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# The Voluntaryist

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Vol. 1 No. 3

*"If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself."*

February 1983

## WHY I QUIT THE LIBERTARIAN PARTY

by Burgess Laughlin

Between December 1979 and November 1982, I invested thousands of dollars and over a thousand hours in the Libertarian Party. I volunteered my time as a state committee member, newsletter editor, campaign manager, county chair and active candidate for state-wide office.

In November 1982, after a year of doubts, five months of campaigning, and weeks of analyzing my electoral and partisan experiences, I concluded that electoral politics is wrong in principle and ineffective, even counterproductive, in practice.

The insights I gained during my three-year involvement with the L.P. led inevitably to my resignation.

### WHO I AM

I am 38 years old, a publications consultant (providing writing, editing and other publications services for electronics companies) and an author of two books on the black market.

In 1962, Ayn Rand's writings led me from statism to minarchy. In 1971, the writings of Harry Browne, Murray Rothbard and Lysander Spooner opened me to the idea of a stateless society. However, in 1979, a desire to "do something" led me to join the LP and begin voting. In 1982, I was the LP candidate for the position of Oregon Labor Commissioner, an almost purely coercive administrative and law enforcement position.

### INSIGHTS INTO THE LP

Several of my political experiences raised questions about the LP itself. I coordinated the 1982 Tax Day protest at Portland's main U.S. Post Office. I admonished two protesters that they were misrepresenting the LP when they said that the LP doesn't oppose all taxes, only the federal income tax ("because it is unconstitutional," they said).

A month later, one of those two men was selected to be the Oregon LP's gubernatorial candidate. Except for token, last minute opposition from me, he was the only nominee. (Besides me, the only other LP nominee for the Labor Commissioner position was a man who supports land-planning laws.)

In the last week of the campaign, just before a televised candidates' forum, the gubernatorial candidate told me he was considering filing suit to force TV stations, radio stations and newspapers to give equal coverage to LP candidates.

Why does the LP tolerate candidates who advocate coercion? Because the LP's need for candidates is greater than its need for consistency with its principles.

### INSIGHTS INTO THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Many LP members recognize that they have little chance of directly reducing or eliminating government. Their rationale for membership is that LP activism is an effective way to educate nonlibertarians. I now believe that electoral politics is a very ineffective and inefficient educational tool.

Electoral politics is an ineffective educational tool because the people in the electoral audience are most likely to be statist. They pay attention to electoral politics because they think they benefit from government coercion. The people who are disgusted with government in general and electoral politics in particular are unlikely to listen to campaign speeches and ads. Promoting libertarian ideas to most voters is like advertising milk to alcoholics.

Electoral politics is inefficient as well as ineffective. Candidates and campaign workers spend most of their time organizing, fundraising, complying with electoral requirements and performing other housekeeping activities. They spend very little time talking to people who don't already agree with them.

The theme of my campaign was abolition of the office I was running for. Throughout most of my campaign I was treated respectfully by even the most thoroughly statist politicians and their supporters. A short haircut, a sparkling personality and an expensive suit helped, but I sensed some other factor at work.

In September, I realized why I was "respectable": in spite of my abolitionist ideas, statist didn't see me as a threat. I was playing their game by their rules. Even if I were to win the election and work with the Oregon legislature to abolish my office, I would still be accepting the system for what it is: a system which acquires and dispenses coercive power through the electoral system.

With that realization, I started thinking again about "sanction of the victim," a concept I learned first from Ayn Rand's novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, and from Harry Browne's book, *How I Found Freedom in an Unfree World*. In the next to the last month of the campaign, I began rereading some of their works because I respect the clarity of their writing and the effectiveness of their ideas. Their writings reminded me that I was helping the very people who were oppressing me.

Electoral politics is the government-approved way to change government. That insight was enough, by itself, to tell me that there is no chance to achieve more freedom in my life through electoral politics except occasionally, temporarily and very inefficiently.

Many governments that attempt to rule strong-willed, independent people try to involve those people in government activities, at least nominally. People involved with "the system" won't actually abolish it if they are part of it, any more than they would think of scuttling their own life boat.

At that point I asked myself, "But haven't other groups achieved large measures of freedom through the ballot box?" In September, I began reading about the history of the movement to abolish slavery in the U.S.

Wasn't that movement, I thought, a shining example of successful electoral politics? I quickly found the answer: no, electoral politics played almost no role in emancipating slaves. When the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, it was grotesquely ineffective and cynical. It was a weapon of war, not a tool of freedom. After the Civil War, blacks (as well as others) were still the victim of systematic coercion.

