
The Voluntaryist

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

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Does Freedom Need to Be Organized?

By Carl Watner

In a recent book review* of John Henry Mackay's *THE FREEDOM SEEKER*, Murray Rothbard noted that the author became more "passive or quietist" in his strategy over the years. This quietism, Rothbard observed

is, I believe, a blind alley for anarchists or libertarians. If individuals wish to improve or redeem themselves, they should, so to speak, do so on their own time, and not bother the rest of us. Trying to achieve social goals, such as total freedom and private property, by this route is a task for Sisyphus. It gets nowhere. Attaining a free society, like any other goal, requires organization. Anarchists must organize themselves to spread the message and to work toward their goals in the real social world. Contact must be made with the masses of fellow-citizens, and alliances made on the basis of issues of common agreement with those who have not achieved the full libertarian position, but are willing to collaborate on more specific goals. In short, it is incumbent on individual anarchists to leave their self-imposed sectarian holes and to forge out into the real world. They should seek to move the world consciously and as rapidly as possible, toward their cherished goals.

While Rothbard's comments are offered as an aside, voluntaryists must challenge Rothbard on his continued insistence that we "organize." Even without clear definitions of "quietism" or "organization," let us note Rothbard's deprecation of self-education and self-improvement. *THE VOLUNTARYIST* has consistently maintained that such virtues are the prerequisites to the achievement of spiritual freedom and physical liberty. Effective and long-lasting improvement in human affairs MUST begin with the individual. Reform begins with the individual because society is never better or worse than the persons who compose it, for they in fact are it. As Frank Chodorov once put it,

The only 'constructive' idea that I can in all conscience advance, then, is that the individual put his trust in himself, not in power; that he seek to better his understanding and lift his values to a higher and still higher levels; that he assume responsibility for his behavior and not shift his responsibility to committees, organizations, and, above all, a superpersonal state. Such reforms as are necessary will come of themselves when, or if, men act as intelligent and responsible human beings. **There cannot be a 'good' society until there are 'good men.'** (emphasis added) [ANALYSIS, July 1949.]

Bob LeFevre attributed to Rose Wilder Lane the saying that "freedom is self-control." By this she meant that each person must learn to control his or her self so as to not interfere with the physical liberty of others. Freedom for all thus becomes a by-product or derivative of self-control. As each person assumes true self-government, there no longer is any need for any attempt at external governing. As LeFevre wrote in his article on "The Stoic Virtues," "if individual men can be made right, society, a mere gathering of men, will be right of necessity." Thus, the voluntaryist way of changing society is to concentrate upon bettering the character of men and women, as individuals. We refer to this as the "quiet" or "patient" way since it focuses on the individual units of our social structure. As the individual units change, the improvement of the structure will take care of itself. Or as we have constantly observed, "if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself."

The problem that we face is not really how to get rid of the State, but rather the longer range one of how to prevent another

one from taking its place. That is why we must encourage individuals to seek self-enlightenment. There can be no backlash from this approach. It requires patience because the feedback loop, in ideological endeavors is a long one. We are not pointing toward a specific goal to be reached, but rather voluntarism, with its emphasis on means, is simply pointing toward a direction to be taken. Whatever progress we make is to be measured by education and character building, not violence or votes. This is the only way that what tiny progress we may make will be permanent and not have to be done all over again by those who come later.

Rothbard's insistence on "organizing" should also be criticized on the grounds that most organizations suffer from an inner contradiction or internal inconsistency. Generally, "when we create a structure to achieve a public mission, more time is spent on the structure than on the mission." Although Sam Steiger, the Arizona politician familiar to some libertarians, made this observation, others have noted this same tendency. For example, historian Carroll Quigley in his book, *THE EVOLUTION OF CIVILIZATIONS*, describes the practice of "every social organization to become a vested-interest institution more concerned with its efforts to maintain itself or advance its own interests than to achieve the purpose that society expects it to achieve." (p. 54) As evidence, he mentions fraternities (originally intended to promote student fellowship, but often dividing students into competitive cliques), and the institutionalization of football (originally intended to provide exercise for undergraduates, but which is now one of the great spectator sports). In each case the organization begins with a devotion to a purpose and somehow along the way turns away from that purpose and gradually becomes a collection of special interests. Surely libertarians are not immune from this tendency!

