws.

We believe, therefore, in a single standard of conduct." ... *

*Regrettably, we do not always follow this principle [to its logical conclusions]. We fall into error. Our humility [and intellectual consistency], perhaps, is not sufficient to the effort. But it is our belief, to the degree a universal single standard of right is followed you will have a deeper understanding of your religion, greater freedom and security and more happiness and a higher standard of living. This belief will also benefit every person in the community, the state, the nation and the world. That is the reason it is our belief.

R.C. devoted his life and his newspapers to developing these ideas. “His passion was freedom. While the Hearst, Scrip, Knight, Gannet, and others named their newspaper groups after themselves, R.C. Hoiles named his business Freedom Newspapers because, as he explained it, nobody cares about Hoiles, but everybody cares about Freedom.”

[Editor’s Note: A slightly different version of this article appeared as “How R.C. Hoiles found his way,” in FREEDOM FAMILY (October/November 1999) magazine published by Freedom Communications, Inc. 17666 Fitch, Irvine, CA 92514. Both articles are based on an earlier and lengthier essay “To Thine Own Self Be True: The Story of Raymond Cyrus Hoiles and His Freedom Newspapers,” THE VOLUNTARYIST, No. 18, May 1986, and reprinted in I MUST SPEAK OUT: The Best of THE VOLUNTARYIST 1982-1999.]

My Route to Voluntaria

by James L. Payne

(From Issue 122, 3rd Quarter 2004)

[Editor’s Note: Political scientist James Payne has taught at Yale, Wesleyan, Johns Hopkins, and Texas A&M. He wrote his first book (published by Yale University Press) while an undergraduate at Oberlin College and now has over a dozen books and monographs to his credit. Disappointed with the irrelevance and left-wing orientation of the academic political science discipline, Payne resigned his tenured professorship (at Texas A&M) in 1985, and became an independent, free-lance scholar living in Sandpoint, Idaho. His recent works include an analysis of Congress and the budget (THE CULTURE OF SPENDING: WHY CONGRESS SPENDS BEYOND OUR MEANS), an evaluation of the tax system (COSTLY RETURNS: THE BURDENS OF THE U. S. TAX SYSTEM), and an examination of social assistance policies (OVERCOMING WELFARE: EXPECTING MORE FROM THE POOR—AND FROM OURSELVES).

In addition to his non-fiction books, Payne has written the Princess Navina series of fictional allegories (PRINCESS NAVINA VISITS MALVOLIA, PRINCESS NAVINA VISITS MANDAAT, and PRINCESS NAVINA VISITS NUEVA MALVOLIA). At the request of the editor, he explains how he came to write the fourth book in that series, PRINCESS NAVINA VISITS VOLUNTARIA.]

When I began writing the first book of the Princess Navina series in 1978, I had no idea that my efforts would culminate in 2002 with a volume laying out a picture of a voluntary society. In fact, I wasn’t at that time a voluntarist, as I now call myself, and probably would have laughed at someone who tried to put forward a model of a voluntary regime. I was a professor of political science at a state university (grossly

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overpaid, I can now confess), and committed to finding ways to fix the flaws of government.

These, I was discovering, were more numerous and appalling than I, or almost anyone, had dared to report. In fact, I was seeing that when government policies are closely examined, they often seem diabolically perverse, as if policy makers had started out with the aim of doing as much harm as possible. This thought provoked me to invent, as an intellectual exercise, a fictional country where the rulers deliberately intend to inflict harm and sow havoc. It was remarkable to see how often the policies developed by these evil-intentioned rulers were the same as those cherished by modern lawmakers. Seeing that my friends enjoyed this little tale, I eventually published it (PRINCESS NAVINA VISITS MALVOLIA, 1990).

This book, like the others in the series, is a short, illustrated volume in large type. My aim was to make my points quickly and easily for an adult audience and to avoid at all costs anything dull and ponderous. I saw my books as an imitator of GULLIVER'S TRAVELS but one that avoided the interminable verbiage of that work. (PRINCESS NAVINA VISIT MALVOLIA employs but 9,000 words; in the same space Gulliver has not even begun making a single point.) As it turned out, the casual format gives the work the appearance of a children's book, and it has also succeeded in that market.

The Malvolia book and the two sequels that also explored government dysfunctions propelled me to a deeper level of analysis. Almost any thoughtful person can see that government is laughable, and often tragically, inept. But what is the underlying cause of its incompetence? The quest to answer that question led, in the end, to PRINCESS NAVINA VISITS VOLUNTARIA.

The problem, it seemed to me, is centralization. With government, a small number of people attempt to manage much more than they can possibly understand. Imagine, for example, setting a minimum wage for scores of millions of people in tens of thousands of employment situations. Any rule on the subject made from the center would necessarily be inappropriate, ineffective, or harmful in countless numbers of cases. Similarly, how could a tiny handful of men and women wisely oversee the spending of two trillion dollars in tens of thousands of programs and services? Such a system would necessarily involve massive amounts of waste and misallocation. It became increasingly clear that the only rational way to tackle the provision of community services is a highly decentralized system where tiny units deal with problems small enough for the relevant decision makers to grasp, tiny units like individuals, families, and local commercial and voluntary organizations. As the Princess put it (in PRINCESS NAVINA VISITS NUEVA MALVOLIA), "What's wrong with politics is that everyone's trying to fix things from a distance, like cooks trying to bake a pudding through the speaking tube. No wonder they blunder. When you tend things right under your hands, you can succeed."

If small-scale decision-making is best, why has the world opted for centralization? One is at first tempted to blame it on the hubris of politicians. I have

spent many years researching the psychology of politicians, interviewing both American and Latin American leaders in an effort to determine their motivational outlook. The results clearly show that most of them are egotistical status seekers, craving fame and glory. It is natural, then, that they should seek to implement grandiose, centralized schemes in hopes of becoming national heroes.

But yet, the blame lies not only with politicians. Political leaders play to a mass audience that obviously endorses this penchant for centralization. When a national leader gets up and promises to fix the country's education, agriculture, or medical care, the public does not mark him as an idiot. They think he is making sensible, commendable proposals!

So the underlying problem is that human beings are not by nature constructed to be humble. We always seem to think our opinions are valid, even though those opinions might be based on mere fragments of information, whim, shallow impressions, hearsay, or emotion. The result is almost everyone wants to impose his ideas on faraway situations where it appears at first glance that something is wrong. For example, when it is reported that workers are paid seemingly low wages in some job thousands of miles away, very few people have the ability to suspend judgment, saying, "I've only heard a tiny fragment of what is bound to be complex social and economic arrangement, and therefore I have no rational grounds for drawing conclusions about right or wrong, or making recommendations for improvement."

Instead, most people, including intelligent and educated people, will say, "How wrong that is! The workers should be paid more!" The politicians merely reflect this widespread tendency to form opinions about complex, distant circumstances. That is the basic cause of government's destructive, inefficient centralization.

It seems clear that this problem cannot be cured by expecting people to become more sophisticated about social and economic realities. Most people have great difficulty mastering even elementary points of economics (such as the idea that there is no free lunch). It is Utopian indeed to expect the population of any country to achieve a mature humility about the human capacity to wisely address countrywide problems.

The conclusion I reached, therefore, was that if one cannot control the motive to centralize management of the social world, the alternative must be to control the means - which is, of course, the use of force. It is force that enables far-off individuals, be they senators or voters, to impose their whims on situations which they imperfectly understand. Without employing the threat of violence, these individuals would have to rely on voluntary means, like persuasion, or give up expecting their existing opinions to be made effective.

Thus, the person, who believes that far-off workers are underpaid would have to try to persuade employers to raise their wages. His advice could be taken or ignored, of course. Or, if the reformer were really idealistic, he could donate money to be added to the paychecks of the underpaid workers. Or he could try to persuade the workers to quit their underpaid jobs. The reformer who is deprived of the use of force

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is not without means of implementing his opinions, but these voluntary methods are necessarily piecemeal and partial. The harmful, irrational centralized control we now associate with government cannot take place.

I concluded, then, that the ideal society would be one where the members deliberately refrained from the use of force, or to put it more carefully, where they abstained from the initiation of force to attempt to solve social problems. Thus was the land of *Voluntaria* born. I tried to show how the public functions now undertaken by a coercive, centralized government would be undertaken in a voluntary regime more efficiently and with less vexation by small-scale units, especially voluntary organizations.

Although my aim to was identify a society where social policy was made in a rational, helpful manner, as I got into writing the story, I found myself making other points. As I tried to visualize patterns of behavior in a voluntary society, it became clear that voluntary arrangements foster friendship, generosity, and a sense of community. When you can't use force to change other people's behavior, this more or less compels you to approach them in a friendly, non-combative way. And when you can't use force to improve the world, you soon realize that an improved world must depend on strengthening attitudes of helpfulness and cooperation.

Thus, I discovered that a voluntary system does not merely make good policy. It tends to make good people.

Werner K. Stiefel's Pursuit of a Practicum of Freedom

by Spencer Heath MacCallum

(From Issue 134, 3rd Quarter 2007)

On June 8, 2006 we lost to cancer a unique freedom fighter, scientist, inventor, and entrepreneur, Werner K. Stiefel, 85 years old, of Vero Beach, Florida, survived by his wife, Marie, and six children. He was such a private person that not many people knew him.

Werner believed as an act of faith, as do I, that human social organization in the future will be stateless. Such an assumption is warranted for the same reason as the scientist's assumption that the universe is a cosmos and not a chaos. That is to say, it's a productive assumption. The scientist can't prove the universe is rational, but without that assumption, he would make no discoveries. He wouldn't expend the effort. In the same way, it is productive to assume that human society which, after all, is very young, is a work in progress and that we will outgrow/are outgrowing the conflicted behavior of politics.

The interesting question is *how* we will outgrow that conflicted behavior, and therein lies the value of the productive assumption: it prompts the search for new

understandings of the evolving social process. To engage in such discovery is inspiring, and inspiration lifts our spirits. It is the fountain of creativity, perhaps more than anything else, that is what being human, in the best sense of the word, is all about.

Around 1970, I made the acquaintance of Werner, who was developing plans to build a free community. While the community would need to be effectively governed, it would differ from communities as we know them by being internally consistent. In no way would its management infringe upon property rights. There would be no taxation or other discretionary authority over anyone's person or property.

Werner had been inspired and awakened philosophically by reading *Atlas Shrugged*. But unlike many Randians, he saw an inconsistency in her tolerance for the state. He realized that men act in their own interest as they perceive it, and that is no problem when they are dealing with their own person and property. But when they acquire discretionary authority over persons and property not their own, problems arise, since their perceived interest and that of the owners must at some point diverge. The private individual then must resist, even to the forfeit of his life if he cannot prevail, or else live for the sake of another. The last is irreconcilable with the oath taken by all in Galt's Gulch: "I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine." (*ATLAS SHRUGGED* 1956: 680).

Werner's family had experienced Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Unable to rescue any of the assets from the family soap manufacturing business in Germany, he and his father and brother set up a new business in the United States, based on what they carried in their heads. Today Stiefel Laboratories is the largest privately-owned dermatological company in the world with over 2,500 employees and offices in more than 100 countries. Lubriderm is one of their best known products. Werner remained president and CEO until his retirement in 2001.

Reading *ATLAS SHRUGGED*, Werner woke up to a sobering question. When conditions had deteriorated in Germany in the 1930s, many people had fled to the United States. But even then, Werner saw symptoms of the same thing happening in the United States that he had witnessed in Germany. When the time came, he asked, where could people flee from the United States?

Taking a cue from Ayn Rand, Werner conceived of a "Galt's Gulch" (aka "Mulligan's Valley," aka "Atlantis") somewhere on the oceans, a community on the high seas outside the political jurisdiction of any nation. Adopting the name "Atlantis" (not to be confused with Erik Klein's project by the same name in the years 1993-1994, also to promote a floating sea city, but not apolitical), he set about making the dream a reality, using his private resources and not any of those of the company. His endeavor would prove to be a fit subject for a heroic novel after the manner of Rand.

A Herculean Effort

Around 1970, Werner purchased a motel near the company's main plant in

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Saugerties, N.Y., and invited libertarians to come and live there while they worked in the surrounding area and, in their free time, to help plan the Atlantis Project. He conceived of the project in three stages. Atlantis I was the Saugerties Motel. Atlantis II would be a ship at sea, and Atlantis III would be a floating community or perhaps a community on dredged-up land on some submerged seamount. The ship would play an indispensable role as supply vessel and living quarters in the construction phase of Atlantis III.

At Saugerties—Atlantis I—Werner undertook to transform those who had joined him into a seasoned team that could work under any and all conditions. He gave them the daunting task of building the ferrocement ship that would be Atlantis II. The team passed this first test and sailed the ship south into the Caribbean, where a tropical storm destroyed it, fortunately with no loss of life.

Undaunted, Werner obtained another vessel and located a spot in the Caribbean outside any political jurisdiction where the depth was barely four feet at low tide. He had just completed the arduous task of constructing four sea walls and was about to begin dredging sand to create his first bit of artificial land on which to stand while extending Atlantis III, when a gun boat showed up and leveled its guns at his crew. Someone had found silver nuggets on the sea bottom nearby and had cut a deal with Haitian dictator “Papa Doc” Duvalier for protection from pirates. The gunboat captain, not knowing who these people were or what they were doing in the area, decided to run them off. Werner was forced to make a quick decision. Unwilling to risk people’s lives, he abandoned the site.

For a permanent base of operations, Werner then took a long-term lease on a site in a freeport operated by the Haitian government. But when a copy of his newsletter, *The Atlantis News*, fell into an official’s hands and revealed his underlying philosophy, the government forthwith canceled his lease. From this experience, Werner learned the importance of a low profile.

He next set about to create land on the Misteriosa Banks, a submerged seamount midway between Cuba and Honduras, the same location that self-styled Prince Lazarus Long would later publicize as the site for his ill-starred New Utopia. Werner bought and towed to the site an oil rig of the type that, once on location, could be inverted to stand on three legs. Before it could be put in place, however, a hurricane blew it out to sea, destroying it.

Still undismayed, Werner purchased property on Grand Cayman and constructed an attractive complex for a new center of operations, one that could also serve as a retreat for the staff of Stiefel Laboratories. This garden setting still exists. It became, among other things, the office of the Atlantis Trading and Commodity Purchasing Service (ATCOPS), which Werner had already established as the forerunner of the Bank of Atlantis. ATCOPS made profits for many clients, including me, over the years and struck an attractive silver coin, the deca, so-called because it contained a decagram of silver.

From his base at Grand Cayman, Werner bought an island off the coast of Belize

and built improvements on it, his ultimate goal being to negotiate, if not full sovereignty, then at least a grant of freeport status from the government of Belize. Eventually, however, he tired of dealing with the bureaucracy. With age advancing sharply on him, he put up the island for sale.

To Grow a Free Country

Beginning with Atlantis, Werner's goal had been to develop one or a series of freeports at sea that would function much like new countries. His approach had many practical features. Atlantis would start small and grow by increments. Moreover, rather than trying to attract a residential population, it would aim at businesses, starting with one of his own plants—Stiefel Laboratories. Businesses would bring their own personnel and their families, and these would require ancillary services, which services in turn would require personnel, and the residential population would grow naturally. This would enable the Atlantis community to develop without fanfare. Promotional advertising of casinos and other recreational amenities of tourism would not follow until much later. Until then, the fledgling community would keep its profile low, almost under the political radar screen. Werner's approach was also non-ideological. He aimed at attracting effective, entrepreneurial people in business and the professions without regard for political persuasion or lifestyle.

The most imaginative aspect of Atlantis was that the provision of governmental services would be a business in and of itself, creating value in the competitive market and subsisting on the market revenues those values induced. There would be no need to appeal to philanthropy or to practice taxation. Because the provision of public goods would be a business, specifically that of a multi-tenant income property writ large, taxation of the residents would be intolerable, anathema to the enterprise because destructive of the values on which it depended.

From Werner's Herculean effort came an intellectual construct that survived Atlantis. His constitution for a free community was a radical departure from all political constitutions. The need for such a construct arose because Werner's "Galt's Gulch" was to be far more than a literary device. He had set about to apply it in the real world. Unlike Ayn Rand, therefore, he could not ignore the question of how it would be administered.

There seemed no easy answer, however. By 1972, he had reached a low point and almost despaired of the project, agonizing over the question of how Atlantis could be administered as a community and yet its inhabitants remain free. What form of government should he choose? Surveying all of history, he found no form of government that would not be prone to repeating the same tired round of tyranny the world had known for thousands of years.

At that point, Werner came upon the ideas of my grandfather, Spencer Heath, and saw their relevance. Heath had pointed out an advantage in keeping the title to the land component of a real-estate development intact and parceling the land into its various lots by land-leasing rather than subdividing. This creates a concentrated

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entrepreneurial interest in the success of the development, enabling it to be administered far into the future as an investment property for income rather than selling it off piecemeal for a one-time capital gain. Those holding the ground title have an incentive to supply public services and amenities to the place, creating an environment the market will find attractive. To the extent they do so, they can recover not only their costs but earn a profit to themselves and their investors. Heath forecast that in time whole communities would be managed on this nonpolitical basis. He saw this becoming the future norm for human settlements, each competing in the market for its clientele. Community services, he thought, would thus become a major new growth industry.

Heath's ideas brought into focus a vast and virtually untapped body of empirical data from the field of commercial real estate, namely, the emergence of multi-tenant income properties such as shopping centers, hotels, office buildings, business parks, marinas, and combinations of these and other forms. What all of these have in common is that title to the land underlying a development is not fractionated by subdividing but is held intact. While buildings and other improvements on the land might be separately owned or not, the sites are leased. This preserves the unified entrepreneurial interest in the whole development that enabled it to be planned and built initially, and this concentration of interest permits it to be operated as a long-term investment for income. The result is very different from a subdivision, such as a condominium or other common-interest development, which is likely to be governed by a homeowners' association. A subdivision is an aggregation of consumers looking to their own purposes and not in any sense a business enterprise serving customers in the competitive market.

Werner had just such a working community in his Saugerties Motel-Atlantis I. Here he administered all the community services contractually on an ordinary, businesslike basis. Pragmatic businessman that he was, he realized that here was his desired form of government—a proprietary, free-market government in which there was no violation of property rights. All relations were contractual, negotiated among the parties. The only thing lacking that we are accustomed to find in a community is a city hall exercising taxation and other discretionary authority over the inhabitants and their property. All Werner needed was to preserve this form of organization and move it out to sea.

Why had no one thought of this before? Why isn't it common wisdom? Doubtless a major reason is that the dynamic, evolving market process is recent in human history, at least to the degree that we know it today, and our understanding of it only beginning. Boston's Tremont House, regarded in the industry as the first modern hotel, was built only 175 years ago. All subsequent forms of modern, multi-tenant income property have evolved since then. Only with the advent of modern technology and business practice, including all the various supportive institutions of banking and finance, insurance, communications, market prices, modern accounting methods, and so forth, could a community fully take the form of a competitive

business enterprise. In addition, we are used to idealizing politicians as selflessly motivated, since in public life as we have known it, self-interest and the public interest are opposed. Only in the free-market process are the interests of customers and service providers aligned. Unaccustomed to recipients of public services being customers, it is not easy for us to accept public-service providers acting in their own self interest.

Werner's Master-Lease Form

Werner saw that the master-lease form would be critical to the success of Atlantis. It would be Atlantis' social software, as it were, capable of generating an elaborate but internally consistent web of relationships, all spelled out in the wording of the leases, subleases, sub-subleases, etc. The sum of the agreements in effect at any given point in time would be the written constitution of Atlantis. They could be as specialized and distinct as circumstances might warrant, so long as they did not contradict any part of the master-lease form.

Without a body of legislated rules to fall back upon, the master-lease form would have to provide for every conceivable contingency. Werner gave me the task of drafting it. It was a moment of truth. But I couldn't dodge the assignment, since I had studied the question from the broad viewpoint of social anthropology and had published the first description of multi-tenant income properties as a distinct class of social phenomena (*THE ART OF COMMUNITY*, Institute for Humane Studies, 1970). No mere theoretician, Werner assigned me a 2% equity in the venture.

Werner's master-lease form not only survived his Atlantis project, it took on a life of its own. With Werner's approval, it was published in several iterations, giving many people an opportunity to criticize it and offer improvements. But because Werner was leery of prematurely drawing the attention of the world's governments to the idea of private settlement of the open seas, it carried no reference to Atlantis. It appeared as a purely heuristic exercise in the free-market provision of community services in a made-up setting called "Orbis," one of a hypothetical cluster of settlements in outer space. [See "A Model Lease for ORBIS," *THE VOLUNTARY-IST*, Whole Number 81, August 1996 and accompanying editorial comments.]

Of the many refinements of the master-lease form made by other people, the single most important was that by Michael van Notten (1933-2002) in *The Law of the Somalis* (Red Sea Press, 2005). A Dutch lawyer who married into the Samaron Clan of Somalia and lived with them for the last twelve years of his life, Van Notten launched the Somali Freeport project to develop a large, multi-tenant income property provisionally called "Newland" on land leased from the Clan. He conceived of Newland as a purely private business venture with no flags, anthems, or any of the ritual panoplies and paraphernalia associated with political nations. If successful, it would have become something like a small, latter-day Hong Kong, offering a business and professional environment free of all burdensome bureaucracy and taxation. Located in their own back yard, so to speak, it could become for the

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Samaron their stepping stone to full cultural, economic, and technological participation in the developed world. Traditionally a stateless people, the Samaron aspired to such participation if it would not entail their being dominated by a political government, their own or any other.

In adapting Werner's master-lease form to Newland, Van Notten made a significant addition. He sketched out and incorporated in it a detailed set of natural-law principles and supporting procedural rules. This would enable a system of law to be in place from the beginning of the development, from which point it could evolve of its own accord. It would be a system of law, moreover, to which all members of the community, including administrative and service personnel, would have freely consented in their lease agreement or terms of employment. Natural-law scholar Roy Halliday wrote of this innovation that it

comes as close as anything I have seen to establishing the framework for a civil society consistent with liberty and natural rights. The idea of incorporating a description of natural rights into the master lease for a proprietary community is brilliant. It satisfies both the strong natural rights advocates . . . and the skeptics who believe rights are created by contracts. The lease contract provides a way to specify how rights are to be enforced.