Before the Civil War, thousands of slaves reached greater freedom, not through legislative fiat, but through their own initiative and the courage and enterprise of loosely organized

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## The Voluntaryist

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### EDITORIAL

## CLIMBING OFF THE BANDWAGON

*Two politicians, one of whom is an anarchist, have more in common than two anarchists, one of whom is a politician.*

If I persuaded every anarchist in the Libertarian Party to drop out without demonstrating to them a better method of expressing anarchism, it would not be a victory. As a Voluntaryist, I not only want to convince them that politics breeds politics but to induce them to explore and implement strategies consistent with libertarianism. Because non-political anarchists (excuse the redundancy) are often accused of gratuitously sniping at the L.P. without offering constructive alternatives, I want to explain why it is important for Voluntaryism, in its initial stages, to attack the L.P.

Voluntaryists observe that politics will not bring freedom any more than violence will bring peace. It is sadly necessary to stress this fact because so many anarchists have lost sight of it. Anarchists are the natural constituency, the natural recruiting ground, of Voluntaryism. It is assumed that, just as atheists reject God, anarchists reject the State, and would welcome a framework of theory and strategy aimed at delegitimizing and assaulting the system rather than working within it as the system itself encourages them to do. But anarchists—the supposed bulwark of opposition to the State—currently spend most of their time exhorting people to vote and to run for office. Those anarchists who object that *no one* has the right to political power, that the purpose of anarchism is to abolish the office, not merely replace the face behind the desk, are waved aside as 'negative' or 'naive'. However committed these political anarchists are to a far away vision of the stateless society, from their day-to-day actions there is no way to distinguish them from any other power seekers.

As a Voluntaryist, I am in the almost comical position of telling anarchists there is something fundamentally wrong with politics, of explaining that they cannot be clear steady voices for anarchism while wearing a Clark For President button in their lapels. It is only after I present a solid theoretical case for Voluntaryism and answer objections that I can comfortably move on to the myriad of strategies which will fill the void left by electoral politics. (These strategies will be examined to an increasing degree in upcoming issues.)

Anarchists often claim to be in the L.P. simply because there is no other vehicle for libertarianism. I am suspicious of this argument for two reasons. First, the history of libertarianism and other radical movements is replete with examples of effective non-political, non-violent strategy. Anyone acquainted with the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, Gandhianism, or the history of Nineteenth Century libertarianism cannot honestly claim there is no other

way. If they are not familiar with these movements, they are speaking from ignorance and should educate themselves.

Secondly, I have too often heard the 'no alternative' argument used to dismiss moral objections in an off-hand manner as though morality had nothing to do with the real world. This attitude is the death of libertarianism. The strength of libertarianism is precisely what is being dismissed; namely, that it is moral and it is just and no strategic question should ever take precedence over this.

(Fortunately, there is no dichotomy between the moral and the strategic, for strategy is essential. It is the method by which one translates abstract theory into concrete action and feels the principles at work.)

But why reject politics altogether? Why not view it as simply another method within a broad framework of strategy? The obvious response is because it is inconsistent with libertarian principle, but there is another reason to emphasize the moral rejection of politics. Politics is seductive. It offers the illusion of quick, easy victory within a respectable vehicle. There is rousing campaign rhetoric, straw hat enthusiasm and the enviable advantage of an objective measure of success or failure—namely, a vote total. Anarchists who battle over an L.P. plank in a platform that even most libertarians haven't read can go to bed feeling they have accomplished something concrete. These respectable radicals can draw on the feedback and hype accompanying electoral politics.

In contrast, many Voluntaryist strategies, such as education and non-violent resistance, are long-term and demand courage and patience without always offering an objective measure of short-term success. Voluntaryism has only two advantages: it is correct and it actually can deliver what it promises. These long-term advantages pale, however, beside the quick-kill benefits advertised by politics. Only by fully realizing that politics and politicians are a moral/strategic deadend will anarchists be induced to abandon the quick bandwagon route to liberty and settle down for the long, hard fight it is going to be.

Of course some people still claim that, although the L.P. *looks* like a political party, *talks* like a political party and *acts* like a political party, it is really an educational vehicle. To them I offer the Rothbardian insight—follow the money. When the intentions of an institution or individual are muddy, a sure way to clear up the picture is to follow the cash flow and see what it says about demonstrated preference. I challenge any anarchist to compare the fortune poured into political goals with the money directed toward education and then to repeat that the L.P. is educational. Follow the money.

Inevitably, the rejoinder is that politics *is* education. But with what message? That libertarianism is just another political party? How can anarchists oppose the State when the crux of their message is 'elect my man to office'? This is hypocrisy. I will oppose the claim of a libertarian to the office of senator as tenaciously as I oppose that of a democrat or a republican. Anarchists must realize that a political party cannot educate people toward anarchism; all it can do is destroy the meaning of anarchism.

I do not enjoy tearing people or institutions apart. It is because I understand the necessity of breaking the anarchist fascination with politics that *The Voluntaryist* editorials will repeat so often the same theme—government cannot bring freedom. Politics cannot bring anarchism. Only by convincing people of this insight will they be willing to adopt the long-range strategies toward which Voluntaryism is directed.

No one said anarchism was going to be easy, only that it is right.

*Wendy McElroy*

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## ROOTS OF THE MOVEMENT

"How To Become A Teacher" by Robert LeFevre is the first article in this series. Robert LeFevre is a pioneer. As an author and journalist, he has been a bulwark of anti-political libertarianism and an example of the personal integrity and good will possible within the movement. Robert LeFevre's most striking accomplishment, however, was the establishment of Rampart Freedom School (1957) in Colorado. The list of Rampart's teachers and students reads like an honor roll of contemporary libertarians. The following article explains the genesis of Rampart Freedom School.

History is not just the past, it is also the present. We are living through one of the most dynamic periods of libertarian history and, knowing how easily a heritage can be lost, *The Voluntaryist* herewith initiates a "Roots of the Movement" series aimed at preserving the movement's recent ancestry.

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## HOW TO BECOME A TEACHER

by Robert LeFevre

If the truth be known, I never intended being a professor, instructor or teacher.

My father spoke disparagingly of teachers. He had carved an extraordinary record as a scholar at MacAlister College in St. Paul, winning a Bachelor of Science degree with an "A" average in three years. He was openly disdainful of the role played by instructors and it was easy for me to agree. I became a college drop-out.

After World War II, and as bizarre an array of adventures as any man ever had, I found myself living in Falcon Lair, the beautiful home Rudolph Valentino had constructed. (He built the place for love, as the story had it, seeking approval from his enamorata, Natasha Rambova.)

The property dominates a knoll on Bella Drive, part way up Benedict Canyon, and high above Beverly Hills. Living there with my wife, Loy, and our small son, Tom, together with several members of the "San Francisco Group," I had my first opportunity to take stock of my life and to realize fully the width and breadth of the ignorance with which I was bountifully supplied.

I had made a great deal of money in business. I had also lost a great deal of money. I had enlisted in the Army in 1942 filled with noble thoughts of helping to free the world from totalitarianism. The Army of my experience had proved a far cry from the visions which had prompted my volunteer status.

I had imagined that the government of the United States embodied all that was good and worthwhile within the nation; that the state and local governments existed to serve the public; and that "the American way of life" consisted of the right of every American to earn his own way, to own any amount or kind of property he could honestly acquire and to manage that property as he pleased so long as he refrained from injuring anyone.

I had learned, bitterly and reluctantly, that the Army was filled with officers, many of whom hoped and even labored for a continuation of the war. They had never experienced such pay, power and prestige and dreaded the war's termination. Not all, or course, but an astonishingly large percentage were in this category.

I had also found that the government of the nation was abundantly supplied with opportunists of the first water who were actively dedicated to the expansion of federal power and who feared that peace might shrink the power base from which they flaunted their petty authority.

I had discovered to my dismay that state and local governments were manned by thousands of officials whose task was to bully and harass individuals for the presumed good of an unidentified and amorphous entity called "society." And I had also learned that there was a threat to the "American way of life" embodied in "commies" and "fellow-travelers" who had somehow made a home in the nation's woodwork and, like termites, were gnawing away to convert us into a country where the government owned and/or operated the major means of production and distribution and the population at large would become a nation of sheep, docile and tame. The lure to this surrender of independence lay in a clever variation on the ancient theme of tyranny: "Me big, me rule; you small, you obey." While submitting to each new political ukase each new dupe was being fed, housed, clothed, educated and medicated at the expense of the taxpayers.

I had been shocked and then disgusted while in Europe as a Captain in the Army Corps, to find that the American GI wanted only one thing: an ending of the war so he could return home to his family. But, offsetting this natural and reasonable expectation there existed an active conspiracy, of which I became a part, wherein as early as 1943 plans were made to keep large bodies of troops in many foreign countries indefinitely. The argument was that a return of such a large number of persons all competing for jobs would cause economic chaos and massive unemployment in the United States.

Why hadn't I learned some of these realities while in school? I knew nothing about communism. I had learned nonsense about our various governments. The fact was that I had bought a set of ideals which didn't square with the facts of life as I found them. I was pathetically and profoundly an ignorant man. I had been forced into school by law; I had learned enough to get passing grades; I had been able to achieve success in business, but not able to hang onto that success. Frankly, I was appalled at my lack of preparation for real life and by the enormous number of things I didn't know.

But now circumstances favored me. I was essentially unemployed which meant I had time on my hands. Actually, I was caretaker and spokesman for the San Francisco Group and the daily expenses of myself and family were being met so long as I resided at Falcon Lair. So I had an opportunity to pick up some of the knowledge I had failed to acquire while in school.

During 1949 and part of 1950, I concentrated on reading. Books were sent to me and I made frequent trips to the Beverly Hills library in addition. Sitting in the magnificent paneled library that had once been Valentino's, I poured over histories, philosophies, and works on political theory including Marx and the stable of socialist writers who embellished communist ideology. I also studied economic arguments, primarily those favoring a free market. Slowly and painfully, I began to put a few pieces together.