In pursuing his vision of freeports at sea, Werner Stiefel put into motion in a practical way a plan for a wholly proprietary, nonpolitical public authority. Here was his answer to the question of how to have public administration and yet each and every person be fully empowered over his own person and property. He believed that humankind would outgrow government as we know it today. Perhaps what is most intriguing and heartening about his formula for an internally consistent, open social software is that it is not conjectural, but is extrapolated from a century and a half of empirical data gleaned from observation of the marketplace. [Spencer MacCallum is a social anthropologist living in Mexico, where he played a key role in the economic development of the pottery village of Mata Ortiz. He wrote *The Art of Community* and edited and contributed to *The Law of the Somalis: A Stable Foundation for Economic Development in the Horn of Africa* (Red Sea Press, 2005). This article first appeared on LewRockwell.com in June 2006, and is reprinted by both permission of the author and Lew Rockwell.]

A Self-Educated Chicken

by Debbie Harbeson

(From Issue 150, 3rd Quarter 2011)

I was never much of a rebel. I always did pretty much what I was told and followed mainstream thought. I didn't want to get into trouble. I didn't want to stick out. I think the only thing I ever did that would be considered rebellious was underage drinking. But even that's not particularly rebellious, is it?

But something changed when I had my first child. I was a college graduate but realized I was not educated at all about pregnancy, childbirth or parenting. So I began to read and learn all I could about the topic.

I eventually found a group called La Leche League, which is a support group for breastfeeding mothers. Through them, I began learning about other parenting ideas that made sense to me but were fairly counter-culture to anyone outside that group. But now it didn't matter. I didn't care because it was working for our family.

I continued to read, listen, discuss and learn. I was completely free to draw my own conclusions and make the decisions my husband and I thought fit our family best. None of these decisions required government permission.

But that ended when my children became school-age and I decided to try homeschooling. Suddenly our lives were affected by the state. I could now not be trusted to do what was best for my children.

At the time, we happened to live in a school district that was going outside of what the law required. We received a letter from the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney telling us that if we did not comply and fill out all the forms, we would be charged with educational neglect, a felony.

This official government letter, on official government letterhead, explained to us that they had primary authority over the education of our children. This official letter telling us they knew best how to educate our children had three words spelled wrong.

I circled the spelling errors in red and wanted to mail it back to them with a big F on it. But I didn't, of course. I'm a chicken.

In reality, I was scared and worried. Not that I would actually be charged because I knew I'd do what they wanted before that would happen. My main goal was to not do anything that might jeopardize my ability to homeschool. Eventually others with more experience and courage got this district straightened out, we turned in the form that was in the law and were left alone.

But when it all settled down, I just got mad. Mad at how we were treated, how we were disrespected, how they were willing to use force against us if necessary.

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That's probably the root point at which I began to lose respect for any government authority.

I wanted to forget about government and politics and concentrate on raising my family, but I couldn't. I needed to stay informed about the law, at least as it related to education, because any change in the law had the potential of drastically changing our family's entire life.

At this time, online message boards were beginning to grow and I participated in online discussions about homeschooling freedom. I subscribed to "Home Education Magazine," which has a monthly column called "Taking Charge" written by Larry and Susan Kaseman. They kept me informed and thinking about homeschooling freedom. I read books by education reformer John Holt and realized how much a child benefits when given freedom to learn, and became a proponent of unschooling.

I discovered the Separation of School and State organization and joined. I became rabid in my belief of freedom in education. I was definitely becoming an educational anarchist, though I never thought of it that way at the time.

I eventually ran into people online identifying themselves as libertarian. Once again I found myself learning about a whole new idea that was outside mainstream thought.

When I began asking more questions about it, someone online recommended Harry Browne's "Why Government Doesn't Work." It was the first book about libertarianism I bought and I remember really being hit for the first time with a moral argument against the state as he explained that government is force and it is backed up by a gun.

I eventually found the Libertarian Party and my husband and I started the affiliate in our county. Still being a chicken, I convinced my husband to take the chairman position fearing that I could not handle any publicity.

The state party had an online message board and I began once again to educate myself about a new topic. The typical energetic purist/pragmatic debates were going on and I loved it. However, state party leaders became uncomfortable with the image these debates might be giving to potential members so they shut it down.

I was learning so much and really enjoying the debates so I decided to start my own list and made it clear there was no affiliation with the party. It was about this time I discovered Murray Rothbard. I read his book "For a New Liberty" and found myself consulting this book often as we debated and discussed various topics. I also received good information from the Advocates for Self-Government, which is where I discovered Mary Ruwart. I bought two of her publications, "Healing Our World" and "Short Answers to the Tough Questions." I consulted these often, too. These were not the only books I read. I was also very ignorant about economics and read a lot of books in that area beginning with "Economics in one Lesson" by Henry Hazlitt.

It should be no surprise that I was all about using the Libertarian Party as an educational tool. I remained involved in the LP for a few years, even running for state senate at one point, running an educational campaign. After that campaign experience,

the problems inherent in making changes through politics became even clearer to me.

During discussions, I began to get frustrated that others in the party didn't seem to be reaching the same conclusions as I did. I kept on reading and thinking about the philosophy, but others did not appear to be doing the same. They seemed to be more concerned and busy with the details of operating a political party.

Then one day someone said I was not a libertarian, I was an anarchist. Me? An anarchist? How can a chicken be an anarchist? Talk about out of the mainstream.

At some point I found the online site, Strike the Root and began reading their "non-voting archive." I found every single article interesting, but when I read George Smith's "Party Dialogue," I was completely fascinated because it mirrored many discussions I had been involved in for so long.

I noticed this article came from a site called Voluntaryist.com and that's when my life took another turn. I felt like this time, I really did find a place where others had reached the same conclusions as I did. So much of what I read on the site matched my thinking. But most of all, the suggestion that one needs to simply focus on the improvement and education of the self resonated strongly. Self-education is where it all started for me and where my life continues to focus.

What I do now is still focused on education. I have a weekly column, "The Suburban Voluntaryist," in the local daily paper where I write about local issues from a voluntaryist perspective, as much as that is possible. I do this mostly for myself because it helps me think and learn. If my writing helps someone else to do the same, then I'm very enthused, but if not, it's still okay.

What's odd now is that many readers are surprised at what I say and how I say it. They think it's either courageous, crazy or just plain stupid to be so forthright. They don't believe me when I say I'm still a chicken. But I am. I'm still not living my life in a manner as consistent to voluntaryist ideals as I would like.

I know I can improve though, which has led me to another project. I want to read all of "The Voluntaryist" issues, in context, from the beginning. I feel like there's a treasure in those pages and all I have to do is start reading. Carl Watner has done so much for voluntaryism by keeping this publication going for so long and I want to really get a feel for the publication as it developed.

I want to see what else I have to learn - about voluntaryism, about myself - and since writing is a big part of how I learn, I'm going to blog about it as I go through the process. Carl said he will participate if he has the time and as long as it is valuable to him, so hopefully, I will get more insight from his current perspective as well. We'll see how it goes.

If you are interested in following and perhaps even participating in this project along with me, then by all means join me. Share your thoughts of agreement, or disagree and set me straight. Add your unique perspective. Let's learn together. The blog is here: <http://debbieandcarl.blogspot.com/>

[Editor's Note: This article was written and originally posted online on August 20, 2010.]

My Deprogramming

by Larken Rose

Issue 152, 1st Quarter 2012

I was raised in a conservative home, in a conservative town, with some libertarian leanings. I grew up thinking the good old U.S. of A. was the land of the free and the home of the brave, and that “our” Constitution made us fundamentally different from every other country. I was a big proponent of “limited government,” meaning police and military, and not much else.

Back then I considered myself quite adept at explaining and arguing why collectivism and communism are immoral and irrational, and why “government” should have only a very limited role in “society.” Since almost everyone was more pro-“government” than I was, I was almost always arguing AGAINST “government” doing this or that. I had little practice in rationally justifying “government” doing what I DID want it to do.

But there was a problem. My arguments for why “government” should NOT be taking care of the poor, controlling education, running the health care system, and so on, applied equally well to the things I thought “government” SHOULD be doing. For example, if individual liberty was the moral and practical choice when it came to food production, why was it not the moral and practical choice when it came to protection and defense? If a welfare state forcibly robbing people in the name of fighting poverty was immoral and counter-productive, why was forcibly robbing people in the name of protecting them from thieves and invaders any better? Arguing “it’s for your own good,” or “it’s necessary,” or “the collective need justifies it,” made me sound exactly like the communists I routinely railed against. And saying “The Constitution says so” was a complete cop-out, as if my philosophical position didn’t need a rational basis as long as it matched what a sacred piece of paper said.

I’ve enjoyed arguing for as long as I can remember. And whenever one engages in intellectual battle, the chinks in his armor will always be his OWN inconsistencies. I had made a hobby out of aiming for the giant holes of inconsistency in the “armor” of collectivist ideas (socialism, communism, democracy, etc.). And I wanted my own philosophical armor to be invincible. To put it another way, because I considered THE TRUTH to be what matters above all, and because the truth can’t be inconsistent with itself, I wanted to make sure there were no contradictions or inconsistencies in my own belief system, and in what I was advocating. So I spent lots of time looking at my own philosophical “armor,” and saw that it had some gaping holes in it—in other words, I saw that my philosophy CONTRADICTED ITSELF. And that wasn’t okay

with me.

So I set out to remove those inconsistencies, no matter what. If my reverence for the Constitution got in the way of being principled and philosophically consistent, then the Constitution had to go. If “limited government” didn’t fit with a coherent, rational, consistent set of principles, then it had to go, too. In short, I had to back up, past all of the “civics” stuff we were all taught, and start from scratch. What I found was very freeing, and very disturbing. I found that the entire mythology about “government,” “authority,” and “law” was nonsensical garbage. Despite the fact that the mythology was being repeated just about everywhere, by just about everybody, it made no sense at all, for a dozen different reasons.

I should mention that a lot of this examination and reconsidering was the result of my wife and me throwing ideas at each other. She’s another one of those wacky people who want to know the truth whatever it is-and who don’t want to believe in lies and contradictions. Having both been “limited government” believers, over time we basically “corrupted” each other into becoming anarchists, eventually giving up the mythology of “government” entirely. (Don’t talk or think too much, or the same thing might happen to you!)

Now, most of the anarchists I know gave up statism because they decided that, as a practical matter, a completely free society would work better than any “government”-controlled society, and that “government” is not really necessary. But I arrived at anarchism/voluntarism by a different route: I figured out, via simple logic, that “government” is impossible. I don’t mean that GOOD “government” is impossible (though it is); I mean that the entire concept of “government” is a self-contradictory myth. There’s no such thing, and can be no such thing. There can NEVER be a legitimate ruling class, so arguing about WHAT KIND of ruling class we should have, or what it should do, was a completely pointless discussion. If “government” isn’t real, debating what it should be like is silly.

Of course, the gang of mercenaries is very real, as are the politicians, but it is the supposed LEGITIMACY of their rule that makes them “government,” and makes their commands “law,” and makes disobedience to such commands “crime,” and so on. Without the RIGHT to do what they do - without the moral right to rule - the gang ceases to be “government,” and becomes organized crime.

By trying to reconcile contradictions in my own political beliefs, I proved to myself that “government” can NEVER be legitimate. It can never have “authority.” However necessary it supposedly is, and however noble the stated goal might be, I eventually realized that it is utterly impossible for anyone to acquire the right to rule others, even in a limited, “constitutional” way.

There are several ways to prove this, and each of them is astonishingly simple. For example, if a person cannot delegate a right he doesn’t have, then it is impossible for those in “government” to have any rights that I do not personally have. (Where and how would they have acquired such super-human rights?) Furthermore, unless human beings can actually ALTER morality by mere decree, then all “legislation” is

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pointless and illegitimate. If one accepts the principle of non-aggression, then “government” is logically impossible, because a “government” without the right to tax, regulate, or legislate (which are all threats of aggression) is no “government” at all. And just as no one can have the right to rule me, I can never have any obligation to obey anyone’s command over my own “conscience,” which rules out any possibility of any outside “authority.”

In short, I came to the conclusion that “government” is one big lie. It is a mythical, super-human deity which people hope will save them from reality. It is a superstition no more rational than the belief in Santa Claus, and infinitely more destructive. “Anarchy,” meaning a lack of “government,” isn’t just what SHOULD be; it is what is, and what has always been. And by hallucinating an “authority” and a “government” that is not there, human beings have created an incomprehensible level of violence and oppression, covering the earth and stretching back to the beginning of recorded history.

So now I spend much of my time trying to persuade others to give up the cult of statism. I do not advocate abolishing “government” any more than I advocate abolishing Santa Claus. I just want people to stop letting their perceptions and actions be so profoundly warped and perverted by something that DOES NOT EXIST, and never did. That is why I refer to the belief in “government” and “authority” as “The Most Dangerous Superstition.” If people could give up that superstition, even if they did not otherwise become any more wise or compassionate, the state of society would drastically improve. I don’t pretend to have the ability to make anyone more virtuous, but by pointing out to them the contradictions in their own belief systems - the very same contradictions I struggled with for years - I hope to help some of them reclaim ownership of themselves, so they can start thinking and acting as rational, sentient beings, instead of well-trained livestock of malicious masters.

[Larken Rose is author of THE MOST DANGEROUS SUPERSTITION (2011). Available from Iron Web Press, Box 653, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006 or from amazon.com.]

How I Became A Voluntaryist: A Farewell to Tax-financed Murder

by Jeff Knaebel with Carl Watner
(From Issue 137, 2nd Quarter 2008)

[Editor’s Note: In December 2006, I received an order for books from Pune, India. The purchaser was Jeff Knaebel. In April 2007, Jeff sent me his book, Experiments In Moral Sovereignty: Notes of An American Exile, which he had published in October 2006. I discovered that Jeff was a tax expatriate, as well as a person who believes that

“a man needs a country but would be better off without a government.” I read Jeff’s book and asked him to write the story of his life, explaining how he became a voluntaryist. The following article was pieced together from Jeff’s writings and his correspondence with me during May-June 2007. He has read, edited, and approved the publication of this final version. His book, *Experiments In Moral Sovereignty*, is available from *The Voluntaryist*, \$20 postpaid. I highly recommend it. His personal website is www.StatelessFreedom.org.]

Introductory Note

I was surprised and pleased to receive Carl’s request to write this essay. It provides an opportunity to do my homework. My job is to send a voice—to speak truth to power. My mission is to reclaim the human birthright to self-ownership, together with the right to respect the lives of others. Life is liberty. Authority is violence. Blind obedience is insanity. I am refusing to be a tax-paying accomplice to State murder.

Although I seek mostly to write in terms of timeless, impersonal principles as they relate to individual action, I agreed to write this personal story in hope to help “spread the word” that we must elevate our consciousness or risk premature extinction as a species. The battle is for the mind of man, and it can be engaged only one by one. Perhaps these notes of my small efforts might be of use to others in the struggle. Ultimately the power of ideas must translate into individual action on the ground.

The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.

– Stephen Biko, quoted in *ENDGAME*, by Derrick Jensen

“Free Your Mind,” says *The Voluntaryist*. Be Not State Property, if I may add.

Study of *THE VOLUNTARYIST* has been influential and helpful. I support all the goals of “voluntaryism” as known to me at this point. As a philosophy of life and social harmony, I believe it is the way we must go. However, I am instinctively wary of personal labels. They seem intrinsically dangerous because they tend to put us into ideological boxes from which heart-to-heart communication is distorted or muted. We are actually being-becomings whose language is older than words. When we place ourselves into mental boxes, we tend to bump into each other, rather than flowing in the constantly changing flux of energy in which we have our being.

I would label myself an “absolute freedom-seeker,” acting in accord with the laws of equal liberty and nonviolence, guided by an unspoken charter of free inquiry. We must tear apart the boxes around our minds, board by board, so that we may relate to each other as equal beings in an energy field of loving kindness. As said by Kurt Vonnegut, “We are here to help each other get through this thing, whatever it is.”

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Carl has asked for a biographical sketch of my life. So here it is.

* * *

Tagging along in the wake of my father's career as mining engineer kept me on the move during the first twelve years of my life. Born 1939 in San Francisco, within two weeks I was in Canada, thence upstate New York, on to New Mexico, Utah, New York, Brazil, and British Guiana, followed by a return to boarding school in New Hampshire at age 11.

We lived in mining exploration camps of thatched roof huts in South America, swept away tarantulas before showering with rain water collected in a converted 55 gallon drum, and ate game procured from the jungle by native hunters using bows and arrows. Experiences during a brief stint in a Brazilian school had included my younger brother (age 5) having his left arm tied and his palms struck repeatedly with a ruler in order to force him into right-handed penmanship - to suit the authorities of an education system grounded in structural violence.

The mindless violence of American adults "sport fishing" the Essequibo River with dynamite, along with airborne "sport" hunting of crocodiles, etched a deep negative impression into my young mind. In a land of brown people, we were clearly invaders.

Interaction since early childhood with multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual peoples is perhaps the origin of my conviction that all people are "my relations" and that no person is less than me.

Age 12 found me in New Mexico, during the breakup of my parental family. I was shuffled among relatives and boarding school in California and New Mexico. The U.S. government public school system exposed me to a lot of violence. Corporal punishment was routine. Schoolyard fights were sometimes instigated by teachers and staff. My short term in the Boy Scouts was led by a Scoutmaster just returned from the Korean War. He seemed to think his mission was to train the coming generation of infantrymen, which he did by putting us through live-fire exercises in remote areas.

My point here is to provide a glimpse into the effects of World War - State Terrorism - on human consciousness. Structural, systemic violence is deeply embedded in the dominant culture. Well before completion of high school, I had been subjected to the continuous cognitive dissonance of verbalized ethical norms versus observed facts of physical and emotional violence (including wounds to my own body) in homes, schools, and communities.

It challenges one's balance of mind - even sanity - to live with continuous hypocrisy of "leaders" who preach the ethical norms of peace while practicing violence upon others. This double-speak ends in language itself becoming useless - in the public arena, we no longer actually communicate. It is all lies and pretense. As Solzhenitsyn said, "Once violence is chosen as method, falsehood becomes principle."

"Education—compulsory schooling, compulsory learning—is a

tyranny and a crime against the human mind and spirit. ... No other institution does more lasting harm or destroys so much of curiosity, independence, trust, dignity, self worth and sense of identity."

– John Holt, renowned educator and author.

I was taught to compete, to succeed at every endeavor at any cost, that “winning isn’t everything, it is the only thing.” Dutifully, I collected academic honors and earned letters in football and boxing. Blue ribbons on the outside, seething with resentment and anger on the inside, I crossed the threshold of adult life with the certainty that no one could be trusted. The child had been molded by the system.

Contrapunto, I can recall that during these years I also studied the words of Founding Fathers George Washington, Ben Franklin, Thomas Paine, Patrick Henry, James Madison, and especially Thomas Jefferson. Entire passages were committed to memory, and I made both written and silent vows to adhere to their (publicly-published) ethical values. I also imbibed the “freedom poetry” of some of the English poets of yore. How often have I failed these vows, these brave words!

At age fourteen I held my first adult male job - as a mucker in an underground uranium mine. I earned my private pilot’s license at age sixteen. My seventeenth summer was spent in the remote bush of North Ontario, working on drill rigs that were supported by float planes as we moved among the lakes.

Having enrolled in the civil engineering program at Cornell University in 1957, the next six years were spent studying there and at the Colorado School of Mines, where I graduated with an Engineer of Mines professional degree. My university education was financed by scholarships and jobs as underground miner, junior geologist, surveyor, and oil rig roughneck.

Faced with immediate conscription upon graduation, I applied and was accepted into the U.S. Navy Officer Candidate School. Commissioned in November 1963, most of the next four years were spent rotating through “tours” in Vietnam while serving as a Company Commander of Navy Seabees near Da Nang and Chu Lai.

Upon discharge as an early-selected, full Lieutenant, I took up engineering and supervisory duties at open pit copper and molybdenum mines in Arizona and New Mexico. However, two summers as a junior geologist in Alaska had lodged seeds of the “Great Land” in my heart. One winter night of 1969, looking out over the rolling moonlit sea from a Coos Bay pier, the pull of the North could no longer be dismissed. Feet were compelled to obey mind. Mind was compelled to obey heart. Destiny beckoned North.

I mailed dozens of resumes and finally landed a job as Assistant Chief Mining Engineer for the State of Alaska Division of Mines and Geology.

My first assignment was to map 1,500 sq. mi. of the Wrangell-St Elias wilderness area. I worked mostly alone with a string of six pack horses, provisioned by air drops about twice per month across a span of six months. I learned about myself and about

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nature - of risk and solitude and the brave promise of untrammelled horizons. Unlike city man, raw nature does not condemn.

*It's the great big, broad land way up yonder;
It's the forests where silence has lease;
It's the beauty that fills me with wonder;
It's the stillness that fills me with peace.*
- Robert Service

Despite their restless, independent spirit, an unbreakable bond grew between me and my horses. It was communicated through rub-downs, nuzzles and nudges, clucks and whinnies. Many a black night Little Joe or Bay or Bimbo would bring me back to camp across swollen glacial torrents, reins draped loose over the neck, useless in a dark so thick I could hardly see the ground. These were embodied experiences of mutual inter-dependence and cross-species loyalty. These things are not intellectual. The intellect is not much more than a calculator.

Just shy of one year into my job, the Chief Engineer sent me to Yukon Territory to report on the burgeoning mineral industry there. By this time, I'd had a bellyful of government employment. Upon seeing what young, independent Canadian geologists were doing, I determined to imitate them. I would start an exploration company.