One set of writings impressed me in particular. A man named Leonard Read had organized a Foundation at Irvington-on-Hudson in New York. He had been the president of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and enjoyed an unblemished reputation. The Foundation (known as FEE . . . Foundation for Economic Education) was issuing a series of tracts, which, in simple, understandable terms spelled out logical and scientific reasons why private enterprise is superior to a centrally controlled system.

Most of the members of the San Francisco Group were conservative in their leanings. Others of my friends and acquaintances, also mostly conservative, believed that the threat of communism came either from Russia or from the Jews. In-

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deed, in some circles the words were interchangeable. Communism, Russia and Jew spelled the same things.

Read and his associates had seen through that and they helped me to sort things out sensibly. None helped quite so much as the communist writers themselves, who were certainly the authorities for what they sought to accomplish. While it was true that Russia had "gone Communist," the fact was that the Russian economy was in pitiful shape, not because of the Russian people but because of the communist theories their leaders, including Stalin, were forcing them to follow.

While it was clearly true that certain leading communists and fellow travelers were Jewish, it was equally true that some of the most brilliant and vocal anti-communists were also Jewish.

I was so favorably impressed with the output from FEE that I obtained the necessary time to travel to New York for a visit to Irvington-on-Hudson. The organization was housed there in a magnificent old mansion where Read had assembled some of the finest brains in the country. Among the intellectuals gathered there at one time or another were such persons as Ludwig von Mises, Ayn Rand, Frank Chodorov, Suzanne LaFollette, John Chamberlain, James Rogers . . . the names with credits and credentials would fill this page. On a daily basis, these and others met to discuss ideas dealing with economics and politics. Out of these discussions came a shower of pamphlets and a book called "The Mainspring of Human Progress." This was soon followed by two other books, "The Law," by Frederic Bastiat, and "Liberty, a Path to It's Recovery," written by F.A. (Baldy) Harper.

At FEE, I met and talked briefly with Read who quickly assigned me to Dr. Harper for further discussions.

Dr. Harper was the complete scholar. He was thoughtful, gentle and profound. Also, he had an ample supply of hair which caused me to ask about his nickname. He revealed that his students at Cornell University where he had served with distinction for years, always called him that. I never did learn why. But I was so deeply impressed by his observations that I didn't press the point. Hair or not, he and I had an almost instant rapport.

As of this moment I hadn't read any of the three books bearing the FEE imprint but I had devoured everything else they had issued. Baldy refused to take credit for his own book. He insisted that it was as much the product of the other scholars at FEE as it was his. It had apparently emerged, at least to some degree, out of the discussions which had been held.

When I finally took my departure my head was swimming with new ideas. From that time on I corresponded with Baldy regularly. He had planted a number of seeds, some of which took root.

Back in Beverly Hills, I read his book and also "The Law" by Bastiat. Before I could start on the larger work, "Mainspring," Ruth Dazey, one of the members of the San Francisco Group who also served as my secretary, brought me another. It was "Discovery of Freedom," by Rose Wilder Lane.

"You should read this book first, Bob," she said to me. Mainspring is a paraphrase of Discovery. People who have read both say the Discovery is really better."

Currently, nearly everyone is familiar with the television program, "Little House on the Prairie." This is a series, put together by Roger MacBride and based on the early life of Rose Wilder Lane. To tie this apparent irrelevancy into this recitation, the Ingalls family of the series included a daughter name Laura. In real life, Laura Ingalls married a man named

Wilder and Rose Wilder was their daughter. Later Rose married a man named Lane, hence, the name Rose Wilder Lane. Laura Ingalls, Rose's mother, is the author of a series of children's books still being used and Rose clearly inherited her mother's talent for expression. "Discovery" was a book that was so enthralling I read it through at one sitting. Perhaps more than any other single factor it was this book which provided motivation for me in what was to follow.

As the years passed, I had occasion to return to New York and FEE more than once. Each time I talked to Baldy I learned more and became more enthusiastic about the ideas leading to an understanding of freedom.

As my comprehension grew so did my awareness of the plight of the American economy. The tiny voice that FEE had raised wasn't loud enough to attract major interest. The great wheels of government were rolling forward without let or hindrance. The public, itself intellectually emasculated by a school system which is kept subservient to the state by virtue of tax dependency, is magnificently uninformed . . . just as I had been. Whether or not there was a communist conspiracy didn't really matter. What mattered was that American politicians, from all major parties and all splinter groups as well, had learned that careers are built on government grants.

Whereas, conservatives generally had been trying to remove communists from government positions, a deeper study of the issues involved put the problem in another light. No one ever stated it better than Frank Chodorov who said: "You can't get communists out of government; it's their native soil. That's where they grow."

In short, the American problem didn't arise because of infiltration from the private sector into the public; it arose because the politicians in the public sector were suborning and subverting the private sector. The infiltration flowed the other way.

A three-step program for socialist success had emerged and was now widely practiced. It is almost syllogistic in character.

1. Proclaim a danger and scare everyone to death:

- a. The danger can be from foreign invasions, criminals, cancer, unemployment, old age, housing, additives in food, lack of additives in food, automobiles, air, water, germs, mining, manufacturing, farming, weather, med flies, white mice, businessmen, the poor and killer bees.

2. Allege that in view of the clear and present emergency for which statistical data are provided . . . (this is mandatory; everyone is impressed with numbers) the danger requires **GOVERNMENT ACTION FUNDING**. Ordinary people don't understand. It takes a political office holder and lots of money.

3. Therefore, since you are the politician who has brought this terrible plight to public gaze, you propose to organize an agency/ bureau/ commission, committee/movement/party/program/project/study/association/amalgamation/union/circle/society/club/brotherhood/group/grange/clan/league/chamber/symposium or whatever. Further, you propose a new law which your club/ clan/society/commission, etc will administer and enforce. If you can get the law passed you can get funding. And, if you get funding, it can be renewed again and again. This way you don't have to worry about re-elections and you have the public spotlight, a financial sinecure and are set for life.

Sometimes a person who is not an office holder initiates something along similar lines. If he is practical, however, he

immediately seeks an alliance with politicians he knows so that he can obtain through them the same kind of support: i.e., a new law and tax money. The point of origin may be either public or private. If it remains private and is voluntarily supported without law or taxes, it presents no real problem although it could be a little silly. That's what politics and political economic theory is about. How to get funds away from others without being branded as a thief and serving time.

The solution to this problem had been spelled out by smarter people than I. An educated and informed electorate is the single mandatory requirement if people are to vote on anything. Literacy per se should not be viewed as education. One must not only comprehend the nature of reality, one must be well enough informed so that the conclusions reached are valid over the long haul.

An idea formed and the next time I went to New York I obtained audience with Leonard Read once more:

"It seems to me," I told the president of FEE, "that the single most important project for FEE would be the creation of a school; an actual educational facility where the facts of economics and the truth about what is happening to this country can be taught."

Read smiled graciously. "Of course, Bob. We all see that. We've talked about it frequently here in our various meetings. I'm sorry to say, it's not possible. Not at this juncture. Schools cost enormous sums. I've been pretty successful in raising the necessary funds to keep the Foundation going, but you're asking for something which can't be supported with enough dollars to make it feasible. At least right now."

I marshalled my most compelling arguments but they fell flat before Read's experience and conviction. I had prepared to offer my services virtually without charge. I realized as we spoke that while I thought well of my own ability, Read would have no reason to be impressed and I saved myself some embarrassment by remaining mute on the point.

Then I went to Baldy and told him of my meeting. He confirmed Read's view. Money for such an undertaking simply couldn't be made available. It was better to do a good job in a small way than a poor job by over-reaching. I had to agree.

"What if," I suggested, "the money could be found. Let me just imagine for a moment that somehow . . . I haven't any idea how, mind you . . . but somehow, a school could be built and funded. Would such a school interest you?"

"Interest me?" Baldy's eyes held a far-away look. "If such an institution could be created," he said quietly, "It would become the most important happening in this nation in many years. I most surely would be interested."

"I'm not a teacher," I reminded Baldy, "but you are. Would you be willing to serve as an instructor in such a school?"

"Of course I would. Further, I don't think you'd get an argument from Read or anyone else here. We've talked about it for years. But economic realism must guide us, Bob. I'm certain FEE would help all it could. You may be sure I would."

The conversation continued along both parallel and divergent lines for some time. I urged nothing further but an idea was burning inside. What if I were able to provide such a school?

In San Francisco, following World War II, without any money to work with except my final pay check as a Captain in the Air Corps, I had built a small empire consisting of three hotels, an apartment house, several guest houses, an insurance business and a downtown shop. Perhaps such could be done again and the profits from such a string of enterprises would surely go a long way to establish a school and keep it running. Or so I imagined.

From that day forward, creating such an institution became my secret high resolve. A number of years were to pass before such an opportunity presented itself. And I told no one about it, even Loy. Untried ideas are best incubated in secret. The cruel winds of contrary opinion can slay the unfledged hatchling.

During that interim, I wrote regularly to Baldy and he invariably replied. I reminded him in my letters that he was a splendid teacher but his letters to me took on a strange direction, as I saw it. I viewed myself as a man of action, a person who could put the pieces together in the market place. I had no facility nor experience as a teacher. I was concerned with expanding Baldy's sphere of influence.

But Baldy denied my inability. I knew far more about the problems and their solutions than I was giving myself credit. Baldy urged me to think of myself as a teacher, too. This annoyed me. I had accepted literally the oft-repeated canard, "those who can, do; those who can't, teach." I was a man who could.

I'll by-pass the events which finally, after a series of experiences which play no part in this narrative, led to the purchase of half a section of land just north of Palmer Lake in Colorado, near where the huge Air Force academy was then being built. I had managed, one way or another and with the assistance of several of my friends from the San Francisco Group, to put together some buildings and launched the Freedom School.