With four other Directors - whose credit worthiness was required for a bank line of credit -Resource Associates of Alaska, Ltd. was capitalized on two hundred dollars. One of these men left his secure job to join me as full-time member, and during a lean year our little outfit was supported on my savings account. Luckily, our first contract produced a copper prospect that launched the company.

We grew, eventually opening offices in five cities the U.S. and Canada. We were first on the ground with mining claim posts at what is now the big Red Dog zinc mine of Cominco. Our discovery of the Donlin Creek mineralization for Calista is now shaping up to be a world-class gold deposit. Our scope of operations expanded through subsidiaries to include civil engineering, architecture, and city planning.

During this time, our firm was engaged as resource consultant-advocate for an Alaska Native Corporation involved in litigation with the United States pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. For this I became a registered lobbyist and spent considerable time in Congress and negotiating with members of the President's Cabinet. I was constantly accompanied by a cadre of high-powered lawyers.

It was an intense time, living out of hotel rooms in Washington. One of my firm's other partners took turns with me in a watch-standing rotation. A piece of legislation affecting my client required conformation between the House and Senate versions of the Bill. This had been done in a joint legislative conference committee in which our lawyers had participated. It was late at night and there was a rush to have the Bill typed in time to meet the printing deadline for the next day's CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. The draft Bill was handed to one of our lawyers for conveyance to the

stenography section in the basement of Congress. He arranged to have the final typed version changed in favor of our client. Land demarcations and acreage figures were altered in the draft that went to the typists. This became law as published in the Congressional Record. Oil and mineral-bearing lands of tremendous value moved from the public domain into the hands of a private corporation.

The event had taken place on my partner's watch. He reported to me his eyewitness account. This experience - together with the lies of Congress swirling all around me and delivered right into my face - resulted in complete disillusionment with the government that had sent me overseas to a foreign war against a people who posed no threat.

I had been so naive, so gullible. The 'patriotism' conditioning had penetrated deep within my psyche. I had come to identify myself as an American, yet I was facing a process of disillusionment with the United States government. America was supposed to be the "land of the free and the home of the brave," but I could begin to see that this was not true. It was a charade and an appearance, not the truth. I remember walking through the Capitol Rotunda and fighting back tears at the sight of sculptures of the Founding Fathers. Feelings of deep bitterness overwhelmed me. They, as well as I, were being betrayed by the politicians with whom I was negotiating. This goes to show my then naivete, for subsequent study has taught me that none of these men were pure either. See, for example, the **POLITICALLY INCORRECT GUIDE** series of Regnery Publishing.

It amazes me how long men remember eloquent words while so quickly forgetting the bloody deeds they conceal. Who can doubt the absolute evil of power, no matter in whose hands?

Another deeply disturbing experience remains with me. In the mid-nineties, I made a visit with my children to the Los Alamos Museum - the shrine of the Mother of All Laboratories of the Science of Total Annihilation. I recall feelings of repugnance at the message of "national pride," the arrogance, the hubris expressed in write-ups accompanying the displays. Perhaps even more repelling were the mementos sold there and at Sandia Labs in Albuquerque, such as pocket-size trinkets of the Hiroshima bombs, that we may remember with satisfaction how we delivered agonizing death to hundreds of thousands of human beings, and thus feel "national pride."

After the Los Alamos visit, I began thinking that surely the American feats of atom smashing and nuclear weaponry have carried us across a threshold of world-ending destructive power. When we split the atom, we rent asunder the basic building block of material life. Can there be any more powerful statement of utter contempt for life? Can there be any more clearly stated suicidal intention? Is it other than madness? I thought of the hard words of Native American elders repeated to my face in about the same terms as Chiksika (1779), "The whites seek to conquer Nature, to bend it to their will and to use wastefully until it is all gone, and then simply move on, leaving behind the waste and looking for new places to take." This mentality of exploitation

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has now metastasized as the globally infectious disease of wantonly wasteful mass consumerism and endless war-for-profit.

Now to return to my story.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement battle involved years of working as resource consultant-advocate on behalf of Alaska Native tribes (later formed into corporations mandated by law, and thus deliberately destroyed). I read BURY MY HEART at Wounded Knee (Dee Brown) and BLACK ELK SPEAKS (Neihardt and Black Elk). I participated in tribal council meetings, funerals, potlatches, talking circles, community fish cleaning and Board meetings. We worked with “Power Lawyers,” lobbied the Congress, negotiated with Cabinet Secretaries and Governors and State Legislatures and the Military and environmental groups by the dozen.

This experience opened my eyes and began a process of life change. The Native cause became so much a part of me that one day George Miller, Chief of the Kenaitze, introduced me to a tribal gathering as “a better Indian than most of you Indians.”

I became more and more disenchanted, disgusted with industrial “civilization” and my role in it. I loved the land and the wilderness in which I spent long periods alone with only tent and backpack. Yet, paradoxically, I was running a rapidly-growing mining exploration firm among whose clients were world-class mining and oil majors with whom we promoted joint ventures on Native as well as public lands.

On the one hand my work enabled me to earn a livelihood in the wilderness, flying the length and breadth of Alaska and Yukon Territory in choppers, seeing places that looked as if no man had ever trod. On the other hand, my work and the ensuing mineral discoveries would lead inevitably to further destruction of the wilderness. The stress of cognitive dissonance and inner conflict continued to build. Contempt for the insufficient-negative-adjectives-in-my-vocabulary-to-describe U.S. government continued to grow. Federal bureaucrats - parasites and freeloaders - were taking over the “Last Frontier” of Alaska.

Then came a major “wake-up call” (unrecognized as such at the time) in the form of a personal blow which initiated a mini-scale Shakespearean tragedy. An internal dispute-betrayal, unskillfully managed by me, led to my ouster from the firm I had founded. Like a fool, I litigated, eventually losing after seven bitter years. Most of my savings had gone into the pockets of lawyers.

I learned that a justice system devised by constitutions and lawmakers and administered through courts, judges, and attorneys is as far from justice as peace is from war. The U.S. justice system IS war, and to the moneyed go the spoils. It is a game played by liars, thieves, and bloodsuckers. A government enforced “rule of law” cannot deliver justice, but it can transfer wealth from those who work and earn to those who have power.

This first crisis precipitated others, including divorce and separation from my two children, as well as breaks with other business associates. I started over economically as a small-scale placer gold miner and bush pilot, and I began the spiritual quest for the meaning of life. The long, slow, tedious, painful process of de-conditioning the

mind had begun in earnest.

I had now embarked upon what Comanche medicine man Edgar Monatatche told me was the longest journey for the white man - the journey from the head to the heart. It became more and more clear that modern “civilization” is a structure maintained by systemic violence of man against man, and of mankind against nature.

Almost like a wounded animal, I set out on a search for a community of love and reason that revered goodness, beauty, and truth. This led me into the literature of Eastern Masters such as Paramahansa Yogananda, Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi, Neem Karoli Baba, Sri Yuktेशwar, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Satya Sai Baba, Sayagi U Ba Khin, Ajahn Chah, the Bhagavad Gita, and more current writers such as Henepola Gunaratana.

On the ground it led to Elders and Grandmothers of the Athabaskan, Yupik, Lakota, Ojibway, Zuni, Cherokee, Hopi, Acoma, Apache, Nambe, Taos, Huichol, Tarahumara, Gwich'in, Tlingit, and Comanche peoples. I lived briefly on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and was adopted as a family member by Zuni elders Bessie and Paxton Boone, in whose Zuni Pueblo home I lived for more than a year.

Here I learned the Zuni prayer in the frontispiece of my book.

I add my breath to your breath
That our days may be long on the earth
That the days of our people may be long
That we may be one person
May our Mother bless you with life
May we finish our roads together.

I learned of tribal council decisions that take into account the welfare of the seventh generation hence, as they must live as provided by fruits of the earth.

Here I learned of “people’s courts” where telling a lie is unknown, where punishment is aimed at restoration and not retribution, where the most feared punishment is to be banished from the community. I learned of a culture of forgiveness that emerges from depths of the heart rather than intellectualized sermons. Here I learned of Pueblo holy men who have been offering prayers for the welfare of all beings on continuous rotating 24x7 watches since time beyond memory.

I began to fly as a volunteer pilot for Lighthawk - The Wings of Conservation. My work in Alaska was to support the Gwich'in people against Big Oil invading the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I learned more about respect for life from Sarah James and Trimble Gilbert of Arctic Village than had been taught me by my own family or culture. Trimble was then Chief of the Arctic Village band of Gwich'in, and Sarah was Chair of the tribe’s environmental defense organization. The Gwich'in had been on to global warming long before it was discussed in public science journals. Living organically on the good earth, they knew the land, used their powers of observation, tried to warn, but few listened.

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The Gwich'in have inspired me by their longstanding adversarial position versus the United States government, by their unbroken struggle for self-ruled independence, and by their refusal to relinquish their land in exchange for the Federal gravy train of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

May the Gwich'in prevail. The right to life itself is on their side. The Settlement Act was intended "legally" to extinguish all aboriginal rights to the land which had sustained them since time immemorial. This is tantamount to extinguishing the right to live. What happens to an "American" man when his right to the land which sustains his existence has been removed – extinguished - and replaced with a Federal money welfare program administered by corrupt bureaucrats from a capitol so far away as to be a foreign country?

What happens to a man of India when his tribal forest or generational farm lands are condemned in favor of a "Special Economic Zone" (in which multinational corporations are given tax breaks), and he is rendered landless and homeless? Dependent upon the pittance of a compensation package that will be siphoned into the pockets of politicians before ever reaching him, his right to life has in effect been "legally" extinguished. Who has the power to do this? "Lawmakers," who suck the life out of the rural poor on behalf of the corporatocracy.

Flying remote areas of Mexico's Sierra Occidental on behalf of the Tarahumara - working off dirt strips in the Copper Canyon country with aircraft doors removed for photojournalists - coalesced into another "Aha!" experience: Corn growing in dry sandy river banks seemingly by the power of prayer only; families living in clefts of sandstone cliffs, men catching tiny fish in traps laid across desert rivulets; villagers hounded by the logging mafia and drug runners servicing the insatiable Americans; women and children of the Tarahumara living in burrows dug into the Chihuahua City sanitary landfill, while bureaucrats and corporate executives debated their fate and exchanged bribes in air conditioned hallways of the University nearby.

An experience at a World Bank conference sponsored by the University of Chihuahua crystallized it all. A Tarahumara elder faced the staff of the World Bank and American multi-national corporations. Holding aloft a pulp magazine transmission of mental filth, he said, "You are cutting the last of our trees to make them into this. These trees are the life of my people. When you have finished the trees, we will die, and you will read this."

Contemporaneous TV images of the U.S. bombing of Baghdad during the Gulf War of Bush the Elder stirred emotions of anger, grief, shame, and disgust. My stomach churned at the depraved senselessness of it all. Denial was no longer a psychological option for me. Everywhere I turned - from the tribal women of Mexico to the bloodstained streets of Iraq - my tax money was being employed in the name of death-for-profit.

It was then that I made the final decision to leave my native land forever. I would become a man without a country. I would owe allegiance to all of humanity and to no State. I would no longer be the indentured servant of a gang of murderers sitting in a

legislative body. By saying no to the taxes of the State, I would finally make a farewell to arms. Without the State, no man is my enemy.

Much earlier, I had begun to ponder deeply what I was doing with my life. Does one work, profit, consume and assuage his conscience with mercy missions among the exploited -or, finally seeing the imminent destruction of the entire planetary commons, does he abandon his profligate lifestyle altogether? See John Perkins' CONFESSION OF AN ECONOMIC HIT MAN. Every corporate employee is a mini-economic hit man. We are cannibalizing the earth and ourselves. I think Perkins' book is one of the most important of our time.

Service as a co-founding Trustee of Spiritual Unity of the Tribes generated more catalysts. I discovered deep inner connections to Black Elk and Chief Joseph. I felt more comfort and happiness among Native Elders than with any group of so-called "advanced educated" people. The Elders spoke of love and acceptance, the "civilized" spoke of money and of war. Unable to maintain a livelihood within Native culture, disgusted with my own, I became more and more alienated.

Study, together with personal interaction with East Indian teachers of consciousness, convinced me of my ignorance of even the physical-matter universe, let alone the nature of consciousness and the laws which govern it. My studies drew me to India. One teacher had said "Go and live among the poor," and I determined to do that. I dwelt in stone huts with earthen floors and fetched water. The Native American reverence for the circle and the Buddhist cosmology of endless cycles of birth and destruction seemed to coalesce in my personality. It became clear that Truth can be seen only through the eyes of simplicity. One must become like a child.

Conscience brought the dilemma into clear focus. I was faced with unacceptable choices. One seemed to be cutting corners and lying on my tax return in order to prevent my work and sweat from becoming State-financed murder. The other was to acquiesce to the system, file an honest return, and become a fully paid up accomplice to the war mongers. I had pondered long about fighting the system, and in the end it seemed clear that this would be a life-consuming waste of energy. Imagination, linked to conscience, found the way out. As a human being, I am a citizen of Earth, not any particular arbitrary "Nation." I would divorce myself from my government.

I decided to arrange my affairs so that I could leave the United States and cease paying tribute to the Internal Revenue Service. Since the ouster from my firm and my near-bankruptcy, I had formed several public and private corporations and limited partnerships based on my mineral exploration and discoveries. Three placer mines and one small hardrock mine had been brought to production, and I had recovered to some extent from my financial losses.

In the early 1990s, I worked out the mechanics of how to sever all personal connections with the U.S. economy, and to arrange my financial affairs so that I would never again have taxable income as defined by the IRS. The purpose of my life - and the fruits of its labor - is not to murder, but to learn to love. I was not born upon this earth to be slave to a gang of murdering thieves, no matter by what high title they

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may be anointed.

When I began my tax avoidance program, I was able to use operating loss carry-forwards to offset current income. By liquidating enterprises at “going out of business” sale prices, my “adjusted taxable income” was reduced to below the reporting threshold, but the problem remained of how to deal with income reported to the IRS on Form 1099B. Without a full tax return from me, the 1099 forms filed with the IRS would seem to indicate that I had taxable income. I felt that preparing tax returns was a waste of life, but the IRS took the position that “not filing” (even if ultimately there is no “taxable” income) is against the law. The burden of proof was on me: they wanted me to prove that I owed them no tax. I resented this intrusion into my life. Why should I have to prove to them that I owed no tax? Let them shoulder the burden and prove that I did!

I have now been a non-filer for about eleven years. For the first seven years, the IRS hounded me with letters forwarded through the American Embassy. I never responded, and apparently they eventually gave up on me. I felt comfortable not filing a return since I knew that no tax was due or would ever be due. Currently, I have no taxable income, either in India or the United States. My daily expenses in India are minimal. I own no dwelling, nor vehicle, telephone, credit card, TV, insurance, driving license, social security pension, or securities. I live on after-tax savings, which are set up in non-interest-bearing accounts. I don't worry about paying income tax on interest “earnings,” nor about the principal being loaned to companies that make instruments of war (or being invested in U.S. Treasury Notes which support the Corporate-State war machine).

At the time that I moved to India, I held the fantasy of eventual dual citizenship. Later, serious consideration of Indian citizenship dropped out of the picture because of red tape and regulations. However, being a foreigner without income, at least I pay no taxes except the excise, sales, value-added, and other taxes in the chain of production and distribution that are built into my ordinary daily consumables. Nonetheless, because of these taxes, my bread labor of the past still finances a big war machine.

The fact of unavoidable, built-in taxes is one of the reasons for not being a “legal citizen” of any country. People support the structural violence of the State simply by maintaining their citizenship status. When one becomes a non-citizen, as I would like to be, then one's position becomes that of someone who has been robbed. One is thus not responsible for what the thief does with the stolen money he takes from his victim.

In both the United States and India, governments have made it nearly impossible to live a decent and honest productive life. The State makes it impossible to live a decent (meaning non-destructive) and productive life - because its tax-levies upon our labor are employed to finance murder. The State has also made it impossible to live an honest life. In India, quite literally the sustenance of life depends upon bribes and kickbacks - because of government controls over the absolute basics (food, fuel,

shelter). You can neither construct nor sell a house without government permission. Propane cooking gas requires a government license to purchase. Telephone connection requires government paper including photo ID. Food in government shops, sometimes the only available, requires a "ration card." Admission to government hospitals, the only ones affordable to the poor, requires "grease." All these and many other things require bribes: telephone line maintenance, electrical connection and line maintenance; reliable postal service; a seat in a good school; water connection; clearance of property title transfer; obtaining a bank account in government bank (often the only available); obtaining a passport and driving license. The list is endless. The pit of corruption is bottomless.

Since 1995, I have made my full-time domicile in India. I became Trustee and co-manager of meditation centers, helping to design and construct two centers. Working with Indian colleagues, I served as a small-time village social worker. I have assisted in small-scale school and library construction, village water works, and farming technology projects, book distribution, and an adult literacy program. I support education of Tibetan refugee children and have assisted Buddhist monks, a Gandhi Ashram, and a free school for children of widows. These are small scale individual efforts. I am a member of Friends of Gandhi Museum Pune, and gandhisalt.org.

Current activities of my Indian wife include work for Indo-Pakistan people-to-people peace conferences, adult literacy for slum-dweller women, night shelter for the homeless, a municipal waste management composting project, saving old-growth trees of Pune city, peace education manuals (adopted by the central government), peace library and book distribution, and an international peace website. She is a member of National Society for Clean Cities, World Foundation on Reverence for All Life, and co-founder of Friends of Gandhi Museum Pune.

On philosophical grounds, I would like to implement my decision to terminate my United States citizenship, and to become a citizen of no Nation-State. I have published my personal Declaration of Severance and Independence from the United States at page 227 of my book. Its Preamble is a long list of the chain of abuses of my human rights by the United States. As a stateless person, I plan to ask - by laying my life on the line - the question whether humanity, with its political institutions, is capable of allowing a man to live free, without the State. I plan as an act of civil disobedience not to renew my passport and visa. This is my claim to self-ownership, and the freedom of movement without which sustenance of life is not possible. This is my claim to the right to life.

I will claim my right to ignore the State. At www.StatelessFreedom.org, I have created a website that will feature more details. Soon (already there is the "deadline tension" of getting documents prepared for my heirs), I will be outside the "law," subject to the whims of Power. What destiny awaits an "illegal alien"? Whatever the consequences, I've had enough of voluntary servitude to lies and murder. Let me live out my twilight years in a manner worthy of the human being.

I, Jeff Knaebel, undertake this risk as a duty to humanity and the ideals of liberty.

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Guided by my conscience, I openly declare my repudiation of U.S. income tax laws and declare my disobedience thereto. I do not labor that my earnings should end up as bombs which shred the bodies of women and children.

My purpose on this earth is not to finance destruction and murder, but to learn the practice of gratitude and reverence for all life. I seek a life of love and reason.

I have no loyalty to the Constitution of the United States. My loyalty to humanity supersedes any loyalty to a State or any other “constituted authority” founded upon and maintained by violence and coercion. How can a rational man be loyal to a frozen-in-time document which had been drawn in secrecy for their own self-interest by a few rich and powerful men long since dead? What can be a man’s “loyalty” to a document which his so-called “representatives” and “leaders” have for generations abused, distorted and bent to their own evil purposes? Who did I appoint to commit murder in my name because of “loyalty” to the politically shrewd and cunning words of sell-proclaimed “representatives” of people who never knew them? I disown all of this.

Acquiescence to this charade makes us sheep, corralled behind a fence of words, herded by rapacious lawmakers, marched to slaughter under the delusion that we voted for it.

What do we think we are doing? How can the dead bind the living? How can the words of dead men, now ink stains upon old parchment, render current justice among the living? Life is lived by the living. The decisions of justice, of war and peace, are for the living to make according to prevailing circumstances. The metes and bounds of liberty and justice are not to be marked out by words once employed by rich men of the past to hold their power. How can you bind and shackle Life with words? Can you grasp the wind? Live and let live, we the living.

We make a mistake to plead and litigate with our masters using only the tools they have provided us. We cannot prevail within a frame of the same rules by which we are enslaved. By this pleading, we only feed the monster with our energy and money. We must take back personal responsibility for our independence and for our survival. One way is to exercise our natural right to ignore the State, to renounce it, and to work at building an independent life, accepting neither the State’s “benefits” nor its costs, to the extent we are able to avoid them.

Gandhi’s example of Satyagraha (strong adherence to truth) with Ahimsa (non-violence) points to the method. Gandhi wrote that “if we take care of the means, the end will take care of itself.” Thus, we must be the change we wish to see. I submit that a simple first step is to tell the truth in every transaction, to every person, at all times, in every situation. When we begin to call things by their true name - for example, “collateral damage” is murder pure and simple - we will begin to wake up to the reality of the human condition created by The Powers That Be, and to which we have acquiesced for far too long.

For me, the great challenge of nonviolent resistance has been learning - by quotidian inner application and with many (continuing) stumbling defeats - to rotate

anger at senseless destruction and murder into proactive work grounded in compassion and kindness. It has been difficult to understand that the problem is more of an evil system than evil people. The institutional system exists. Weak people succumb to the temptations of power and learn to murder. We must change the system-structure toward the feminine, toward nurturance, toward love and away from war.

“When your premise is ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ you can skip a lot of boring and distracting discussion and just get to work [improving yourself and the world around you.]”

– Alia Johnson

I conclude that there is no political institution or political “ism,” no authoritarian person, no economic policy, and no government that can save us from the self-inflicted disaster bearing down upon us. Only the freedom to be in love with life and to express that love without arbitrary institutional barriers that label us as “the other”—and thus block person to person natural expression—can save us. This is the freedom to live in the original, unconditioned character—found deep within each of us—of total, sweeping, deep, overflowing, unconditional love of life, of this earth, of its creatures, of ourselves, of each other. To express this love, we must get the State out of our way.

May all the readers of THE VOLUNTARYIST live long, and live free.