I had managed to enlist the vocal and even the dollar support of a group of fine, dedicated people from various parts of the country and with them organized a Board of Directors. I had run the school for three years, each year attracting more students and more support.

Prior to opening the school in 1957, I had visited with Baldy in New York one final time. He was now completely dissatisfied with his work at FEE but was uncertain about what he wanted to do. Again, I brought up the matter of a school, not revealing that I was thinking of him as I prepared to launch this very project.

I didn't want him to tell me all over again that "it couldn't be done." Further, I didn't want to tell him I was thinking of him in its connection. After all, he could be right and I could be engaged in a monstrous folly.

But here was a man whose thinking and knowledge I idolized. What a glorious surprise for him, if, after I had

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### **NOT ALL UNSUNG HEROES ARE IN THE PAST**

Paul Jacob, a libertarian activist, has been living underground in order to avoid arrest by the F.B.I. His crime: refusal to register for the draft. Do *not* let this act of heroism pass without your support. Don't just talk freedom. Contribute to the Paul Jacob Fund established by the Voluntarists to be held in trust by Kathleen Richman, Paul's sister and a long-time libertarian activist. Please make your checks payable to the Paul Jacob Fund. For more information and to pledge your support, write to *The Voluntarist*.

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demonstrated success over a brief period of time, I turned to him and put him in charge. What I wanted more than anything in the world was his admiration.

At the annual meeting of the Board of Directors in the autumn of 1959, I laid out my idea. I had few illusions about myself and I had raised all the funds. I was now hampered by having far too much for one man to handle. I was, as a matter of fact, earning my living by writing editorials and serving as editorial page editor of the local paper, The Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph.

"If the Freedom School is to be a success," I told the Board, "It must expand. For it to expand, it must have a qualified person handling the academic duties. I make no pretenses concerning myself. I'm not a teacher. I've put the pieces together. I propose continuing in my job as a fund raiser and supporter."

"Through the years I've had many talks with Baldy Harper. Baldy had led me to believe that an independent institution such as Freedom School would be exactly the kind of position he would love to have. My proposal is that we invite him here and turn the school over to him."

"Baldy is well-qualified in all respects. He knows more about the economy of this country than anyone else I've ever encountered. I'm sure he'd accept. Frankly, without a man like him on board, I don't really know what to do. I've come this far by guess and by gosh. Now it's time for us to come under the leadership of a pro; a man who knows what to do and how to do it."

The board agreed and Bill Grede, our Board president, telephoned Baldy inviting him to the Freedom School at our expense so we could consult with him. To my unconcealed delight, he agreed to come.

A day or so later, with Baldy in attendance, we convened on the patio under the Ponderosas and Douglas firs which surrounded our main building. Bill Grede made the presentation beautifully, ending with what amounted to a gift of the school, plus a staff of willing workers who would place themselves under his direction.

Baldy's face paled. He was obviously surprised. No, that is too mild a term. He was thunderstruck. His mouth was agape and he remained silent for at least fifteen seconds which is a long time when one is waiting for an answer.

At last he said he would have to think it over.

The following day he contacted Grede and turned the offer down cold. He refused to see me and immediately departed.

Not once, in all the years that passed before his untimely death did he ever speak to me about that episode. I made up my mind that I wouldn't broach the subject with him. My pride stood in the way. I felt he owed me some kind of explanation. Clearly, he didn't share that view and the magnificent rapport we had experienced lay in ruins.

The happy sharing of confidences and ideas ended abruptly. With it went all thoughts I had ever had of NOT being a teacher. So, that's the way I fell into what was to become my career. I had bricked myself into a towering wall of responsibility and had nowhere else to turn. I learned to teach by trial and error. It is the best way to learn.

To be sure, the fault was mine. I hadn't revealed my secret plans. Baldy had promised me nothing. I had presumed his joyful acceptance and was rebuked for this effrontery. Perhaps Baldy had sensed a tutorial capacity in me for he had urged it repeatedly in his writings. But his silence on the matter provided a wound that never completely healed.

I will offer one final and gratuitous remark. When you think you understand a subject, begin to explain it to students. They will quickly reveal to you how little you know. And when

they send you back to source material and into deep study and reflection in order to camouflage your prior folly and when this repeats frequently over a period of years, you will know how to teach.

That's how I learned. I have no teaching certificate, no license, no government or institutional credentials. Learning to use one's mind as a teacher is like learning to play the violin. Constant practice with the instrument does the job.

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## NOTICE

Part III of *The Ethics of Voting* by George H. Smith will appear in issue IV.

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abolitionists who took direct action. These direct-action abolitionists smuggled food, clothing and weapons to slaves who wanted to flee. They also set up underground networks to help escaped slaves reach safer territory. Direct action was much more effective and efficient than electoral politics.