My Journey to Voluntaryism

by Joyce Brand

(From Issue 154, 3rd Quarter 2012)

I always loved to read. I remember my mother telling her friends that I was no trouble because she could set me down with a book and I would amuse myself for hours. Maybe that was why I loved school, in spite of the regimentation, which I hated. My life was in my head, not in the stupid rules I had to follow.

My father was both a Southern Baptist minister and an officer in the US Navy, very conservative and very Republican. I adored him, so I found it very painful when I realized at the age of fifteen that I couldn’t believe what he preached, no matter how hard I tried. However, I was a good little girl, so I didn’t rock the boat, and I went off to a Southern Baptist university right after my seventeenth birthday.

Probably nobody was less prepared for college life than I was in 1966. It was then that I discovered Ayn Rand. It was a religion I could believe in, until I realized that worshipping Ayn Rand made no more sense than worshipping an invisible deity. Although my life took some strange turns in the next few years, I kept the basic

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philosophy of individualism that I learned from Ayn Rand, which included a profound contempt for politics.

After escaping from an unhappy marriage, I indulged my love of reading by going to a state university and taking a double major in English and History. I was particularly interested in how literature affected history and vice versa. I was shocked by how different the history I learned in college was from the history I had been taught in grade school. Yet even the texts in college were heavily influenced by the philosophy of the writers, which seemed to me disturbingly collectivist. In retrospect, I realize that, in spite of how much I was reading, I was never exposed to any ideas that challenged the legitimacy of the state.

I graduated Phi Beta Kappa and was accepted into the PhD program in History at the University of California at Berkeley, but I was unsure if I really wanted a life in academia, so I took a summer job in a law firm to see if law school might suit me more. I was disgusted by the legal profession and started to think about making my living in the real world of business.

I spent many years trying to find my place in the world through different careers and different relationships. Nothing seemed to suit me long term, but I learned a lot.

One of my most memorable lessons came from my job as an office equipment salesperson. I spent most of my time showing private businesses how my equipment could increase their productivity. I discovered that trying to sell to government agencies was a waste of time because bureaucrats didn't want to increase productivity and possibly lose employees. Then one day I got a call that a District Court wanted to buy some electronic typewriters from me because the manufacturer of our newest line had a government contract. Easiest sale ever because there was no competition and they already knew they wanted the most expensive models we had. They had a budget for typewriters that they had to spend or lose, so they spent it on typewriters that actually decreased their productivity because the machines were designed for more complicated tasks than filling in forms. All I had to do was deliver the machines and teach the secretaries how to get around all the features that made filling out forms difficult. The commission was nice, but I couldn't help thinking about all the tax dollars being wasted. That was when I realized that all tax dollars were wasted in exactly the same way, propping up the power of bureaucrats for no benefit to anyone else. It's all about the perverse incentives.

Perverse incentives had a lot to do with the failure of my second marriage. My husband was a very kind person with little ambition but a history of taking responsibility for his life in difficult circumstances. He told me how his union job created the incentive for everyone to put forth minimal effort and how wrong he thought that was. Then he hurt his back and got into the worker's comp system, which gives doctors and patients incentives to continue treatments after they are no longer needed. Maybe those perverse incentives just brought out weaknesses in his character that were always there, but I can't help blaming that government program for the change in his personality. I saw the growth of an entitlement mentality and

dependence happen before my eyes until I could no longer live with the man he had become.

Another job that taught me how government interferes with free enterprise business was the year I spent as a business broker. It started with my having to obtain real estate licenses in two states just to be allowed to do the job. I had always heard that real estate licenses required months of classes and most people still failed the exam on the first try, and the challenge exam was even harder. Fortunately, I didn't believe it, so I spent about thirty hours on my own studying the guide and passed both challenge exams with no problem. The ridiculous thing was that passing those exams in no way ensured that I would be able to sell real estate (or negotiate business leases) honestly and responsibly. It just meant I knew a lot of stupid and useless rules.

The real lessons came from working with small business owners who were trying to sell their businesses. Listing the business for sale meant learning everything about the business, including how the owner did or did not manage to get around all the government regulations that interfered with his ability to please enough customers to make a living at the business. Even though intrusive regulations didn't account for all the owners who were failing, the ones who were trying most scrupulously to follow all the rules seemed to be the ones who did worst. The owners who did best were those who found ways to please customers while keeping enough money for themselves to make it all worthwhile. That mainly meant figuring out which regulations to follow and which to ignore. Unlike big businesses that can use government against would be competitors, small businesses get no benefits from government. They don't need any government to tell them to treat their customers and employees well in order to prosper.

As a corporate manager at Kelly Services, the oldest temporary help company, I learned even more about the difference between large and small business and how government affects business. My small department with twelve employees was a cost center rather than a profit center, so my job was all about achieving productivity goals at the lowest cost possible. Government regulations created the biggest costs and happy employees created the biggest productivity gains. Keeping employees happy is not about money but about respect and freedom and challenge. The problem with size is not that it is inherently bad but that it can dilute responsibility. Just a few political (rather than economic) business people at the top can create a corporate culture rife with political maneuvering and not enough focus on business goals. The more politics gain, the more business suffers. Kelly Services was once the leader of its industry, but not any more.

After a few more careers that got boring as soon as I accomplished my initial goals, I finally discovered a career that I loved and that never got boring — editing feature films — a different kind of storytelling than I had once imagined as a child. At about the same time, I got interested in the Libertarian Party. The man who recruited me insisted that the LP was not “politics as usual” but a real chance to restore freedom to America by reining in government power. I soon discovered how wrong

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he was when I attended the 2000 California state convention. It was just as disgusting as any other political game, in spite of the sincerity of most of the participants. I saw that it wasn't the people involved that was the problem but the perverse incentives of politicians, just like the perverse incentives of bureaucrats, no matter how well-meaning.

However, I did get a lot out of my brief time in the LP, especially from a few speeches by libertarian anarchists, like Mary Ruwart. In particular, her books *HEALING OUR WORLD* and *SHORT ANSWERS TO THE TOUGH QUESTIONS* opened my mind to the idea that government wasn't necessary at all. That started me on a reading program that emphasized writers like Frederick Bastiat, Lysander Spooner, Albert Jay Nock, Leonard E. Read, and Murray Rothbard. I found more than I would ever have time to read on websites like Lew Rockwell, Mises Institute, and Strike the Root.

It took me a few years of fairly intensive reading between films before I fully understood the beauty and simplicity of market anarchism/anarcho-capitalism. It seemed like I spent a lot of time defending the terms before I heard the word *voluntaryism*, which made it all so clear. What I had always believed on some level was that all interactions between people should be voluntary and peaceful. The vision of a society based on that idea was what I had always sought. I am now very happy to be one of the organizers of *Libertopia*, an annual festival that brings together people who share that vision of peace, prosperity, and a voluntary society.

My Winding Road to Voluntaryism

by Ned Netterville

(From Issue 156, 1st Quarter 2013)

First, about my name. It's a pseudonym. I use it to remain anonymous whenever I publicly mention my participation in Alcoholics Anonymous, as I do here. As you shall see, Alcoholics Anonymous, a completely voluntary institution, has played a pivotal role in my life. [Footnote 1] Beginning in my teens, I embarked on a fruitless, 30-year quest to sample every alcoholic beverage the world has to offer. Fortuitously, I was forced by the exigencies of the drinking life to surrender and join AA at the ripe age of forty-five after indulging in a considerable variety of booze, however only a small fraction of the world's total offerings. It is apparent to me in retrospect that alcohol dependency is incompatible with the degree of individual liberty afforded and the personal responsibility required by voluntaryism.

My first introduction to voluntaryism occurred in the early 1990's. I had written an article for Jacob (Bumper) Hornberger's *FREEDOM DAILY*, in which I asserted that the American colonies' Continental Army was an all-volunteer force that defeated

the British - the superpower of the day - without recourse to taxation or conscription. Carl Watner wrote a courteous letter to the editor pointing out that several of the colonies had in fact employed taxation and conscription to provide men and equipment to Washington's revolutionary forces. Bumper forwarded Carl's letter to me. After checking out his contention, I wrote him acknowledging my error and thanking him for his correction. Carl then graciously gave me a subscription to THE VOLUNTARYIST. I soon bought a copy of his book-length anthology of articles from earlier issues of THE VOLUNTARYIST entitled, I MUST SPEAK OUT. When I finished it, I chucked my pocket copy of the Constitution in the waste basket and became a voluntaryist. His book remains on my shelves as a valuable reference and an inspiration, which I need from time to time as I once needed to drink.

I was born in 1937, and grew up as one of five boys in a rather chauvinistic, somewhat insular, Irish-Catholic social network in the Cleveland, Ohio, area. My father was a street-smart, over-the-counter stock trader who took a year off high school after his father died to help with family finances. In the midst of the Great Depression (1933), he used his small savings, hocked my mom's engagement and wedding rings, borrowed money from several of his retail-brokerage clients, and purchased a junior partnership in a startup broker-dealer firm, which he eventually owned outright.

Growing prosperous from his successful stock market business, Dad provided a better-than-middle-class living for his five boys, who all went to work for his firm after college. My mom, the loving center of our young lives, supplied the glue that held the family together to this day, although she has passed away. Her principled adherence to her Catholic moral values undoubtedly saved me from even more trouble than I managed to get into as a rebellious adolescent.

As far back as I can remember, I hated school and any form of discipline. Apparently I suffered from what is now diagnosed as ODD – oppositional defiance disorder. I played hooky often. Two schools asked me to leave before I matriculated. Mom had to tutor me to get me through every math class. I'm sure the idea of home schooling never occurred to mom, but she would have been a good teacher, and I might have become a good student much earlier in life if she had. It wasn't until my sophomore year in college that I discovered a few subjects I liked and began attaining A's and B's instead of C's and D's. I switched my major from Forestry to English and took all of my electives in economics and finance. Unfortunately, the economics department at Miami University (Ohio) was and still is Keynesian, which isn't really economics. Today I believe the Austrian School of Economics (AE) is the only brand that makes sense.

After graduating in 1960, I joined the Ohio National Guard in order to avoid being drafted into the Army for two years. I immediately spent six months on active "duty" attached to the U.S. Army. It never occurred to me that I could resist the draft, which today I consider to be the only moral way to approach military service. I spent my Army time doing everything in my power to avoid work ("duty?"). After basic

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training, I spent every weekday afternoon and evening in the PX drinking beer, and the weekend leaves in bars in Washington, D.C. It would be virtually impossible for a person to be less productive of value than I was those six months.

I spent the rest of the 1960's working for Dad as a proprietary stock trader, eventually becoming responsible for all trading and customer order executions. Sometime during the late 60's I came across and accepted the Foundation for Economic Education's (FEE's) offer of a free subscription to THE FREEMAN magazine. That wonderful journal introduced me to the principles of liberty through articles by Leonard Read, Ludwig von Mises, Hans Sennholz, James Payne and other great libertarian voices.

In January 1971, I "dropped out" of the securities business to "do my own thing," a not-uncommon practice for that era of Vietnam-induced national angst. I traveled to Australia and New Zealand with a vague notion of immigrating, but found both countries too far down the road to socialism for my taste. I eventually purchased and operated a one-hundred year old cider mill and apple processing business and moved from suburban Cleveland to rural northeastern Ohio. 1971 was a watershed year for me in many ways. One of the company benefits I had when I worked for Dad's firm was free, professional income-tax-return preparation by the firm's CPA. In '71 for the first time I had to prepare and file a return on my own. My only income that year was one paycheck for half of January, and a large capital gain from the sale of my shares in the brokerage firm. I also lost some money that year trading stocks for my personal account both in the US and Australia while I was there, so I took the cost of the trip as a business expense on my federal tax return. I soon got a call from the IRS informing me that I was to be audited regarding my business expenses, and to get my records together!

The audit, which was only supposed to address my business (trading) income and expenses, turned out to be a full "field audit" of every item on my return, and of all of my financial records including every check written and every deposit made with an explanation of what each one represented if it wasn't self-evident. When it was over I felt stripped of my dignity, privacy and freedom. The agent disallowed my trip expenses saying they weren't sufficiently related to my trading, and informed me that I owed an additional two-hundred and fifty dollars in taxes. I could appeal, of course, but I quickly calculated that an appeal, to an IRS administrator first, and then to U.S. Tax Court, would cost me several-times more than the additional tax. (I felt I would need to hire a lawyer to argue my case.) My own reading of the IRS code told me my travel expenses were a legitimate deduction. I believed the agent, knowing it would be much cheaper to pay the \$250 than appeal, arbitrarily disallowed my deduction in order to cover the IRS' expenses for the hours he spent auditing my return. So I paid, but I am delighted to say that was the last federal, state, or local income tax I ever paid.

Throughout the 70's I neglected to file returns. For several of those years I probably didn't owe any tax because the apple crops in northeastern Ohio failed, and

my cider-mill business lost money. In 1981—after ten years without a word from the IRS—an agent came by our house to see me. Fortunately, no one was at home, for I do not know how I would have reacted. The agent left his card with instructions that I call him. To say the incident scared the hell out of my wife understates the effect it had on her. It made me both scared and angry. When I called, the agent asked why I hadn't filed any tax return since 1976. Why he didn't ask about 1972, '73, '74, and '75, I'll never know. Anyway, I told him I doubted I owed the IRS any money, but I would start to prepare those returns and get them to him within a couple of weeks. He allowed that would be acceptable.

I prepared five identical returns for 1976 through 1980, with no information other than my name and address. Across the face of each return in magic marker I wrote, "I CANNOT PROVIDE THE INFORMATION REQUESTED HEREIN UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY ASSURES ME THAT IN SO DOING ALL OF MY RIGHTS AS A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES SHALL REMAIN INVIOLEATE." With that simple quid pro quo I became what the IRS at the time called an "illegal tax protester," even though according to the first Amendment there can be nothing illegal about protesting taxes.

I had committed no crime. As a matter of fact those were the most honest tax returns I ever filed, probably more honest than any of the hundreds of millions of returns that other Americans filed during those five years. As Will Rogers said, the income tax has made liars of more Americans than golf. Americans cheat on their taxes to the extent they think they can get away with it, or at least a comprehensive IRS study showed that to be the case. I got sober in 1982, which likely saved me from going to prison on some tax-related charge. Before sobriety my attitude toward the IRS and its agents was belligerent, to say the least.

In sobriety I began studying the Gospels. The wisdom of Jesus revealed in the Gospels plus AA's famous Twelve-Step program persuaded me of the utter futility of anger, resentment, and retaliation. The Gospels also revealed that Jesus often hung out with tax collectors, calling some (Levi/Matthew) away from their tax-collecting duties, and redeeming at least one "chief" tax collector (Zacchaeus) from his sinful occupation. On the advice of Jesus ("love your enemies, pray for your persecutors"), I began praying for the IRS agents who were vigorously pursuing me. I diligently endeavored to love them and eventually forgive them. In due course I found to my surprise I had no enemies and no one persecuted me. That remains true to this day.

One of the things about the behavior of Jesus as reported in the Gospels that stood out to me was that he pointed to tax collectors as exemplars of sinfulness, yet he numbered many tax collectors among his disciples. This suggests to me that reformed tax collectors may play an important role in the tax abolition movement. Several IRS agents have already come out against the income tax and their former employer, to the cheers of those the IRS now refers to as "tax deniers," since Congress, belatedly realizing the first Amendment assures that protesting taxes is legal, ordered the Service to do away with the "illegal tax protester" designation.

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In the early 1980's when I first started studying Jesus' teaching on taxes and tax collectors, I was struck by the fact that every so-called "Interpreter's Bible" I consulted (and I think I consulted all of them) claimed Jesus endorsed the concept of taxation and/or the legitimacy of government rule when he said, "Give Caesar what is Caesar's, but give God what is God's." This conflicted with my libertarian beliefs that taxation was theft in violation of God's command, "Thou shall not steal." It seemed to me that the State usurps God's authority as Lawgiver, and the story of how Israel came to have a king bears this out. (See the first book of Samuel, Chapter eight.) It was inconceivable to me that Jesus would condone what his Father forbade or condemned. One dissenting voice among the many statist interpretations of the Gospels was that of Leo Tolstoy. Tolstoy taught himself Greek, translated the Gospels from early manuscripts, and produced his own consolidated version of the Gospels because he didn't trust the Russian-Orthodox Church's translation. According to Tolstoy, Jesus told Peter that he and his disciples were not obligated to pay taxes. Tolstoy was indubitably an anarchist. After witnessing a public execution in Paris, he wrote to a friend, "The truth is that the State is a conspiracy designed not only to exploit, but above all to corrupt its citizens. ... Henceforth, I shall never serve any government anywhere." Amen, brother Leo.

After some serious Gospel study, I concluded that when Jesus said, "give Caesar what is Caesar's but give God what is God's," he meant DO NOT give Caesar (representing the State of Rome and all other human governments) ANYTHING.. Sacred Jewish Scripture, which Jesus consistently cited as his authority for what he said and did, states in at least five places, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it," or words to that effect, which obviously leaves nothing for poor old Caesar. Eventually I wrote a book entitled JESUS OF NAZARETH, ILLEGAL TAX PROTESTER, which I published on the Internet in 2003. It is the first comprehensive analysis of everything Jesus said and did relative to taxes and tax collectors as reported in the Gospels. (http://www.jesus-on-taxes.com/Page_7.html)

Throughout the 1980's the IRS thrust and I parried. Eventually I was required to appear with my records at an IRS office before my favorite revenue agent and her supervisor. I brought a tape recorder and a witness, and when asked to produce my records, I asked to see the warrant required by the Fourth Amendment. I was dismissed, but soon thereafter I received a "summons" to Federal District Court in Akron, Ohio. I ignored the summons, and soon thereafter two armed Federal Marshals picked me up in my office and brought me before the judge. I had been scrambling to learn something of court procedures from a patriot group whose members were mostly tax resisters. The judge gave pause when I raised a question of the court's jurisdiction, but when he questioned me on the subject it became obvious to him that I didn't know what I was talking about. So he ordered me to produce my financial records and provide testimony as required by the IRS.

Back at the IRS before the same two agents, I again demanded to see a warrant before I would provide testimony or give them my records. Our meeting abruptly

ended. A few days later one of the Federal Marshals came again to my office to get me. The judge gave me a choice of jail or co-operating with the IRS. Refusing the later, I was sent to jail for “civil contempt” until such time as I would provide the IRS with what it wanted (eternity???). Other than a few one-night stands for driving under the influence or public intoxication, that was my first jail experience. After 34 days and with a big Memorial Day weekend with my family in the offing, I told the judge I would cooperate and was released. A week later before the same IRS agents, a third time, I told them regretfully I had no financial records whatsoever. I informed them I didn’t keep records because I was afraid someday someone might subpoena them. After holding out for 34 days in jail, I think the agents expected my records would turn up a plethora of valuable assets. With taxes, interest, and penalties included, they thought I owed them about a quarter-million dollars. Their disappointment was palpable and worth every minute of my days in jail.

Unfortunately, I was forced by the threat of more jail time to answer all of their prying questions as they dug to uncover my hidden treasures. When the interrogation made it evident I had none, chagrin crossed their brows again. Although the meeting cost me nothing and yielded the IRS the same, being forced to answer their questions was the most mentally excruciating experience of my entire life.

Carl Watner’s writing made me realize voluntaryism fit me like a glove. The influences that made me become a voluntaryist were my undiagnosed oppositional defiance disorder, FEE, AA, AE (Austrian economics), my mother’s moral values, my non-payment of taxes and the pleasure of resisting them, and, last but not least, the principles Jesus preached and lived, especially nonviolence and love for all mankind, even to my would-be enemies. I am no longer defiant of human authority because I realize it is nothing but a hoax. Voluntaryism is good. Love your enemies. It befuddles them!

[Footnote 1] It is in keeping with AA tradition to remain anonymous when speaking publicly about AA. It’s a humility thing. Coincidentally, AA is a truly voluntary institution. It has no rules nor regulations, no dues nor fees nor taxes, only voluntary contributions. The expenses of local AA “groups” and AA’s significant worldwide services designed to provide help to alcoholics everywhere are the collective obligation of its members. AA’s “Twelve Traditions,” which are the closest thing to rules, compel nothing. There are no AA authorities. Our leaders actually are our trusted servants whose only power is persuasion. Each of the multitude of local AA groups throughout the world operates autonomously. Withal, AA has proven effective at achieving its primary purpose, which is to enable its members to remain sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. No small task, which eluded the medical profession and mankind on any significant scale until AA came along in 1935. AA’s 76-years of experience may one day prove instructive to the formation of a stateless society.

From Vagueness to Voluntarism: How I Got From There to Here

by Alex R. Knight III

(From Issue 158, 3rd Quarter 2013)

The first time I remember even seeing the word “libertarian,” was in 1994, when I was twenty-five. Years prior to that, like most kids, I had no real philosophical or political leanings. Government was just something that happened to be there, like the landscape, or the weather. As I grew into my teens, however, I began to develop a kind of vague sense that something was wrong – perhaps even horribly so – with the way society was structured. I think the catalysts for this awakening process were things that many young people experience on the path to adulthood: I had my first few brushes with the police – mainly for underage drinking. The paychecks I earned at the several jobs I had over those years had numerous taxes taken out of them. Laws restricting ownership of guns seemed increasingly wrong. The police and the military had them, yet the government wanted to curtail others from doing so. I began, again, like many young people, to distrust and resent authority in all forms.

My new awareness, however, had no cohesive threads running through it. My rapidly developing beliefs didn’t fit into any form of traditional political paradigm. I wasn’t “right-wing.” I didn’t think the police should have many of the powers that they had. I didn’t think drugs should be illegal (after all, I was doing them). I didn’t think the government should have soldiers marching all over the world. But I wasn’t “left-wing” either: As stated, I liked guns, and thought people should be able to own them without asking permission from anyone. I thought people, regardless of how much money they had, should be able to keep that money without having the government confiscate it through taxation. I thought that public schools were run more like prisons and indoctrination centers than learning institutions, and that they should be privatized, and all associated property taxation ended. Indeed, if people were actually supposed to own their houses, how could they be taxed? I didn’t identify with either Republicans or Democrats. I settled for considering myself politically independent. I had no idea what I would do when I became old enough to vote. When I did get there, I did nothing. Based on my beliefs, there seemed no method of voting consistent with my principles.