### INSIGHTS INTO MY LIFE

In the last month of the campaign, I noticed that I was softening my stance. I was beginning to avoid harsh words such as "abolish." Without deliberately intending to do so, I was seeking the favor of the voters by sounding more moderate. That worried me.

Whenever I feel confused or frustrated about where I am going, I call a time-out and review my goals. (Where am I going? Am I going where I want to?) In that review, I realized that I was no longer asking myself, "What's in it for me?"

I had told myself that I was working with the LP to acquire more freedom. But then I asked myself, more freedom to do what? What would I do in a free society that I can't do now? I realized then that the most significant, direct intrusion of government in my life, at this time, is taxation. Nothing I had done or was doing in the LP had any prospect of actually relieving that coercive burden.

I did a cost/benefit analysis of my effort in the LP. What was I getting for my investment in electoral politics? The answer was "nothing." Political action without return, or even a reasonable expectation of return, is martyrdom. I have no desire to be a martyr.

### THE NEXT STEP

I now know, for the many reasons I have outlined, that electoral politics is not only ineffective in practice but wrong in principle. I intend to focus my energy into activities that I can reasonably expect will provide a return on my investment of time and money. Also, I am determined to choose only those activities that will help me achieve short-term personal goals even if the long-term goals prove unattainable.

Participation in electoral politics won't reduce support for government. An educational movement might be more effective, but ultimately a society (including its government, if it has one) changes in the same way a market changes: the people in it individually change their own minds and then their own lives. The result but not the purpose of their individual actions is a change in "society."

I don't know what the best strategy is for other people. In fact, I have stopped thinking about what is best for others. You have to decide what is the most effective way for you to acquire more freedom in your life. If our paths run in the same direction, perhaps we can work together.

At the very least, let's maintain a voluntaryist network: let's share the pleasures of the company of free people.



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## BOOKS OF INTEREST

by Carl Watner

Gene Sharp, *Gandhi As A Political Strategist with Essays on Ethics and Politics*, Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1979, 357 pp.

In the annals of 20th Century political history, Mohandas Gandhi undoubtedly holds a unique place. For one thing, he was probably the only leader of a national independence movement in this century not to have held political office or led troops into military combat. Yet it was his creative theory of Satyagraha ("Truth Force") which was the driving force behind India's independence. As Gene Sharp demonstrates in this collection of essays about Gandhi and the theory of non-violent resistance, Gandhi was an extraordinary political strategist. Gandhi's primary contribution during this century was to argue for, develop and implement practical nonviolent means of struggle. He was the first to consciously act on the voluntarist insight and he formulated a major system of resistance based on this assumption. Thus, Gandhi deserves our careful attention.

Gandhi has often been maligned and misunderstood in the United States. It is important that libertarians understand and come to grips with Gandhi's stance on nonviolence as a means of social change because it offers them an entirely new alternative to electoral politics. The Indians are often perceived as being inherently nonviolent people, but this is definitely not so. Nonviolent action was accepted as a technique of struggle in the grand strategy for Indian liberation because Gandhi offered it as a course of action which was above all practical and effective.

Although Sharp does not offer us a full scale biography of Gandhi, we are able to fit together a picture of his life. Born in 1869 into the family of well to do Hindus, Gandhi led an uneventful childhood. He was sent to England in the late 1880's to pursue legal studies. It was in South Africa, where he was sent to represent an Indian firm in 1893, that he read some of the works of Leo Tolstoy, John Ruskin and Henry David Thoreau. His concern from that time until 1914 was the liberation of the Indian community there. These two decades served as the proving ground for forging the weapons later used in India. In South Africa, Gandhi proved that a well conducted civil-resistance movement could embarrass an opponent of superior numbers and physical power and could eventually mobilize public opinion to such an extent that discriminatory legislation would be rescinded.

South Africa was truly the birthplace of Gandhi's Satyagraha. To counter the discriminatory laws placed on the Indian minority in South Africa, Gandhi chose to develop a theory of resistance which was at once nonviolent and nonhostile. "The resistance he wished to offer would be that of people who did not fear to be violent but chose deliberately to be nonviolent and fight by the power of truth rather than by the power of the body." Satyagraha was born from the knowledge that the soul cannot be jailed and that freedom and slavery are mental states.

The theory of social and political power basic to Satyagraha is the theory of voluntary servitude or what The Voluntarists label the voluntarist insight. Even before Gandhi had read Tolstoy or Thoreau, he realized that the genuine source of political power "lies at the grass roots" level. It is the cooperation and obedience of the subjects which permit elites to wield power. Such power can be curtailed by the withdrawal of cooperation and obedience. As Sharp writes, "Accordingly, on the question of how to achieve social and

political changes, Satyagraha differs fundamentally from those political philosophies which accept the need for a seizure of power (whether by violence, majority decision, or other means) . . ." (pp. 72-73).

When Gandhi returned to India during World War I, he found a situation similar to that he had encountered in South Africa. The Indians were involved in a struggle to determine how and at what pace they might seek independence from Great Britain. Gandhi realized the applicability of Satyagraha to this movement and, as early as 1917, began implementing nonviolent struggle against the British. From that time until he was assassinated in 1948, (after having seen Indian independence granted), Gandhi was one of the spiritual and political leaders of India.

Gandhi has a superb sense of timing, a quick intuitive grasp of the balance of power, an instinct for symbolic action, and an unsurpassed view of strategy and tactics. These are some of the reasons he was one of the most able political figures of his time. This is all the more remarkable because, remembering the lessons of the Bhagavad Gita, he never sought the rewards of politics.

Much of Gandhi's success was based on his realization that the ends he sought were irretrievably linked to the means he used to attain them. Nonviolent resistance, for him, was the only way to promote peace and oppose injustice simultaneously. It was the only way to unite the means with the ends. Satyagraha was at the same time the most practical and most moral approach for achieving social change. Neither Sharp nor Gandhi accept the dichotomy that the moral and practical approaches to societal change are really different. It was this view of the relationship of means and ends which led Gandhi to reject both violent revolution and electoral politics. Gandhi maintained that "if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself."

Gandhi emphasized the importance of using only non-violent means and showed why the use of unjust or violent means in an effort to hurry up progress would only hinder goals. He drew on the Hindu concept of "nonattached action" going back as far as the Bhagavad Gita and applied it to politics. "He maintained that action which is determined on the basis of ethical or moral standards turns out in the final analysis to be the more practical course than that determined by short-term expediency for achieving the desired goal." (p. 291). It is an interesting coincidence to see how closely this reasoning follows Ayn Rand's strictures that the moral and the practical are always synonymous. Nonviolent resistance is the only theory of social change consonant with these requirements and that is why Gandhi was not a politician, but rather a partisan of civil disobedience and non-violent struggle.

Gandhi's way of dealing with violence, as Sharp points out, was very different from the traditional Western pacifist. He was not a conscientious objector nor a war resister, although he obviously did not support military means. Gandhi respected the willingness of a man or woman to fight and die for their beliefs. This willingness to die represents one of the strengths of nonviolent resistance and indicates why it is, in fact, a weapon of the strong. Gandhi wanted "men to give up violence because they were strong enough not to feel the need for it and because they had a better way of facing serious conflicts." In one of his most famous statements, Gandhi announced that "Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will." (p. 138). "Satyagraha is always superior to armed resistance . . . It is the weapon that adorns the strong. Nonviolence is without exception superior to violence, i.e. the power at the

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disposal of a nonviolent person is always greater than he would have if he was violent."

Sharp's final evaluation of Gandhi echoes George Orwell's assessment: "regarded simply as a politician, and compared with other leading political figures of our time, how clean a smell he has managed to leave behind!" Despite his extraordinary political canniness, Gandhi remained uncorrupted in a country where politics and corruption were almost identical. More importantly, whenever the chance of political power lay near at hand either before or after the liberation of India, he rejected it, and in this he was certainly unique among the revolutionaries of any time. Although Gandhi confessed to being "a kind of anarchist" his impulse was religiously and socially rather than politically motivated. Nevertheless, Sharp's book shows why Gandhi is of significance to The Voluntarists. When the Indian National Congress became a political party, Gandhi withdrew from it. "With an extraordinary persistence he made and kept himself one of the few free men of our time."

Reviewer's Note: This review is the 2nd in a series of three dealing with Gene Sharp's writings on nonviolence. *The Politics Of Nonviolent Action* was reviewed in our first newsletter and *Social Power And Political Freedom* will be treated in a forthcoming issue.

#### RECOMMENDED READING

M.K. Gandhi, *Non-Violent Resistance (Satyagraha)*, New York: Schocken Books, 1961.

*Selected Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Selected and Introduced by Ronald Duncan, Boston: The Beacon Press, 1951.

*Gandhi On Nonviolence*, Edited, with an Introduction by Thomas Merton, New York: New Directions, 1964.

*All Men Are Brothers*, Life and Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi As told in His Own Words, Paris: UNESCO, 1958.

George Woodcock, *Mohandas Gandhi*, New York: Viking Press, 1971.

Krishnalal Shridharani, *War Without Violence*, The Sociology of Gandhi's Satyagraha, New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1939.

Richard Gregg, *The Power of Non-Violence*, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1934.

#### Statement of Purpose

The Voluntarists are libertarians who have organized to promote 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. Voluntarists seek instead to delegitimize the State through education, and we advocate withdrawal of the co-operation and tacit consent on which State power ultimately depends.

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## FEBRUARY 26:

The Voluntarists are co-sponsoring with the Center for Libertarian Studies a one-day conference in New York featuring Gene Sharp, author of *The Politics of Non-Violent Action*. Other speakers include LeRoy Pelton (*The Psychology of Non Violence*), Richard Curry (University of Connecticut) and Carl Watner of the Voluntarists. Registration, which includes lunch and reading material, is \$10. For information, please contact *The Voluntarist*.

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