But in 1994, I chanced upon an article written by one Sean Glennon in a free newspaper published in New Hampshire called SEACOAST TIMES. Glennon was a far leftist, but the piece was about drug legalization, so it held my interest. In it,

Glennon made mention of the fact that the libertarian candidate for governor, Steve Winter, was in favor of ending the drug war. This intrigued me. So much, in fact, that I looked up the Libertarian Party of New Hampshire's toll-free number in the phone book (the Internet was still in its infancy), and left a message requesting an information package. A few days later, a large envelope showed up in the mail. By the time I was done reading all the material therein, I had come to what was for me at the time, a revelation. All those years, I had actually been a libertarian without knowing it.

Or, that's what I thought.

I contacted the LPNH again, and let them know I wanted to get involved in some way. I was kind of excited. I now had some people I could vote for at election time, and a vehicle to advance the philosophy I had always, for the most part, embraced: The Libertarian Party. I went on to become Communications Director, won more media coverage for the LPNH than had accrued in all the prior years of their existence, and was awarded Activist of the Year in 1998.

But there were still some unresolved problems.

Probably the most daunting one was how to reconcile libertarian philosophy with the existence of government. Because, of course, if one follows the non-aggression principle to its ultimate (and only logical) conclusion, no government – not even a miniscule one – can function without the implementation of coercive force. This seemed paradoxical to the notion of a political party attempting to get candidates elected in order to then legislate into existence greater freedom. I wrestled with this concept for some time. I talked with a lot of other liberty-minded people. I questioned, then questioned again, my core beliefs. There were a lot of great books on the subject that I now realize I should have been reading, but that didn't come until later. Things all came to a head for me in 2000 when, at the LPNH's annual convention, I publicly confronted the late, great Harry Browne on an issue which similarly challenged his candidacy for U.S. President, and the Libertarian Party's fundamental integrity. As a result of that somewhat discomfiting tableau, I resigned from any and all participation in politics, including voting altogether. I realized that I had become a true libertarian in the purest sense. I had become an anarchist. Or if you prefer, as many do, a voluntarist – a believer in non-aggression and peaceful willing relationships among human beings instead of the imposed violence governments bring to bear against individuals. I now believe I am on the correct path in doing my part to bring about a truly free and prosperous society. I warmly invite one and all to join me.

‘A’ Was For America: My Journey to Voluntarism

by Peter Eyre

(From Issue 162, 3rd Quarter 2014)

I was born in 1980, in Ponca City, OK, a town of about 25,000 two hours north of Oklahoma City. My old man - a chemist graduate from Madison by way of Purdue - worked at the Conoco refinery, the area’s biggest employer. My mom - who’d been a nurse at the hospital - opted to stay at home with me and my older brother.

Growing up, I played sports (sometimes poorly) and inherited my dad’s love of riding bicycles. My folks were supportive. One book they gave me, *THE WAY THINGS WORK*, instilled in me an interest to investigate what was beneath the surface. When I was ten, a tree house we’d started building wasn’t getting finished, so I knew some change was in the air.

We moved 700 miles up the road (I-35) to a suburb of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Save for math, school was easy enough but I tended to get into trouble. When younger, I got nothing more than checks next to my name on the blackboard. When older, I did nothing serious enough to get me caught up in the legal system, but I have had to apologize for some things I did in 11th and 12th grades.

Though I spoke with Army and Marine recruiters in 10th grade, like most of my classmates I ended up heading off to college. My worldview at the time was aptly summarized by my second tattoo, an American flag surrounded by the text “Love it or leave it.” I majored in Law Enforcement. A mandatory class in the Ethnic Studies department was the impetus for that becoming my second major. In both programs I found that more and more, I was often the lone voice of dissent.

Drug policy was the issue that got me into the ideas of liberty. James P. Gray’s *WHY OUR DRUG LAWS HAVE FAILED AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT* was one of the assigned books in a Sociology class I took, and provided me with a logical framework of potential alternatives. I consumed other books on the issue and in a Law Enforcement class, wrote a paper calling for the decriminalization of drugs. My Ethnic Studies classes caused me to question democracy, after it became clear that a majority doesn’t make something right. It didn’t make sense to me that people should celebrate the political victories of women’s suffrage or the ending of enslavement, but ignore the fact that it was the same institution that had “legalized” such inequalities in the first place. Ride-alongs and time spent as an intern with the St. Paul Police Department only reinforced my belief that systemic changes needed to be made.

I went off to grad school at Western Illinois University, where I majored in Law

Enforcement and Justice Administration. The program was geared for those heading into the field rather than academia. My grades were good - 3.85GPA in undergrad and 3.91 in grad school. I attended conferences around the country and was active with many organizations on campus including the College Libertarians.

Thought-provoking discussions at our meetings caused me to question the status quo. I took my views on drug policy to their logical conclusion - get the State out of the way. The same happened to marriage and education and other issues. I quit thinking about working for federal law enforcement agencies since I couldn't support any of their missions. Still, I thought I could have a positive impact working at a big police department. After all, wasn't protecting people and property a proper role of government?

I tested with New York City Police Department, Seattle PD and LAPD, and scored at the 94%, 98% and 100% levels, respectively. But, after a questionable reading on the lie detector test administered by the LAPD, they found that I hadn't been truthful about my use of "illicit" substances. Consequently, they dropped me from consideration. I thought more about my future. I withdrew my name from consideration with the NYPD and Seattle and interviewed and was then offered a job in the private sector working for a surveillance company. I had my choice of placements around the country and was to be given a car and quite-decent salary, but then I received an email that changed the course of my life. I had previously applied for an intern position at the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C., thinking that such an environment would be very beneficial to my intellectual development. I didn't know anyone in Washington, D. C., but I knew it was an awesome opportunity, so off I went into the belly of the beast.

I exited the train in Union Station with two bags and my boxed-up bicycle in early January of 2005 and began my internship in the Foreign Policy & Defense Department. The caliber of those I was surrounded by was impressive. Most of the other interns came from big-name schools and were well-read. I felt like I had some catching-up to do and I worked hard to get the most out of my time there. Weekly seminars by Cato staff on public speaking, op-ed writing, research techniques and more helped me become a more effective communicator of liberty. In-house events and those around town exposed me to a lot of ideas and policy proposals. After a short time I got up the courage to question those I felt were less than consistent. And for the first time I was exposed to economics (I hadn't had a single class in high school or college). Austrian economics specifically opened up to me an entirely new perspective on the world, one centered on the actions of individuals rather than on mega-data like GDP or nation-state imports/exports. This was instrumental in my progress to seeing political boundaries as arbitrary.

That summer I was fortunate to be one of about 40 in the Koch Summer Fellow Program (KSFP). John Hasnas led one of the sessions during our opening week, and though I wasn't assigned to his group, I made time to talk with him at the suggestion of others in the program. I found his views thought-provoking and today continue to

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share his essay “The Myth of the Rule of Law” with others who believe law created and interpreted by man is a good thing. Through the KSFP I interned at the Drug Policy Alliance. While some colleagues there advocated for the government to be completely uninvolved with drug policy, most sought to redirect government involvement from enforcement to treatment. Healthy conversation ensued and working through political channels to bring about systemic change became even less attractive.

I read ATLAS SHRUGGED for the first time and finally understood the “Who is John Galt?” reference I had months before seen on a t-shirt. In June, I went to the Porcupine Freedom Fest (PorcFest), the summer event hosted by the Free State Project. Its founder, Jason Sorens had addressed our KSFP class. It was the first time I had been around people who openly carried weapons and were living the free lifestyle. Their attitudes were very infectious. In August 2005, I was hired by the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS), which I still believe is one of the best bang-for-your-buck non-profits advancing liberty.

I worked at IHS for over 2 1/2 years, last serving as director of the campus outreach program, which demonstrated to me the benefit of coupling online and in-person communications. While there I read Bruce Benson’s THE ENTERPRISE OF LAW, Carl Watner’s I MUST SPEAK OUT, the Tannehill’s THE MARKET FOR LIBERTY, and Brian Doherty’s RADICALS FOR CAPITALISM just to name a few. At some point while at IHS, I realized that I was an anarchist, although I initially hesitated to describe myself as such, fearing I’d do more harm than good since I might fail to adequately address the critiques posed by others. That self-censorship soon passed.

In early 2008, I left IHS for Bureaucrash, a then-principled activist-oriented organization. It was a tough decision, but it was my logical next step. The intellectual foundation and skills I’d acquired over the past few years and the discretion afforded in my new role facilitated the creation of tools and content that helped advance the voluntary society. A vibrant social network meant individuals could connect online, share ideas and even meet in-person. Events, videos, merchandising and other efforts reinforced this community’s growth. A year later, I left DC to “search for freedom in America” through the Motorhome Diaries (MHD) with my friend Jason Talley, who, too, had been active in DC’s libertarian think tank world.

We set out in our RV, dubbed MARV, the Mobile Authority Resistance Vehicle, and pointed our cameras at those advancing the freedom movement. We held meetups in over 50 cities and did media and outreach. Shortly into the tour, we received an email from Adam Mueller, who I subsequently nicknamed Ademo, and who later changed his last name to Freeman, to show that he owned himself. He expressed interest in joining our project. A week later he took the train from Milwaukee to Chicago and we picked him up as we headed west. A month later we were stopped in Jones County, MS for having a temporary, rather than a permanent, metal license plate. This led to our unjust arrest and the search of MARV, and underscored why we

were doing what we were doing - the police state was alive and well. But so was the liberty-oriented community, who made hundreds of calls to our captors, raised bail money, and helped get more attention on our rights-violations. I still get teary-eyed when talking about the spontaneous nature of the support we received from friends and other lovers of liberty. After seven months we had visited 41 states, met thousands of people, and uploaded 200 video interviews from policy wonks, activists, thinkers and, yes, three politicians (including Ron Paul and Adam Kokesh).

In early 2009, I joined Ademo at Cop Block (CB), a police accountability project he'd started after being harassed by an individual working for his local police department. Its tagline, "badges don't grant extra rights" and proactive tactics have resonated with a lot of people, including a growing number of contributors. Though everyone approaches the issue from a different angle and with a different tone, we all seek to communicate that it's the monopoly on the provision of law enforcement that must cease in order to end the rights violations from those wearing badges.

A couple of months later, after I bought Jason out of his half of MARV, Ademo and I founded Liberty On Tour, through which we sought to advance the voluntary society. Taking what we learned from MHD, we spent a few months on logistics for our next tour. This time, over 30 organizations such as FEE, FFF, Freedom's Phoenix, Free Keene and Strike The Root stepped-up. We included their brands on our video intros and outros, wore their swag, adhered their graphics to MARV (a rolling billboard for liberty), distributed their materials, and more. By this time we had relocated to Keene, NH, to be involved with the growing community of doers on the ground seeking to achieve "liberty in our lifetime!" A few weeks before we hit the road we traveled to Greenfield, MA, to bail out a friend. We were filming, as we often do, which eventually led to us being kidnapped and caged by aggressors wearing badges.

Together we were threatened with three felonies and five misdemeanors. After over a year of legal hoops, we had a trial. By that time, only three charges remained (including wiretapping). We represented ourselves (though the judge assigned us lawyers over our objections) and communicated that it wasn't us but those wearing badges that were the criminals. People were supportive and emboldened to stand up for their own rights. The jury found us not guilty. When the jurors left, they received a standing ovation from those present to support us. We completed another cross-country tour - 13 cities in 13 weeks - that departed from Keene and ended in Miami, complete with more unfounded arrests. This past summer (2011), we did a shorter tour focused mostly on the growing liberty community in New Hampshire. My experiences in these roles only further strengthen my belief in and advocacy for consensual interactions.

Right now, I'm brainstorming with Ademo about future plans for Cop Block and Liberty On Tour. The former has had enormous traction due to its decentralized nature and the sheer number of people whose rights have been violated by those wearing badges, so it's likely we'll focus efforts on that front.

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The ideas of liberty and of voluntarism specifically have made me a better person. Most individuals mean well, but they've only been exposed to the misinformation peddled in gun-run schools and by the mainstream media, which communicate that it's okay for people working for the government to do things that would be wrong for others to do. Introduction to the ideas of self-ownership, one mind at a time, can only encourage the peaceful evolution toward a more free and prosperous society. And oh yeah - that American flag tattoo is now covered by a big circle-A, which has been an excellent conversation starter about my journey, and the ideas of liberty.

Looking Back and Forward

by Spencer Heath MacCallum

(From Issue 171, 4th Quarter 2016)

My grandfather, Spencer Heath (1876-1963), was largely responsible for my being a voluntarist. He taught me most of what I know about thinking, and my own thinking is largely an outgrowth from his.

About 1898, attracted not by the Georgists' attack on property in land but by their strong free-trade stance, Spencer Heath became recording secretary for the Chicago Single Tax Club and continued in close association with the movement for the next 40 years. He assisted Henry Geiger in founding the Henry George School in New York City and taught there for several years in the early 1930s, until Frank Chodorov, succeeding Geiger as director, fired him for not hewing closely enough to the established Georgist line. By 1933, Heath had concluded that George's animus toward land was misplaced and that the institution of land ownership was essential to a functioning society. Indeed, he came to believe that the further development of private property in land was the key to society outgrowing its subservience to the state, which he saw as a social pathology.

The story of my close association with my grandfather during the last half-dozen years of his life (he died in 1963 at the age of 86) actually begins in the Depression year of 1931. On a visit, he found his daughter, my mother, in tears because my father thought they couldn't afford a second child (my brother had been born two years earlier). My grandfather left the room. He returned moments later with a check for a thousand dollars, a princely sum of money in those years, and asked, "Will this help?" So, being bought and paid for, I was named after him: "Spencer Heath MacCallum." Years later, when I became the only member of the family interested in working with him to publish his major work, CITADEL, MARKET AND ALTAR, and in preserving and carrying forward his ideas in other ways, he said it was the best investment he had ever made.

After helping me overcome a depressing psychological episode at Princeton University, where I was a student in 1952, I began a long-term intellectual and personal friendship with him. I began listening to what this gentleman, whom I called Popdaddy, had to say. What I heard was amazing. He maintained that the only realistic way to conceive of human society was in the total absence of government as we know it – the absence, that is, of any form of legislated laws or other institutionalized coercions. He believed that people in society are fully capable of providing for every social need through the further, free, development of the institution of private property.

I was astonished to hear such extreme ideas from a person seemingly level-headed, who had been preeminently successful in not one but three careers in engineering, law and business. As a pioneer in early aviation, he had developed before World War I the first mass-production of airplane propellers, taking the place of the man who stood at a bench and carved them out by hand, and by 1922 he had demonstrated at Boling field the first engine powered and controlled, variable and reversible pitch propeller. Over the next two years, therefore, I listened closely and at times incredulously to every word he spoke, while interposing questions and objections, intent to know if he really was the purist about society that his words implied.

Prior to this, Popdaddy had been a vague figure in the family who was “always writing” but had been unable to find a publisher. Looking back on it, anyone with his views would have had little chance of finding a publisher in the 1940s and ‘50s. Now, having learned what his writing was about, I proposed that when I finished at Princeton, I’d help him self-publish his book. We’d do it together, I said. Thus began a productive working relationship. After his death ten years later, I collected every scrap of his writing, much of it in longhand, and numbered, transcribed and, more recently, digitized 3,000 items for the SPENCER HEATH ARCHIVE that will be domiciled at the Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala.

I was slow maturing and, in my teen years, was socially incapacitated by a severe stutter. Popdaddy found out about the National Hospital for Speech Disorders in New York City and offered me his apartment, which he used only at intervals, at 11 Waverly Place just east of Washington Square in Greenwich Village. The apartment was within walking distance of the Hospital, where I could attend daily group therapy. I accepted his offer and left Princeton for a year. It was a wonderful year, having my own apartment in the Village, exploring the used bookstores on Fourth Avenue that I passed walking to and from the Hospital, and finding there and reading, among other things, everything ever written by Sir Henry Sumner Maine. After Princeton, I came back and spent another year with Popdaddy in New York and then at his country place, Roadsend Gardens, in Elkridge, Maryland just south of Baltimore.

I graduated from Princeton in art history. For the required undergraduate thesis, I wrote on Northwest Coast Indian art, then went to graduate school in anthropology at the University of Washington in order to be near enough to visit and learn first-hand

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about Northwest Coast Indian life and culture. Because these people had had a traditionally stateless society, echoing Popdaddy's ideas and those of Maine on the village community, my interest turned strongly toward social anthropology. Determined to write my Master's paper on Heath's notion of an altogether proprietary, non-political community, for which he often took the hotel as a heuristic model, I decided to read everything I could about hotels and write on the hotel as a community.

I went to Berkeley for a summer to take advantage of the libraries there. Soon after getting well into reading about hotels, I discovered the shopping center. A month later, I was reading about office buildings, and then marinas, mobile home parks and similar phenomena, all members of the class of the relatively recent and evolving phenomenon of multi-tenant properties. Wanting to read everything about all of these, I extended my stay beyond the summer and through an entire winter. Returning to Seattle in the spring, I submitted my thesis, which was rejected. I devoted the summer to recasting it, and in the fall it was accepted. Several years later, following a suggestion made to F.A. Harper by Sartelle Prentice, Jr., the Institute for Humane Studies published it under Alvin Lowi's suggested title, *THE ART OF COMMUNITY*. "Art" in the title refers to the empirical art of community which I then saw developing in commercial real estate in multi-tenant properties, paralleling the way that empirical arts like Toledo steel, dye making and the like had developed in the Middle Ages before there was any science of these matters. An authentic science of society, such as envisioned by Heath and by British social anthropologist A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (*A NATURAL SCIENCE OF SOCIETY*, The Free Press, 1957) was yet to come.

At various times while at the Berkeley libraries, I would visit Baldy and Peg Harper and their family. I bought a lightweight bicycle propelled by a little Italian "Mosquito" motor and would bicycle over from Berkeley to Menlo Park. Baldy was an important mentor. We'd gotten acquainted when he was at the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). I'd accompany Popdaddy on his occasional drives up the Hudson to FEE to visit with Leonard Read, Baldy, and others on the FEE staff. Baldy had a great sense of optimism about the future of humanity and by that time had clearly adopted, as his compass setting, the concept of a "total alternative" to political government. This became his ideal goal by which to correct and guide one's mundane decisions much as the North Star enables the mariner to make continuous course corrections and so come safely into Liverpool. My wife, Emalie, put almost the same thing a little differently: "We must entertain the ideal of no government if we are ever to realize limited government."

Baldy said that he didn't know just how he had arrived at this philosophical position, but he thought it might have come about from John Chamberlain, who was Popdaddy's friend, having forwarded him a working draft of *CITADEL, MARKET, AND ALTAR*. John had told Baldy that he didn't really understand it but thought there might be something important here; perhaps Baldy could make something of it. Baldy read it through several times and about a year later found himself advocating,

as an ideal toward which to strive, a society totally free of structures of institutionalized coercion.

Considering Baldy's role in my life as a mentor, it's worth digressing here to say some more about this unassuming teacher with such a down-to-earth grasp of economics and impeccable intellectual hospitality who encouraged me to a better appreciation of Austrian economics and Hayek. Although Baldy had been the first staff member recruited by Leonard Read for FEE at the end of World War II, he could never prevail upon Leonard to do any more at FEE than promote what was already discovered and known about freedom - which he did very well. Leonard, not wanting to go any further, may have felt constrained by the exigencies of fund-raising, perhaps fearful of the label of anarchy. Whatever the reason, Baldy felt there was much more to be discovered about human social organization and wanted to give more encouragement at the growing edge of ideas. Without taking Leonard into his confidence, he began around 1954 to plan an independent organization, to be called the "Institute for Humane Studies." He did take Popdaddy into his confidence, and they planned much of it together. For a campus, Popdaddy offered to donate Roadsend Gardens, his 100-acre country place outside Baltimore in the direction of Washington. Baldy and his family came down one weekend and walked over the land with Popdaddy and me, but ultimately Baldy decided that the then intellectual climate in California would be more hospitable for what he wanted to accomplish.

Baldy's dream was to create a special kind of a community of scholars. He wanted to create an environment that would be conducive to breakthroughs in social thought.

The Institute would cater to young people, recognizing that breakthroughs in any field tend to be made by the young. But it would cater also to seasoned scholars from many diverse fields (law, physics, biology, not excluding even the paranormal as represented by Dr. Rhine at Duke University) who were retired but intellectually active - and who might be able to use the Institute's tax-exempt status in pursuing their work. The Institute would find living arrangements nearby and offer its library and other facilities including private office space, so that visitors - young people and senior scholars - could work alone so far as they liked or mix with others in the library and in the Institute dining room, as had been done so successfully at FEE. The active or vital ingredient in Baldy's formula would be the give-and-take between seasoned scholars and enthusiastic youth. This interplay, he thought, would lead toward the breakthroughs he felt were sorely needed in contemporary thinking about society. This unique idea tragically came to an end with Baldy's death from a traffic accident with a drunk driver. Without his leadership, the Institute adopted its present program of hosting seminars and mentoring young people to become professionals - helping them write grants, publish books and articles, get teaching positions, and so forth.

Returning to the thread of this account, while I was pursuing my graduate studies at the University of Washington and then at Chicago, Popdaddy had been invited to

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Santa Ana, California as a house guest of Frances Norton Manning, who had undertaken to actively promote intellectual contacts for him and had been very successful at it. On my visits there I became acquainted, among others, with R.C. Hoiles, of the Orange County REGISTER, Walter Knott, of Knott's Berry Farm, John L. Davis, president of Chapman College, and Andrew J. Galambos, and his two associates, Alvin Lowi, Jr. and Donald H. Allen. The last three had been colleagues in the defense industry. Galambos, an astrophysicist, was entrepreneuring with Don Allen on the side in mutual fund sales and in free-market education and was just then independently arriving at the notion of the "total alternative" (my phrase which Baldy and several others had adopted). Alvin Lowi prompted Galambos to found the Free Enterprise Institute (FEI), which soon became a full-time proposition, Alvin for some years acting as "senior lecturer" and Don managing the bookstore.

The main thing I learned from attending some of the basic courses at FEI was the multifaceted role that insurance could play in a free society. This was a major idea in Galambos' teaching that had originated with one of his students, Peter Bos. Galambos' ideas about intellectual property, on the other hand, made little sense to me. I believed in the importance of giving credit for ideas, which is simply good scholarly practice, and learned from Alvin that the time to contract about ideas is before they have been disclosed. I learned little from FEI that I hadn't already learned in principle from Popdaddy, but Galambos had a profound effect on many people who gained their first vista of the "total alternative" through him, comparable to my awakening experience with Popdaddy. My relationship with Alvin, by contrast, has continued to grow through the years, helping stretch my intellectual grasp well beyond where it was with my grandfather and Baldy Harper. In particular, I've gained an appreciation from him of the meaning and implications of the scientific method. Alvin became well acquainted with Popdaddy in the short time before his death. Afterward, at the timely suggestion of Don Allen, he assisted greatly in organizing and evaluating the SPENCER HEATH ARCHIVES.

Soon after completing my Master's at Seattle in 1961, I went on to the University of Chicago for a doctorate. Unaccountably, however, my work slowed down. While continuing to get high marks in my class work, I often took many months to complete course assignments, and independent work suffered. Finally I dropped out, after fulfilling the residence and course requirements but short of the dissertation. For the dissertation, I had planned to do an ethnography of a shopping mall, looked at in its internal organization as a community of landlord and merchant tenants. In preparation for this, the University had given me a summer grant to drive the length and breadth of California visiting shopping centers and collecting case histories of dispute situations and how they were resolved. This gave me a store of empirical data, and I selected the mall in which I wanted to do the fieldwork for my dissertation. That was not to be, however. My last accomplishment before leaving Chicago was publishing in MODERN AGE (9:1, Winter 1964/65) a paper that I still think important, "The Social Nature of Ownership." For the summer of 1965, I was invited to consult on a

project with the UCLA Economics Department with Armen Alchian and Harold Demsetz. I had difficulty fulfilling that commission.

I supposed my problem was psychological. Was I not motivated? Why was I having serious problems tracking conversation where several people were present? The next ten years were a totally lost decade. I couldn't start anything at all with the expectation of finishing it. Finally the answer came. The diagnosis was severe hypoglycemia, which had not been understood in the medical community ten years earlier. It was largely resolved by the simple expedient of eliminating all sugar from my diet. I began to pick up the pieces of my life but never returned to academia.

Around this time, some interesting projects unfolded. The first was discovering the rigorously free-market monetary ideas of E.C. Riegel, a friend of Popdaddy's in Greenwich Village. Riegel was in the last stages of Parkinson's Disease when I met him. On a hunch that his papers might contain valuable ideas, knowing that Popdaddy considered him a genius and had similar ideas on money, I kept in touch with the family who received his papers on his death in 1955. Ten years later I was on hand to save them from being dumpstered. Almost ten more years went by, and I showed an essay from them to Harry Browne, who in his best-selling *YOU CAN PROFIT FROM A MONETARY CRISIS* (Macmillan, 1974), called it "The best explanation of the free market I've seen." A flurry of requests for the essay encouraged me to systematically examine all of Riegel's papers and eventually edit and self-publish two books from them, *THE NEW APPROACH TO FREEDOM* (1976) and *FLIGHT FROM INFLATION: THE MONETARY ALTERNATIVE* (1978).

From Riegel I came to respect the notion of an abstract unit of value whereby exchange might be facilitated by simple accountancy among traders in the market. Issue of new units would be done by traders monetizing their future productivity and redeeming them as they offered goods or services competitively in the market. Since political governments are not traders in the market, they would have no place in such an exchange system. Should such a unit of account come to be preferred over legal tender for its constancy, political governments would no longer be able to engage in deficit-financing. Not being traders, they would have no issue power, and having no issue power, they would have no means of watering the money supply. This is radical thinking, but I have fostered interest in it whenever opportunity has arisen.

The other project that developed was with Werner Stiefel, head of Stiefel Laboratories, a family-held, multinational pharmaceuticals firm (a leading product was Lubriderm). In exchange for a small equity in the project, Werner in 1971 commissioned me to draft a master-lease form for a multi-tenant property to be constructed somewhere on the ocean outside of any political jurisdiction. Werner had been profoundly influenced by Ayn Rand's *ATLAS SHRUGGED* and wanted literally to create a new country which he would call "Atlantis." Inspired by Rand's "Galt's Gulch," he envisioned a place to which, as conditions became untenable in the United States (signs were even then showing), people could flee as they had to the United States when conditions deteriorated in Germany in the 1930s. Werner devoted a great

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part of his life and many millions of dollars of personal assets to this project. At a critical point he was at a loss to know what form of government he could institute that would not repeat the same tired round of tyranny of all governments in history. I made a suggestion. Among his assets at the time was a motel in Saugerties, New York. I pointed out that a motel is a community. It's a place, after all, that is divided into private and common areas, and Werner was providing public services there. But instead of citizens, he had customers, and both provision and maintenance of community services was contractual, carried out through ordinary business means. Why not keep this entirely non-political form of community organization and transfer it to the ocean? People could own improvements on the land in any way they liked, but the ground itself, the sites, would be leased. By opting not to subdivide, he would preserve a concentrated entrepreneurial interest in the attractiveness of the development, and this would be ongoing, capable of extending indefinitely into the future. The master-lease form would be the social software to generate the actual written constitution of the community, which would consist of all the leases and subleases in effect at any given time.

The lease form I worked up survived Werner's project, and over the years it took on a life of its own as many people critiqued it and added valuable inputs. It became for me a prime heuristic aid in thinking through questions of community administration in the absence of taxation or bureaucratic regulation. Several iterations were published as the master-lease form for "Orbis," one among a cluster of imaginary settlements in outer space. (See *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, Issue 81.) The reason for presenting it in that way was to avoid calling attention prematurely to the notion of settling the oceans outside the jurisdiction of nation states.

The most recent and important of many innovations in the master-lease form has been to incorporate into it, and hence into the contractual structure of the community, a system of natural law with appropriate procedural rules authored by the late Michael van Notten, a protégé of Belgian natural law scholar Frank van Dun. Contracting parties could adopt any legal system they chose that was not inconsistent with the minimal law system they had agreed to in their lease.

The idea of incorporating a system of natural law arose after several years of consultation with the Samaron Clan of northwestern Somalia. Michael van Notten had married into the Samaron Clan and lived the last dozen years of his life with his adopted kinsmen, during which time he devoted himself to economic development and study of Somali customary law and politics, gathering the ethnographic material for a book. He died prematurely and in his will asked that I organize and edit his notes for publication, which I did (*THE LAW OF THE SOMALIS: A STABLE FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE HORN OF AFRICA*, Red Sea Press, 2005). The Samaron are a traditionally stateless people, many of whom would like to come into full participation in the modern world if they could do so without coming under the domination of a political government, their own or any other. Their idea of how to accomplish this, which originated with

them, was to lease a portion of their territory with access to the sea for a private consortium (governments or government agencies need not apply) to be developed and managed as a purely commercial multi-tenant property writ large. This is described in Van Notten's book. If successful, the Samaron would then have a thriving freeport like a latter-day Hong Kong in their own back yard, from which to pick and choose among the opportunities it would offer for jobs, education, technical training, entrepreneurial venturing, investment, and so forth. It would be their bridge to the rest of the world.

Except for these projects, I continued to be apart from any very serious intellectual life until the mid 1990s. First, I was taken up for eight years beginning in 1976 with an economic-development project of my own involving a Mexican village, Mata Ortiz, in Chihuahua. Because of space limitations I won't describe it here, but it was successful beyond anyone's dream. The story is told in the Emmy-Award winning documentary, [THE RENAISSANCE OF MATA ORTIZ \(helpfundmymovie.com\)](http://helpfundmymovie.com). In 1999, Juan Quezada, the artist whom I mentored and worked with, received the Premio Nacional de los Artes, Mexico's highest honor for a living artist, and in 2015 I received the "Ohtli" medal, Mexico's highest cultural award. The project itself left me rich in intangibles but exhausted the modest inheritance from Popdaddy that had sustained me, and for the ensuing decade I had little time for anything but to work for a living. I worked as a very small businessman, and found it enjoyable.

Emi and I cared for my mother during her last six years, and after her death, a small inheritance from her gave me some independence again. In my wife, Emalie, I'm fortunate to have an outstanding in-house critic of ideas. An invitation in 1997 from David J. Theroux, of the Independent Institute, to attend a Liberty Fund Conference on "The Voluntary City" helped settle me once again into thinking and writing on social organization, and economist Daniel Klein gave me friendship and encouragement. The fruit of that Liberty Fund Conference has been a dozen journal articles, most notably "The Enterprise of Community: Social and Environmental Implications of Administering Land as Productive Capital" (*JOURNAL OF LIBERTARIAN STUDIES* 17:4, Fall 2003). I also edited and contributed to Van Notten's book at this time, as well as putting together a small, inspirational book of my grandfather's, as yet unpublished, *THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF MAN: A QUIET CELEBRATION OF VOLUNTARY EXCHANGE*.

If I knew how to do it, I would like more than anything else to encourage thoughtful consideration, perhaps by a graduate student looking for a dissertation topic, of some general ideas of my grandfather's in philosophy of science that he held in higher regard than his thoughts on social organization. He held that action in its technical sense is a more fundamental concept in physics and closer to reality than energy, which is an abstraction because it leaves time out of account, and that literally reformulating physics in terms of action could lead to a great simplification of the science.

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My mother maintained that her seventies were the best decade of her life “for sheer, silly fun.” I found the same thing, though I might put it a little differently, continuing now four years into my eighties. Twelve years ago, Emi and I made our permanent home in the small Mexican town of Casas Grandes, Chihuahua. Wanting to help conserve some of the old aspect of this pueblo, we’ve restored four old adobes near the plaza and furnished them with local antiques. These we offer for extended-stay rentals to visitors, who are frequently artists or writers. So we’re making the most of our life here, including entertaining old and new friends. I continue writing, most recently “Freedom’s Ugly Duckling: A New Take on Property in Land” (Volume 7, LIBERTARIAN PAPERS, October 2015) and hope to inspire in a few others the passion for life that I’ve come to feel in these later years.

[Originally from Walter Block’s Autobiography Archive, 2003, subsequently published without updating in Walter Block, compiler, I CHOSE LIBERTY: AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF CONTEMPORARY LIBERTARIANS (Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2010). This account has been updated by the author and edited a bit by Carl Watner to shorten it for THE VOLUNTARYIST. Spencer MacCallum is a social anthropologist living in Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, Mexico, reachable at sm@look.net. Copyright © 2003 LewRockwell.com. Permission to use given in the author’s email of December 16, 2014, 11:22 AM.]

How and Why I Became a Libertarian

by John Roscoe

(From Issue 174, 3rd Quarter 2017)

[Editor’s Note: John Roscoe was born in 1929. He has owned and operated grocery stores in the Western United States for fifty years. He started in the Drive-In-Grocery business and coined the idea to call them convenience stores. He is the only living founder of the National Association of Convenience Stores, which bears that name as a result of his efforts. He was the first to use a remote control system to sell gasoline and was instrumental in its approval and acceptance as a delivery system. In the 1970s he rejected the less-for-more retailing philosophy of convenience stores and built bigger stores called Cheaper! These stores provided the lowest prices in the areas where they operated, as well as dispensing libertarian literature. In the 1990s he developed Cigarettes Cheaper! He and his family operated 850 of these stores in forty states. His grandchildren own Just Good Tobacco, which he and his wife, Marilyn, manage for them. Just Good Tobacco developed and sells the Just Good Tobacco Make Your Own Cigarette System. See www.justgoodtobacco.com. A good share of their time is spent trying to abide by, and circumvent, when possible, government restrictions that have been developed and put into place by special interests. He and

his family do not smoke tobacco, but they respect the right of others to do so. What follows is John's story of how and why he became a libertarian.]

As we live, we develop a personal philosophy. Some personal philosophies come from experience. Some emerge in a moment of epiphany. Some are based on false signals and misinformation, but personal philosophies ought to be reality-based. If a philosophy is any good it ought to work to the benefit of the holder. It ought to improve his life and, through him, the lives of those around him.

Our personal philosophies are based on our core beliefs. It may take years to understand these core beliefs and understand why we have them. Core beliefs should be logical and should be tested. It is disturbing when you realize some of your core beliefs are based on false information, are illogical, and are likely to be damaging to you and to others. I have tried hard to identify my core beliefs and to practice them consistently. Some of my core beliefs are:

1. You own your body, and you can do what you want with it so long as you don't harm others.
2. You should treat others as you want to be treated.
3. You should bestir yourself so that you attempt to solve your own problems.

Libertarians often like to discuss how others became libertarians. Libertarians wonder whether people are born libertarians or if they become libertarians as a result of their worldly experiences. My own story begins in Montana during the Great Depression.

My family's experience was all about taking care of themselves and then putting goodwill in the bank by helping others. Life was tough on the prairie and people realized they were on their own. I was raised by people to whom this was obvious. I was raised in a culture of self-sufficiency. I was raised as a libertarian. I didn't know it at the time, and my parents probably never heard the word. However, as a child I learned to take care of myself and to respect the rights of others. I was neither born libertarian nor was I a convert. To put it simply, I was raised as a libertarian.

I was taught the Golden Rule through the examples set by my parents. The Golden Rule is the basis of good personal relationships. It makes the interests of others the same as our interests. My parents lived the Golden Rule. They knew the importance of working with others, and they realized that helping others was the key to earning the goodwill of their neighbors. They also believed people were responsible for themselves and for their actions, and, of course, shouldn't take actions that would hurt others. They realized that there was no such thing as a free lunch. Somebody, somewhere pays for it.

My father was a Methodist minister, who farmed on the side to earn enough funds to take care of his family. I was the sixth of seven children, and my parents were fully engaged in the Christian ministry and activities that kept the family

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financially afloat. This gave me the room to decide things for myself and to make my own decisions and the freedom to act on those decisions.

I suppose most children are taught the Golden Rule, but it may take examples for it to stick. My father lived his faith and sometimes went overboard helping others. At one time he had three old cars that he had loaned to parishioners. This required my father to walk instead of drive. While I've never gone this far, his example was important in my development. However, it has taken years for me to realize the importance of the Golden Rule and to realize that people who want libertarianism to work need to go the second mile and have consideration for others. They need to have the same consideration for others that they have for themselves.

The precept that we should treat others as we would like to be treated is common to all of the world's great religions. Each religion states it differently, but it means the same thing. It means: DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU. This is also the foundation of good customary law. In fact, the old English common law was based on these two simple ideas:

1. Do all that you have agreed to do.
2. Do not encroach on other persons or their property.

But even the old customary law and the basic libertarian core beliefs are not enough to make us really good neighbors. When you juxtapose basic libertarianism against the Golden Rule, it seems like pretty weak stuff. I'm familiar with Ayn Rand's essay on the "virtue of selfishness," and the importance of individuality. Rodney King was right when he said "Can't we all just get along?" Getting along involves more than just not damaging the interests of someone else. Really getting along requires a coordination of interests between the parties. Cooperation developed by a mutuality of interests fathers production and progress. As Martin Brower said, "Good ethics is good business." Lemuel Boulware phrased it well when he said we need to "work in the balanced best interests of everyone."

The importance of the Golden Rule is well-stated in Michael Shermer's new book, *THE MORAL ARC*. In the book he quotes from Peter Singer's 1981 book, *THE EXPANDING CIRCLE*: "In making ethical decisions I am trying to make decisions that can be defended to others. This requires me to take a perspective from which my own interests count no more, simply because they are my own, than similar interests of others. Any preference for my own interests must be justified in terms of some broader impartial principle."

I developed an understanding and some animosity for government and for conscription when I spent five years in the United State Air Force. I beat the draft by volunteering for military service, expecting to serve just three years. I enlisted, and later went to Officer Candidate School. Arbitrary rank distinctions were an excuse for discrimination. My enlisted experience taught me a lot about inequality and about how rising above rank-discrimination brought favorable results. I was a Club Officer

at Lowry Air Force base in Denver, when Eisenhower held the Summer White House there. The Air Force Academy was started during that time and I had involvement in the execution of functions for the new Academy, including the dedication party. These experiences provided valuable insight into human relations. They also provided me with insights on bureaucracy and power.

While I chafed at my years in the service, I had experiences and held responsibilities well-beyond what my age and experience warranted. I read a lot during this time and broadened my view of history and how the world works. Since my parents were Republicans, I had similar inclinations. However in 1964, when Barry Goldwater ran for President, he appeared too zealous for my tastes, and I bolted the Republican Party. Mr. Goldwater seemed not to want to “just get along,” but to impose his views on everyone else. It is hard to know how I would feel about his philosophy and his positions today. While I was in the Air Force, a person with whom I went through Officer Candidate School suggested that we should open Drive-In-Markets in Denver, Colorado when we were released from the Air Force. At that time all the Seven-Eleven-type stores only operated in warmer climates. My friend stated that his grandmother was well-off and would back us in the venture. This turned out to be untrue and we started business with my mustering-out pay and a loan from the credit union where my wife worked. It was an important lesson in self-sufficiency.

My political philosophy continued to evolve. I swore off voting during the 1970s and printed the “Don’t Vote, It Only Encourages Them” message on our grocery bags. As a result, I was quoted in TIME Magazine after the 1976 election: “In San Francisco, John Roscoe, 46, a grocery chain president, laughed sardonically: ‘I’m a three-time loser. In 1964 I voted for the peace candidate, Johnson, and got war. In ‘68 I voted for the law-and-order candidate, Nixon, and got crime. In 1972 I voted for Nixon again, and we got Watergate. I’m not going to vote this time.’”

The Don’t Vote message was inspired by Robert LeFevre. A friend who operated stores in West Virginia had a friend who had attended Bob’s Freedom School. Not knowing what I was getting involved with, I scheduled a week of his Freedom School for our employees. It was an important week in my life. The following comments are from remarks I made at a dinner in Los Angeles in 1980, and from a letter I wrote Bob on the occasion of his 70th birthday in 1981:

I bought a pig in a poke when I got Bob. With just the scantiest of information, I scheduled him for a week long seminar for thirty of our key employees in 1975. We, of course, were surprised, delighted, entertained, enriched, and rewarded.

While Bob doesn’t bill himself as a business or time-management consultant, he performed that function for me. He helped simplify my life and my business. His philosophy and his wisdom brought a lot of things together for me. It became apparent that I was worrying about and trying

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to manage a lot of things over which I had no control. He pointed out that I had a full time job managing myself. It was wonderful to find out that if I only managed myself, a lot of other things would fall into place.

Not that the dragon of interference into the affairs of others is easy to slay. On occasion I still find myself starting to cross other people's boundaries. I then sit back and try to remember Bob's premises and logic from his seminars and can generally let the folly of others pass me by.

Bob's message has been good for me. He has given me a better framework in which to work and live. Bob gave me reasons why I could heed my mother's dictum, "You don't have to attend every fight which you are invited to."

Before the Internet and before blogs, we wrote bagatorials and published them on our grocery bags. These bagatorials were libertarian messages that appeared on our brown paper shopping bags. We published messages from Carl Watner and Wendy McElroy and others. Eventually, the entire bags were used for editorial copy, including the gussets. These messages also included exposés of waste and inefficiency of government systems. The bags were generally well-received by our customers. When someone objected to our message and philosophy we made the news and got more publicity for our message. Simon and Schuster published some of the bagatorials in a book by that name in 1996. There are still copies of BAGATORIALS, A BOOK FULL OF BAGS (John Roscoe and Ned Roscoe, editors) available for sale on the Internet.

For sentient beings to survive and flourish, we, as libertarians, should heed Albert Jay Nock's advice about preaching to the Remnant. We need to preach the message of the Golden Rule and the commonality of man's interests whenever and wherever we can. As Nock said, "the Remnant will find you." When I first met Bob LeFevre, he said his original goal was to find one person who would agree with his philosophy. I'd like to think I was part of the Remnant. I found Bob and he helped reinforce my already existing libertarian beliefs. I have always been a libertarian because it is good for me and works to the benefit of those around me. This maximizes my freedom and minimizes life's frictions.

From Conservative to [Free-Market] Anarchist (Voluntaryist)

by Steve Patterson

(From Issue 175, 4th Quarter 2017)

[Editor's Note: Although the author does not describe himself as a voluntaryist in this

article, in latter correspondence with me he related that he was “equally comfortable identifying himself as a voluntaryist as I am a market anarchist.” His evolution from constitutional, limited government statist to free-market anarchist points to the many diverse ways people are turned onto voluntaryism.]

Four years ago, I became an anarchist, and I’ve never looked back. My political philosophy now runs through my veins. But this wasn’t always the case. I used to be a young, apathetic conservative. Then, I was introduced to libertarianism, which slowly turned me into an anarchist. This might sound crazy, but I assure you, it’s quite reasonable, and many people share my same story. It all started in 2007. I was casually aware of politics at the time. My parents were conservative, so I was conservative. YouTube was still relatively new, and I remember one day stumbling across a video of Ron Paul. I was immediately intrigued. Here was this funny old man saying the opposite of his fellow Republicans on stage, and he called himself a “Constitutional conservative.” This sounded appealing. He would say all these fascinating things I’d never heard before, and the more videos I watched, the more excited I became. After only a few weeks, I was fully on-board with the platform of this Ron Paul guy. Little did I know this resonance with a political philosophy would change my life.

If you know anything about Ron Paul, you know he’s an exception to the rule. He was a politician, yes, but only in title. Politicians are (rightly) known as slimy, spineless, unprincipled folk whose political ambition overrules any shred of integrity they possess. Ron is the opposite. He defies the oxymoron “principled politician.” He’s been called the one exception to the gang of 535. And it shows when he talks. He doesn’t appeal to rhetorical flourishes or woo the crowd with empty platitudes. He really believes what he says and speaks out of conviction, something nonexistent among politicians.

But to me, ultimately, Ron Paul is a charming, principled nerd. He’s an extremely well-educated man in every area of political thought, especially Economics. He puts philosophic ideas above politics or elections. In fact, he used his presidential campaigns as educational platforms. Ron didn’t think he could win, but he knew more people would discover the power of free-market ideas if he ran for president.

But as he would tell you, Ron Paul’s ideas are more important than his person. Millions of people were swayed by the philosophy of freedom, not just his charming personality. The core principles of limited government resonated through all political upbringings, whether you identified as a liberal, conservative, or were apathetic.

Given my conservative ideology, I knew that lots of people gave lip service to the Constitution, but rarely did they defend it consistently. They supported military intervention overseas, but balked at the idea of requiring Congress to formally declare war. They complained about the Department of Education, but would only support gentle budget cuts, at most. Ron said what conservatives were too afraid to say: get the government out of education altogether. We don’t need a 10% budget reduction; we need to abolish the whole department! Conservatives say they support individual

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responsibility and don't want a nanny-state. Then how can they support the War on Drugs? If an adult decides to peacefully smoke pot in his basement, and not hurt anybody, we don't need a nanny-state to micro-manage his life and throw him in jail. Conservatives supposedly want you to be free to make bad decisions, as long as you pay the consequences for them.

Probably the most controversial position Ron held was on the U.S. military. He thought, as old-school conservatives did, that we should be extremely cautious before intervening in foreign affairs. He also thought the Pentagon wasn't infallible; they are prone to the same egregious waste and mismanagement as the Department of Education. This ruffled a lot of feathers. It shouldn't have. Ron simply applied the same principles across the whole spectrum of government.

He was consistent, and he kept coming back to the following principle: what is the proper role of government? Before we argue about cutting 10% of the Department of Education's budget, shouldn't we discuss whether or not it should exist in the first place? Is it appropriate, or even Constitutional, for the Executive Branch to send troops into foreign countries for an extended amount of time without Congressional declaration? Before we nibble around the edges of government spending, we need to talk about what government should do in the first place.

To me, he was precisely correct, but it revealed an unsavory truth: Republicans and Democrats aren't so different from each other. One party might want to raise spending 5%; the other might want to cut spending 5%, but both favor the status quo and support big government in their respective areas. Liberals and conservatives are like two sides of the same coin. Constitutional conservatism, I thought, represented a real alternative.

But my journey didn't stop there, because Ron implanted a little seed in my head. When he spoke, he often mentioned the "Austrian School of Economics." I never heard of it, but eventually, I decided to Google around. What I discovered changed my life. I came across the Mises Institute, which had a number of free books and lectures online about Austrian Economics. I was immediately enamored. The explanatory power of Economics was breathtaking. After diving into the literature, I didn't simply believe government was inefficient, I understood why. This had an enormous impact on my political philosophy, and it started my transition to radical libertarianism.

I now believe it's impossible to have a clear understanding about how the world works without Economics. The coordination of prices, profits, and losses in a market is awe-inspiring. No exaggeration – it is almost miraculous. I will write extensively about this at a later time. But suffice to say, Economics became a pillar around which I would develop my other political beliefs.

The more I learned – the farther I went down the rabbit hole of Austrian Economics – the more "radical" I became. Not only was government inefficient at delivering mail, but they were inefficient everywhere they intervened. The same economic principles apply to the Post Office as apply to the Patent Office. Of course,

this wasn't radicalism for the sake of radicalism, it was just consistency. And if you apply economic principles consistently across the board, you are left with a very grim perspective on government. However, I was no anarchist.

I firmly believed in small-government libertarianism. Markets could handle everything except a few core services: the courts, military, and police. Of course, this would be considered wildly limited government compared to today's standards.

My first interaction with an anarchist, ironically enough, was as an intern in Ron Paul's congressional office. I was given the opportunity to be his intern in DC for a semester, and one of his staffers considered himself an anarchist. He was a nice guy, but I didn't take his ideas too seriously.

But that changed in the summer of 2010. I was fortunate enough to attend a conference for students at the Mises Institute – the organization I held in such high regard. The conference was called “Mises University,” and it was a week long, focusing solely on Austrian Economics. I was elated, and it turned out to be one of the most intellectually stimulating weeks of my life. I was surrounded with the smartest peers I've ever met.

A few lectures hinted at the possibility of complete statelessness – the idea that private entrepreneurs could better provide all the services of government, including courts, military, and police. Supposedly, for the same reasons we don't want government to monopolize the production of shoes, we don't want them to monopolize the court system or the production of national defense. I wasn't convinced.

During the middle of the week, I was forced to adjust my beliefs a little bit, so I called myself a “Secessionist” for a few days. But I was no anarchist. I agreed with some core ideas – that taxation is fundamentally coercive and is therefore theft. I agreed that markets were based on voluntary, peaceful human interaction, while governments were necessarily based on violence or threats of violence; and I agreed that, in a perfect world, we wouldn't need any coercion whatsoever – voluntary decisions would reign supreme. But, I thought, we don't live in a perfect world, and surely in some circumstances, large groups of people wouldn't care about the “rights” of an individual. Statelessness might sound nice in theory, but in practice, people wouldn't respect the property rights of a lone anarchist, declaring his independence in the middle of a city.

Until one night, when I was challenged by a fellow student named Dan. He was a pretty burly guy, former Air Force I think, and we were hanging out at one of the local bars after the lectures. (Of course, “hanging out at the bar” at Mises University really meant “talking loudly about nerdy ideas in public places.” I remember some locals dancing at the bar, but they were outnumbered 3-1 by sweaty geeks talking about monetary history.)

I told Dan about my hesitations with anarchism, and he said he understood. “But,” he said, “let me ask you this: if I want to opt out of government services, should I be able to?” It's a simple question, but I didn't know how to respond. I

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wanted to say, “Of course you should be able to opt out of government services! If you don’t want to pay, you don’t have to, but then you don’t get to use the services.” But alas, such an admission would be tantamount to anarchism. After all, government services are by definition tied to taxation, and you can’t opt out of taxation. Doing so would be opting out of government, which is precisely what these anarchists were talking about.

On the other hand, I couldn’t say with a straight face that indeed, Dan should never be able to opt out of government services. I’d have to be willing to put him in jail if he tried. Even if his decision to opt out was poor – if he’d be better off by using the services – I couldn’t justify forcing him to pay for something he didn’t want. So, I was perplexed. I didn’t have a good response, and I remember slowly responding, “I think I might be an anarchist now.”

I wrestled with that question for the next few months, as I kept trying to justify the existence of involuntary government. I read a book called *CHAOS THEORY* by Bob Murphy, which has a section on the private production of law. My list of necessary government services dwindled. Then it happened: I became a closet anarchist. After playing devil’s advocate so much with myself – being an annoying anarchist – I couldn’t find a proper counter-argument to my critiques of limited government.

I was shocked. I couldn’t believe I’d ended up so far away from where I started. I thought anarchists were bomb-throwing hooligans who smashed in windows for recreation. But this type of anarchism was about private property and peaceful, voluntary cooperation. I saw the contradictions and inconsistencies in popular conservatism, and I couldn’t stomach it any longer.

By the end of 2010, I came out of the closet. But I didn’t know what to call myself. “Anarchist” seemed too dramatic and hot-button. (Believe it or not, people dismiss you rather quickly upon identifying as an anarchist.) I toyed around with labels like “anti-statist” or other nonsense, but I’ve recently settled on the term I find most appropriate: market anarchism.

You can sum up market anarchism succinctly: all the services which are currently provided by governments can be more efficiently and ethically provided by private entrepreneurs. Granted, there’s a million different ways to phrase it, but that’s what I prefer. Really not so radical, is it?

Four years later, and my conviction has become stronger. The explanatory power of market anarchism is unparalleled. Politics finally makes sense when you throw out the romance surrounding government and patriotism. But what’s surprising to me is how my own justification for anarchism has changed. I still wholly subscribe to Austrian Economic theory, but now I am even more compelled by the ethical and philosophic arguments for anarchism. To an anarchist, it’s clear as day: taxation is theft. Theft is immoral. Therefore, taxation is immoral, which condemns government as immoral. Simple and profound.

Upon taking the leap to anarchism, it appears preposterous and naive to try and

manage the lives of a hundred million people from a central planning board. Social problems involving 300 million people aren't resolvable by one tiny group forcing everybody to act a certain way, threatening them with jail time if they don't comply. It seems clear. On a philosophic level, proponents for government run into trouble: what exactly is a government, anyway? Upon inspection, "governments" are only grandiose, harmful abstractions; they have no tangible reality. We live in a world inhabited by humans – not "governments" or "countries." This might sound absurd – and I won't defend the claims right now – but I intend to give rigorous explanations for these ideas in the future.

The anarchist worldview is radically individualist, not because it views people as isolated decision-makers, but because individualism is the most philosophically critical way of viewing the world. It helps us avoid dramatic abstractions and opens up the world of economic thinking. And at this point, I can't imagine turning back; anarchism has gone to my core.

If anybody is intrigued by this story, I only ask they pursue the topic sincerely. Hold on to your objections as long as you can, and see if your beliefs can withstand the criticism of market anarchist arguments. I humbly suggest starting with Austrian Economics and see where it leads. I, for one, sought political truths as a young conservative, and I believe I've found them in market anarchism.

[This article originally appeared on www.stevepatterson.com on August 19, 2014. Reprinted with permission of the author August 28, 2014.]

The Author's Story Behind LOOKING BACKWARD:2162-2012

by Beth Cody

(From Issue 178, 3rd Quarter 2018)

In 2012, when I published "LOOKING BACKWARD: 2162-2012: A View from a Future Libertarian Republic," I had been interested in small-government libertarian ideas for nearly a decade, but was only just beginning to understand that we might not really need any government at all.

My changing views, and the story of how I came to write my book, are actually the story of my encountering several books written by others.

Some background: I grew up in Ames, Iowa, the daughter of a geology professor and a botanist, and I progressed through the political spectrum over time: as an undergraduate music student, I started out with liberal/progressive leanings and voted for Bill Clinton; later, as a graduate student in economics, and then as a financial analyst, I became more conservative and voted Republican. But after buying my small business in 2000, I began to wonder if either party got it right.

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Before the birth of my first child in 2003, I became interested in our dysfunctional educational system, and read several books along the lines of “why Johnny can’t read.” Then, in a thrift store, I stumbled across a used copy of Sheldon Richman’s book, *SEPARATING SCHOOL AND STATE*, and it was like a light bulb went on above my head, like in the cartoons. That was the beginning of my understanding that we don’t need government in order to get things done. (It also led to my decision to homeschool my two children.)

By 2005, I was firmly a libertarian, writing monthly op-eds for the local newspaper in Iowa City. As the recession hit in 2008, my growing unease with government regulations and spending led me to begin to speculate what would happen if the U.S. government ever “ran out” of money.

It was around this time that mainstream publications such as the *WALL STREET JOURNAL* began to publish occasional articles about the idea of states seceding or the breaking apart of the U.S. – a forbidden topic in polite society until then. It was also around 2008 that my book-collecting father gave me a 1920s copy of Edward Bellamy’s 1887 book, *LOOKING BACKWARD FROM 2000 TO 1887*. The novel recounts the story of a Boston aristocrat who enters a hypnotic trance in 1887 and wakes up in the year 2000 to find a socialist-utopian world in which all of the problems of the 19th century have been solved. Poverty has been eliminated; everyone is employed by the government, assigned work for which they are fitted, and retires at age forty-five. Every person receives the same income and distribution of goods, eats together in common dining halls, and children are cared for in government-run centers so women are free to work.

Bellamy’s book was hugely popular and influential at the time of its publication (the third-best seller after *UNCLE TOM’S CABIN* and *BEN-HUR: A TALE OF THE CHRIST*). It inspired over 150 local “Bellamy Clubs” for discussion and promotion of the author’s Marxist ideas, as well as several utopian communities.

Surprisingly, I found myself attracted by the story’s hopeful, optimistic view of the future and almost felt sadness that such miracles had not come to pass, despite hindsight from the spectacular failures and mass graves of communism in the 20th century.

Then I wondered if a similar libertarian vision of society had ever been published? Surely someone must have written a fictional work describing how a limited-government society could work?

Not the dog-eat-dog, sinister corporation-controlled dystopian worlds imagined by those who do not understand the benefits of competitive markets governed by limited laws, but the world of prosperity and limited – or no – government coercion that most libertarians strive toward.

Sadly, I was unable to find any such fictional imagining. So I set out to write one, loosely modeled on Bellamy’s story. It took me more than two years to complete.

In my book, a progressive professor, rightly concerned with the problems facing the U.S. in 2012 – poverty, bad schools, endless wars and corruption of democracy by

special interests – believes that government could fix these ills, if only government could do more.

But following a fluke accident, he awakens after 150 years in a new nation that has largely resolved these issues – by government doing less. He learns what caused the Decline and Fall of the former United States and how multiple new republics were formed. He wakes up in the Free States of America, a nation of drastically limited government, free markets, civil liberties, and widely shared prosperity.

During the period I worked on my book, I came across Linda and Morris Tannehill's 1970 book, *THE MARKET FOR LIBERTY*, which describes how an anarcho-capitalist society could function. While I was not immediately convinced that we could do entirely without government, I began to understand that we could get along with much less of it than I had previously imagined. And as my views continued to evolve, government seemed less and less necessary as I continued to think and write my book. Toward the end of my novel, I hint at this growing awareness by describing a region of the Free States of America experimenting with no-government, implying that the limited-government FSA might be only a stop on the journey to even greater freedom from coercion.

Do I think that things might happen as I wrote in my book? The United States of America will almost certainly break apart at some point, perhaps before 2050. It has become increasingly clear to me that the U.S. cannot continue in its current iteration; it's just not possible to get 300 million people to agree on so many things – and an increasingly centralized federal government means that we must vote to decide more and more things together, instead of deciding them individually. The result is increasing unhappiness with political results, and decreasing trust in government. This is a good thing for voluntarists. The rancor and hatred inspired by the results of our last presidential election show that it's merely a matter of time until the idea of separation becomes acceptable in the mainstream. Once the U.S. has separated into multiple regions, most of the regions probably will become European-style socialist nations or U.S.-style "socialist-light" nations (and possibly some could descend into dictatorships).

But perhaps one region could become less coercive if enough Americans who appreciate the liberty and prosperity that strictly limited government fosters will congregate there. The most socialist Americans will choose to live in the socialist regions, which will allow freedom-loving Americans to institute more limits on their own government. While the result would not be the completely non-coercive society that voluntarists hope for, it could be a big step in that direction.

And once government no longer controls education, people will be more likely to learn about the dangers posed by coercive government. They will be free to try new ways of helping others, and will be able to see the effectiveness of peaceful, voluntary efforts. This is the environment in which voluntarism can grow. This is my hope, at any rate. I don't know if many people will ever read my book, but I hope that it might eventually influence a few readers, the way the three above-mentioned books have

influenced me.

[Editor's Note: See our review in Whole Number 177, pages 2-4.]

“Anarchist’s Progress”

by Ken Knudson

(From Issue 182, 3rd Quarter 2019)

When I was 12 years old, I shot and killed a wild rabbit with a .22 rifle my parents gave me for my birthday. This so affected me that I resolved never to kill another animal again. Five years later, I carried that idea to what I considered its logical conclusion and became a vegetarian - something unheard of in the ‘fifties in the small Wisconsin town I was raised in.

The following year, in 1959, I became liable for conscription. By law, at that time, every American male was required to register for the draft when he turned 18, even though Korea was behind us and Vietnam not yet a twinkle in Kennedy’s eye. I refused to register (despite a felony penalty of up to 5 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine) and wrote a letter instead to the director of the Selective Service System telling him why. I also sent a copy of that letter to my local newspaper, the Door County ADVOCATE, who printed it, with the inevitable patriotic reaction from furious subscribers. In that same year, I enrolled as a student at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. The university, being a “Land-Grant College,” required all freshman and sophomore male students to follow a course of ROTC (the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps). I refused to attend these classes, wanting nothing to do with an institution whose ultimate purpose is to kill people. The university’s policy at the time was that if you failed a required course twice, you were automatically expelled. Fortunately, there was a committee established to consider exemptions from ROTC due to conscientious objections. Up until that time, the criteria used required (1) a refusal to participate in ALL wars, and (2) the belief in a supreme being guiding that principle. While, as a pacifist, I fulfilled the first requirement, as an atheist, I decidedly did not fulfill the second. Luckily for me, 3 of the 5 members of the exemption committee ignored precedent, bent the rules, and I became the first nonreligious male student in the university’s history up until then to be absolved from ROTC for conscientious reasons.

As I entered university, my political ideas were a vague mishmash of “progressive” views, many of them self-contradictory. I decided to put them on a more rational footing and so I set out to look for a system with fewer internal inconsistencies. What I knew for sure was that I was a pacifist, determined to avoid killing other human beings and dedicated to using non-violent means to achieve social change. With that principle in mind, it became obvious to me that I would have to also

be an anarchist, since pacifism prohibited the use of armed force. And without police or an army, the state couldn't exist. Ergo, I must be an anarchist because I was a pacifist. The latter implied the former!

But what sort of anarchist was I? Clearly the bomb-throwing "propaganda by deed" variety was out of the question. I decided to do a little research at the Memorial Library and came upon a remarkable book: Benjamin Tucker's *INSTEAD OF A BOOK* (1893). This was a real eye-opener for me. Everything he had to say made sense to me and his "plumb-line" logic connected everything together into a system I felt comfortable adopting as my own. Tucker called his philosophy "Individualist Anarchism"; today one might refer to it as "Voluntaryism." That was nearly sixty years ago and I still adhere to its basic tenets to this day.

As a student, graduate student, and eventually junior faculty member at the university, I was active in the anti-war movement. I was the head of the Student Peace Center, which sponsored lectures by pacifist speakers, demonstrated every Hiroshima Day at the Capitol Square, organized the annual "Anti-Military Ball" (to counter the ROTC's "Military Ball"), and distributed pacifist literature at our booth in the Student Union.

When the Vietnam war raised its ugly head, we became even more active, spearheading the student rebellions on campus that led to demonstrations against Dow Chemical, an attempt to make a citizen's arrest for war crimes of the commanding general of nearby Truax Air Force Base, and other activities which were depicted in the Academy Award nominated documentary, "The War at Home." (That film opened by showing me being interviewed before the local IRS office to protest the use of taxes to finance the war.)

Tax resistance became an important means of opposition to the war for me. I was determined not to turn over any money to the vultures at the IRS to prosecute the government's immoral war. To that end, I had worked several part time jobs, earning an income in each one below the threshold whereby withholding tax would be deducted. But with a family to support, I found that method bothersome, so I devised a scheme whereby I could earn a decent income and not have anything withdrawn from my paycheck. I simply declared I had 12 (non-existent) child dependents on my W-4 withholding tax form, a number high enough to prevent the government from withholding any taxes. Then, when April 15th rolled around, I could thumb my nose at the IRS and tell them they weren't going to get any money for that war from me.

That worked for a few years, but in 1966 the attention derived from my annual protests caught up with me and it became apparent that I would either have to go to jail or leave the country. Since I had already experienced a few unpleasant incarcerations for minor offenses and didn't care for the idea of an extended one, I chose to leave the country.

I managed to land a job at CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research in Geneva, Switzerland), where I was employed as a physicist until my retirement in 2003. This was fortunate for me on two counts: first, I was only one of

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three Americans employed by them as a permanent staff member and, second, as an international organization, employees of CERN are considered diplomats and therefore exempt from taxes - thus relieving my conscience in not having to contribute to paying for the many things I object to governments spending money on!

While in Europe, I continued my activities against the war in Vietnam. I penetrated an American army base in Munich and distributed in the mailboxes of GI's a leaflet I composed, asking them to resist their deployment to Vietnam. I was arrested by the MPs and turned over to the German police, who charged me with "encouraging NATO troops to desert" - an offense I never committed since I didn't ask them to desert, but rather to stay within the army and sabotage and otherwise resist. But there apparently wasn't a statute on the books for that, so they charged me with the desertion offense instead. I was tried a few days later at a trial I couldn't understand and found guilty and sentenced to two years in jail - thankfully suspended after agreeing to never return to Germany again!

I wrote articles and letters to a variety of anarchist publications in England ("Freedom" and "Anarchy" in particular) and became a foreign correspondent for the New York-based pacifist magazine, WIN. In 1971 the editor of "Anarchy" magazine, Bill Dwyer, asked me to write a full-issue article for them critiquing communist-anarchism and setting forth the individualist-anarchist alternative. This I did, but unfortunately the magazine folded just before it could publish my essay as its issue number 119. In 1983 the "Voluntaryist" published the chapter on "means" in its sixth issue. Subsequently, the whole essay was finally brought into print by Kevin Slaughter in 2017 in paperback form under the title "A Critique of Anarchist Communism."

I have done little in recent years as an activist for "the cause," although I continue to cling to my anarchist-pacifist beliefs as tenaciously as ever before. I've opted more toward the Max Stirner (1806-1856) line of egoism in my daily life than for the activism which seems hopeless to me now in a world where the state holds all the trump cards (no pun intended).

However, my most recent gambit has been my TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, which appears below. Unfortunately, in today's world, one needs a passport to travel across borders. Without one, I would not be able to visit my children in England or the United States. Therefore, every ten years I would renew my American passport as an expediency to facilitate travel. But a few years ago, I was so disgusted with the United States that I considered finding another country whose passport I could use instead. Having a French wife for over twenty years and also having been a resident of France for even longer than that, I figured I could qualify for French citizenship, and I took the initial steps to that end. It took a couple years of bureaucratic red tape and jumping through ridiculous hoops (like tracking down my parents' original birth certificates from over a century ago), but I eventually succeeded in obtaining French nationality. But before finalizing the operation, I had to fill out a form for the French government declaring whether or not I wanted to renounce my American citizenship.

I checked the box which said “yes,” but when I looked into how I could legally do this, I was amazed to see that it wasn’t at all easy. It would require at least two trips to the U.S. embassy in Paris and all kinds of bureaucratic forms and personal questions I was unwilling to answer. It also requires a \$2,350 renunciation fee - something I would never accept since I do everything I can to keep money out of the hands of those war mongers. So I drafted the following statement instead and carry it with me, along with my French passport, whenever I travel abroad.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Henry David Thoreau informed the world in his classic 1849 pamphlet “On the Duty of Civil Disobedience,” “Know all men by these presents, that I, Henry Thoreau, do not wish to be regarded as a member of any incorporated society which I have not joined.” In particular, Thoreau noted that he had never “joined” the United States and, therefore, he did not feel compelled to obey its laws - which led to his imprisonment for refusing to pay taxes to finance the Mexican war, which he considered immoral.

I, too, have never joined the United States and, despite the accident of being born within what it supposes to be its sovereign borders, I do not consider myself to be a subject of that state. I, therefore, make the following declaration: KNOW ALL MEN AND WOMEN BY THESE PRESENTS, THAT I, KENNETH ALBERT KNUDSON, DO NOT WISH TO BE REGARDED AS A SUBJECT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND, THEREFORE, FORMALLY RENOUNCE MY “CITIZENSHIP” IN THAT COUNTRY. ANY AND ALL “PRIVILEGES” (SUCH AS SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE BENEFITS) AND/OR “DUTIES” (SUCH AS TAXES AND MILITARY SERVICE) IMPLIED BY SUCH CITIZENSHIP, I EQUALLY REJECT.

Kenneth Knudson
Annecy-le-Vieux, France
February 29, 2016.

How I Became a Voluntaryist

by an Anonymous Lawyer
(From Issue 185, 2nd Quarter 2020)

I was born in the early 1970s and raised on a farm in the Midwest. In public school I was taught that the State was a necessary part of life without which we would have chaos and be invaded by other countries. I learned that democracy was the ideal form of government and voting was the duty of every good citizen. It took several decades before I recognized the true nature of the State.

The seeds of my doubt about the State were unknowingly planted by my father.

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He was a Republican, but he had an anti-authority, libertarian streak that he passed on to me. He often said that “you can’t legislate morality,” nor was he particularly fond of law enforcement, or, for that matter, public school officials. He wasn’t a fan of the State, but it was only because he believed that the wrong people were being elected.

During my teen years, I was a political junkie. I watched the news each night and was convinced that the world’s problems could be solved if more Republicans were elected and the U.S. military received more funding. I cringe now to think about it, but I was excited to vote for George H.W. Bush.

College was my ticket off the farm, so I applied and was accepted to a state college. It was there that I first heard the term libertarian and began identifying politically as a libertarian. A liberal professor caused me to reconsider my belief that U.S. military intervention is the solution to the world’s problems. Although I didn’t join the Libertarian Party in college, I started voting for Libertarian Party candidates. Despite my new-found belief in a smaller State, I barely avoided joining the military when I was caught up in the drumbeat to war before the first Gulf War. I was one signature away from joining the Army and going to Officer Candidate School after college but nagging doubts about whether that’s what I wanted to do with my life and a high school friend, who said in passing that I should be a lawyer, changed my plans. I backed out of joining the Army and started focusing on admission to law school.

Law school was a different world. Professors and students assumed without debate that the State was necessary in all parts of life to force people to do what was “right.” My professors presented the legal system as a necessary tool of the State in which judges diligently applied case precedent to disputes to arrive at fair, well-reasoned opinions. Most of my classmates were liberal and believed that the State was a benevolent force for good. I learned to keep my libertarian thoughts to myself.

After law school, I joined a law firm that represented many government employees who had been retaliated against for whistle-blowing. Those cases opened my eyes to the vindictiveness of a bureaucrat scorned. I was idealistic (and naive) enough to believe that justice would prevail. Federal judges knocked that idealism out of me. I quickly learned it was a legal system, not a justice system.

9/11 came and went, and my concern about the erosion of constitutional rights deepened. I formally joined the Libertarian Party thinking that would make a difference. It didn’t, but it did introduce me to the non-aggression principle, which I’m sure I heard back in my college days but had ignored.

I started my own practice, and began dealing with even more bureaucrats and politicians. My view that the State merely needed the right actors to work properly took a beating. Finally, after working in and around the State for several years and seeing “how the sausage gets made,” I could no longer avoid the fact that the State causes much more harm than good. Its purpose is not to solve problems, prevent disputes, or even to protect us, but to perpetuate its existence and increase its power (and thereby the power of those people who form the State).

Election after election changed nothing and only underscored in my mind that

electoral politics is a waste of time. There had to be a better way. This started me delving more deeply into libertarian topics, including anarcho-capitalism, and listening to libertarian-oriented radio shows.

While listening to a radio show called “Free Talk Live,” I first heard the term “voluntaryism.” I started reading about voluntaryism online and that led me to voluntaryist.com. I devoured the contents of the site.

Voluntaryism makes sense to me. The majority voting one way or the other doesn't make a wrong right. Electoral politics is simply dressing up violence in a socially acceptable manner. I'm embarrassed now that it took me so long to discover the beautiful, peaceful doctrine of voluntaryism. Better late than never.

How I Became an Anarchist

by Louis E. Carabini

(From Issue 186, 3rd Quarter 2020)

[Editor's Note: This article is a lengthy excerpt from the author's "Introduction" to his *LIBERTY, DICTA & FORCE* (Auburn: Mises Institute, 2018).]

In the summer of 1961, I was returning from a fishing trip with my friend George Vermillion. We were both in our early thirties. George was a pharmacist and I worked for Parke Davis, a pharmaceutical company. We had been fishing in Mexico, and George was driving us back home to Long Beach, California - a trip that would take about three hours. During the drive, I told him (it was more like a confession) I had never registered to vote and was embarrassed about not knowing the difference between a Democrat and a Republican. I thought it was time I learned about politics and joined the crowd, but most of all I wanted to avoid embarrassment when questioned about my political affiliation.

My main interest outside of family affairs was science; politics and economics were too esoteric for my taste. Other than the required courses, my classes in college were in the biological sciences. George was the perfect person to ask about politics, given that his father, George “Red” Vermillion, a Democrat, had been the mayor of Long Beach from 1954 to 1957 and his mother was the president of the Long Beach Republican Club. Imagine growing up in that household! So, George began explaining things to me. He talked nonstop for well over an hour, and I don't recall asking any questions along the way. When he finished, I told him I should become a Republican because personal responsibility and free enterprise struck a chord with me. I felt relieved that I could now at least call myself something: a Republican. (I should mention George was a Republican; it seems his mother got the best of him.)

A few weeks later, George invited me to a meeting where Assemblyman Joe Shell was speaking about his campaign against Richard Nixon in the California

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Republican gubernatorial primary race. I went to the meeting where there were twenty or thirty people in attendance. As Shell spoke about what he would do if he were elected governor, he touched upon some of the same thoughts George had expressed to me during our trip. After he spoke, he took time to meet with each of us. When he got to me, he asked where I lived. When I told him, he asked if I would be willing to run his campaign in that part of Orange County. I gulped and said yes. Within minutes, a newspaper reporter and photographer had me shaking hands with Joe, flanked by the California and US flags. That was my introduction to politics, of which I still knew next to nothing. The following day, the picture was in a local newspaper. How proud could I be? Just a few weeks earlier, I hadn't known the difference between a Democrat and a Republican, and now I was running a local campaign for a conservative Republican. No sooner had I escaped one embarrassment than I found myself right back in another. I didn't have a clue about what to do as a local campaign manager. I was on a crash course to learn about what it meant to be not just a Republican, but a conservative one.

As a local campaign manager, I had to recruit workers and try to woo voters to our side. Recruiting workers was easy because I only solicited people who already considered themselves conservative Republicans. Most were around my age, and getting together with like-minded people who shared a common agenda - with dinners and cocktail parties thrown in - was a fun and stimulating experience. In the process, I learned from my recruits, who had already read many conservative books and essays, which they either gave me or told me about. After doing some reading and becoming somewhat comfortable with my newly gained knowledge, I was ready to spread the word and persuade voters.

Because the internet and PCs were not yet available, all campaign materials were in print form. We simply delivered the literature door to door. I even commandeered my two sons - ages five and seven at the time - to fill their wagon with literature, which they distributed in the neighborhood. They eventually got to know by precinct number where their friends lived. The campaign went well, with hopes of an upset. However, when the final votes were counted in June 1962, Shell had lost to Nixon, 35 percent to 65 percent. Over the next two years, I became involved in various other conservative Republican campaigns and, in the process, achieved a perfect record of zero to whatever.

At some point while campaigning, someone asked me a question that put me on a different course: "If your free enterprise system is so great, then what about schools, roads, laws, and justice?" I don't remember my answer, but that question was just too simple and fundamental for me not to have considered it when I first got involved in politics. I would like to think the question was at the back of my mind from the beginning and that I had just hoped no one would ask. More likely, though, I had feared the answers might cause me to doubt, or even reject, the efficacy of free markets. Nevertheless, there I stood, shifting from where I was a few months earlier when I had wondered, "What is the difference between a Republican and a

Democrat?” to now wondering, “Is there a difference?” After all, neither party suggested that markets free of government intervention would be able to provide all goods and services more effectively than politically regulated markets could.

Why would nature’s feedback favor the efficacy of free markets for some enterprises and not others? If nature’s feedback favored the efficacy of free (politically unrestricted) enterprises A, B, and C, why would it disfavor the efficacy of free enterprises X, Y, and Z, unless there was something peculiar or unique about them? If a free, unrestricted market was capable of delivering fresh milk to my front door, as was the case when I was a kid, it would seem natural that such a market would also be capable of delivering mail to my front door if allowed to do so, which was and is still not the case. But then, maybe both enterprises would fare better as government-regulated markets.

For nature to be inconsistent seemed implausible. Either a free market is a more efficacious social arrangement than a politically restricted market for all enterprises or no enterprises. Double standards seemed unnatural. I simply adopted the free-market alternative as more universally efficacious because my inherent bias drew me there, which was reinforced by the concern that if regulated markets did lead to greater efficiency and productivity, such would hold true for the most minute market exchanges.

In addition to my free-market bias, I regarded my life as my sole responsibility. Partial responsibility in which others become responsible for part of my life, and I responsible for part of theirs, was incomprehensible.

Around 1962, the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) came to my attention with its published collection *CLICHÉS OF SOCIALISM*. The collection consisted of a couple dozen or so essays printed on 8½ x 11 inch sheets, each on a socialist cliché. The essays described the failures of socialist policies and the fallacious reasoning behind the clichés. Although I was excited to find some justification for free markets, the responses to these clichés did not tell me why free markets work better or even why socialism doesn’t work. Nonetheless, *CLICHÉS OF SOCIALISM* and other FEE materials led me to books and essays that kept my search alive. Discovering the why obviates the need to analyze every enterprise by every group of actors in every part of the world at every given time. Scientific truths are universal, necessary, and certain. If applying the free market to food production would lead to better food supplies in Oregon, the same should hold true in Zimbabwe - now, one hundred years from now, or one hundred years ago. There are underlying principles of nature that govern matter in motion, irrespective of the enterprise, actors involved, location of the event, or time of occurrence.

Also around 1962, I learned about the Free Enterprise Institute (FEI), a newly formed, for-profit educational organization headquartered in Los Angeles and directed by Andrew Galambos (1924–97), an astrophysicist. Art Sperry, an anesthesiologist I had met as a Parke Davis representative, organized an FEI course given by Galambos in Long Beach. I signed up for the premier V-100 course, “The Science of Volition,”

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which was conducted in fifteen weekly three-hour sessions. There were about twenty people in attendance, many of whom were physicians. This was exactly what I had been looking for because it offered a scientific approach to markets and society. ...

I escaped the political box in 1964, and the views expressed here come from outside the world of politics and government. I invite you to escape that box as well. If you have already done so, I hope you will find further reinforcement here for having made that decision.

The thrust of this book is not about changing public policies, limiting or abolishing government, “fixing” America, or trying to change the world. Nor is this book about a crisis or the notion that if we don’t do something soon, civilization will collapse. I hope to convey an appreciation of liberty as the natural common sense way to view the social world and interact within it. The inherent moral compass that guides our behavior in private matters can serve us just as well in public matters.

While political governments are constructs of disutility that cannot serve a useful social purpose, I consider political intervention to limit or abolish them as counterproductive since such activity endorses the use of dicta and force, which is the very reason political governments are constructs of disutility in the first place. Advancing social ideas that do not demand obedience or compliance requires far more personal patience than simply forcing others to comply via the political ballot box. Nevertheless, by way of volition, the widely held idea that dicta and force can serve a useful purpose will eventually fade into backward thinking in the so-called public sector as it has in the private sector. Time, nature, reason, and the human spirit will see to that. Irrespective of good intentions or the approval by consensus, nature’s unrelenting feedback will gradually drive ruling political authorities to extinction.

The Wisdom of Bob LeFevre

by Carl Watner

(From Issue 158, 3rd Quarter 2013)

At the outset, I must admit some personal bias. My intellectual acquaintance with Bob LeFevre goes back at least as far as January 1972, when I first ordered a copy of his book, *THIS BREAD IS MINE*. I first met Bob at the Long Beach, California, Future of Freedom Conference in October 1983. Thereafter, until his death, Bob was a key part of my life. He helped publish the first book of voluntaryist essays to which I contributed. Titled *NEITHER BULLETS NOR BALLOTS*, it came out in December 1983. In October 1984, Bob approached me about writing his biography, which was eventually published in 1988 under the title *ROBERT LEFEVRE -TRUTH IS NOT A HALFWAY PLACE*. In March 1985, Bob and I both attended a week-long session of Freedom School given by Kevin Cullinane. Bob was present at my wedding in

Campobello, South Carolina, on May 3, 1986. He died a few days later while driving home to California with his wife, Loy.

I knew Bob well during the last three years of his seventy-five-year life span. What kind of person was he? What were his intellectual roots? What was the nature of Bob LeFevre? What wisdom did he share with us in this book you are about to read?

Bob was always the gentlemen. Karl Hess remembered him for his “majestic civility,” always respectful of those who differed with him. As he put it in the “Foreword” to my LeFevre biography, “[I] was always mindful of Bob’s great patience, the truly caring nature of his advice, and finally, the clear rightness of his principles.” For one who only knew Bob in his later years, it was surprising for me to learn that he had such a checkered professional life. It ran the gamut from being a supporter of the “I Am” movement in the last half of the 1930s, a radio announcer, an army captain during World War II, a self-employed entrepreneur, a would-be politician, a newspaper editorial writer, and finally founder and primary instructor at Freedom School.

This book, *THE NATURE OF MAN AND HIS GOVERNMENT*, was a product of these last two phases of his life. The idea for the book originated with Jim Gipson of Caxton Press, who suggested to Bob that he prepare a step-by-step explanation of the doctrine of liberty as taught at Freedom School. All but Chapter 6, “National Defense,” were first written as editorials and appeared in the Colorado Springs, Colorado, *GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH* between January 5, and January 15, 1958. They were then collected and published as a small book in 1959, with an original Introduction contributed by Bob’s friend, Rose Wilder Lane.

The most significant influence on Bob during his formative years was his mother, Ethel. Better known as Bonnie, she came from Quaker stock, and had always taught him to question the rightness or wrongness of his conduct. She instilled in him the idea that “truth” whatever it was and wherever it led him - was the most important thing in life. She also taught him not to be afraid of being different, to tell the truth, to work like hell, and to smile. She showed him how to search out the truth, and then to act on it according to the best dictates of his conscience.

Bob was active in Republican politics during the early 1950s, but he finally proved to himself that “politics was not the answer.” In November 1954, he began work as an editorial writer for Harry Hoiles, publisher of the *GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH* in Colorado Springs. It was here that he began to formulate a complete freedom philosophy. Harry’s father, R.C. Hoiles, was founder of the Freedom Newspapers, which were once described “as the greatest money-making device ever put together in support of human liberty and human dignity.”

Both Hoiles, father and son, wanted someone who could write consistently on the subject of human freedom. Until he resigned on January 15, 1965, Bob worked with both of them, hammering out the libertarian philosophy of the Freedom Newspapers. Nearly all of his editorial output centered around various aspects of human liberty and the free market. Bob had previously read Rose Wilder Lane’s *DISCOVERY OF*

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FREEDOM, and had met Leonard Read and Baldy Harper of the free-market-oriented Foundation for Economic Education. Baldy Harper, who had taught economics at Cornell University, was the first person Bob ever knew who questioned the basic assumption that human beings require a political government. However, it was the Hoiles' insistence on building an integrated philosophy of freedom that made Bob realize "limited government" was an oxymoron and that it was redundant to speak of "unlimited government."

Both Harry and R.C. had a significant impact on Bob's thinking. They exposed him to the idea of abandoning reliance on limited government, and replacing it with competing defense agencies and other private service-providers to carry out the many functions of government. As they saw it, individuals needed food, shelter, clothing, protection, etc., but providing these necessities did not require a monopolistic government. In the late 1940s or early 1950s, Frank Chodorov pointed out to R.C. "[T]here was no such thing as voluntary taxation." R. C., who had been a proponent of voluntary funding of government, then concluded that he was "against all taxes." What he came to favor was free-enterprise associations or voluntary defense companies that would sell protection of life and property, much like an insurance company. As Bob asked, is there a way to "devise a tool for our protection which will be paid for only by those who want it, and in whatever amounts the payers deem best?"

Bob's editorial writing, as well as his teaching at Freedom School, propelled him towards the conclusion that there was nothing that government could do that the private sector could not do more efficiently. Free enterprise, which rested on the consent of the customer, was certainly more moral than government- provided services. As he wrote in an April 7, 1961 editorial: "We are convinced that when it comes to things people want, the market place can do the job less expensively and better than government can do it. And this includes the job of protecting life and property, providing roads, schools, hospitals, cemeteries, airfields, and scores of other things which governments presently provide." Some called Bob an anarchist for rejecting government, but he disagreed. He preferred the labels "voluntaryist" or "autarchist" to differentiate himself from those anarchists who rejected private property.

It was in this milieu and under the influence of the Hoiles that Bob wrote these editorials on the nature of man and his government. Essentially Bob saw government as a tool created by men to help protect themselves from invasion and aggression by others. However, this tool which had been intended "as a safeguard for human freedom and dignity" was ill-designed from the start because it depended on the use of violence. Shouldn't peaceful individuals be left alone to protect themselves as they saw fit? Wasn't government acting in an aggressive manner when it forced people to patronize its services? As Bob observed, government "is an instrument of force and coercion." Even if it were to be voluntarily funded, as R.C. had once advocated, its violent and compulsory nature still remained. Those who preferred to have another

protection agency serve them were prevented from doing so, and those who preferred no protection, or to provide their own, were not allowed to withdraw their patronage.

The essence of Bob's philosophy was taken from Rose Wilder Lane's dictum: "Freedom is self-control." Harking back to the attraction of the "I Am" movement, Bob understood that human energy can only be controlled by the individual. This means that each of us has the decision-making power over his own life. We decide whether we vote or not, whether we respect other people's property or steal, whether we lie or tell the truth, whether we forgive or seek forceful restitution, whether we deal with our fellow man violently or peacefully.

Bob shared a common viewpoint with the Stoics of ancient Athens and Rome. Like them, he viewed human freedom as the absolute dominion of the individual over his own will. This meant that man, by his very nature, was free, and that there was only one long-term way of improving society. If individual men would conduct themselves morally, then society, a mere gathering of men, would be virtuous. In short, Bob saw that if one took care of the means, the end would take care of itself. Bob's idea behind teaching the fundamentals of liberty was not to change anybody. He had neither the authority nor the ability to do so. His aim was to inspire each person to achieve freedom in the right way; the rest was up to the individual.

Bob was a truth-seeker, a man of wisdom. Part of his greatness was his ability to stand alone intellectually, another was his consistency. He insisted on thinking ideas through to their conclusions. If there was a choice between being popular and holding to the truth, he always chose the truth. He knew that truth is not a halfway place. Cyrano de Bergerac's maxim, "Be admirable in all things," could have been Bob's own personal motto. Bob thought that we shouldn't spend much time on destroying evil ideas, but rather devote ourselves to nourishing good ideas and putting them into practice. His task was to understand, to comprehend, and to make allowances for the failures of others. Only to himself did he insist on total self-control and complete self-discipline. Bob was a man who admirably achieved those goals in his own life, and it is that spirit of reasonableness, honesty, and truth-seeking that shall always epitomize Bob for me.

As you read this book, keep Bob's perspective in mind. As he put it, "wisdom is possible only when the individual has learned to control himself." Whether you have long been exposed to libertarian thinking or are newly introduced to voluntarism, this will help you understand Bob's quest for consistency and his conclusion that political government is inherently an invasive institution.

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[Author's Note: This article was written in September 2012 as an Introduction to the e-book version of Robert LeFevre's *THE NATURE OF MAN AND HIS GOVERNMENT*.]

If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.
Gandhi, HARIJAN, February 11, 1939.

There is no greater fallacy than the belief that aims and purposes are one thing, while methods and tactics are another. This conception is a potent menace to social regeneration. All human experience teaches that methods and means cannot be separated from the ultimate aim. The means employed become, through individual habit and social practice, part and parcel of the final purpose; they influence it, modify it, and presently the aims and means become identical. ... The whole history of man is continuous proof of the maxim that to divest one's methods of ethical concepts means to sink into the depths of utter demoralization.

Emma Goldman, MY FURTHER
DISILLUSIONMENT IN RUSSIA, Garden City,
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“Afterword,” Section IV, paragraph 8 of 13.