Rose Wilder Lane, in her correspondence with Jasper Crane in *THE LADY AND THE TYCOON*, pointed out that people in organizations "tend to work for the existence and the expansion of the organization rather than for the organization's 'purposes'." Non-profit libertarian organizations received some of her harshest criticisms. First of all she noted the inconsistency of advocating free enterprise while operating on a not-for profit basis. At least the profit motive offers an organization a measurable goal. The emphasis is upon achievement (building a certain number of cars, etc.). According to Mrs. Lane, groups of persons who possess money, unrelated to the profit and loss picture, may have a certain type of power, but they also become impotent to achieve their goals. Many of the major changes in history have been brought about by the "poor and powerless;" people who act "not for money, not for power, but 'from' a conviction of truth so strong that it compels them to action." In defense of her thesis she cited both the Moslem conquest of the then "civilized" world in the 8th and 9th Centuries and the American revolution of the 18th Century. Both, in her opinion, were brought about by individuals who acted on their beliefs, rather than by people who formed organizations to spend money for intangible purposes. Mrs. Lane concluded that "it isn't money that moves the world; it is faith, conviction, ardor, fanaticism in 'action'."

It is human ACTION that creates human history; and human action comes from individual belief, purpose, will. None of these can be bought. It is the individual's belief, purpose, will that's needed. Not an organization, a suitable staff, transportation, printing presses, expert public relations men, etc., etc., etc. If the belief and purpose exist, in time they will succeed. 'An army of principles will march on the horizon of the world, and it will conquer.' If they do

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The Voluntaryist

Editor: Carl Watner

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How Can We Do It?

By Robert LeFevre

Since I have repeatedly opposed the belief that one can advance the cause of liberty by political action, I have been asked on several occasions for an outline of the practical steps to be taken outside the political arena. How do we move from where we are to where we would like to be if we don't rely on politics?

My recommendation is based on my analysis of the nature of man. If man is a living being endowed with the ability to make decisions and to act on them, then the method employed to improve the human situation must take that fact into account. My analysis says that man is a self-controlling being.

How are people controlled? Each person controls himself. Each controls his own mind and his own body. Liberty is the natural ability of each individual to act on his own volition.

Can a person be controlled by some other method? Actually, no. All men are subject to persuasion, argument, pleading, influence, and so on. But no one *must* accede to the wishes of another. Even if a person is told to do a certain thing or die, reality teaches us that the person can still refuse. Under certain conditions, an individual may prefer to die rather than obey. Indeed, the primary cause of the violence that men exhibit toward each other is the direct result of their lack of ability to control each other. If one person could control the other, there would be little reason to interfere by physical violence.

If we seek a free society, or freedom, we must seek to establish a human situation in which the natural power of the individual to control himself will not be interfered with by physical violence. In short, we seek a condition in which all men will experience liberty.

The reason that people resort to force, or the threat of force, in dealing with each other is that the other party does not do what the first party wishes him to do. Force is threatened or used as a *motivational*, not a control factor.

When I have tried to persuade another, by all reasonable avenues open to me, and I am still met with refusal, I have only two possible avenues open. I can cease my efforts. Or I can become unreasonable. I can put reason aside and resort to force or the threat of force.

Reduced to simplicity, there are two motivational factors and only two. Remember, you control yourself. But to get you to control yourself in a way that pleases me, requires that I (1) offer you a gain if you comply—the carrot; or (2) offer to injure you if you don't comply—the stick.

All political systems rely on the stick. Do as you're told, or suffer. Only the market place offers gain (the carrot) as the motivational factor. A society in which each member experiences liberty will require the abandonment of the stick method and total reliance upon the carrot method.

Why is this necessarily true? Because the victim who experiences the stick wielded by another loses some of his freedom. Additionally, the party wielding the stick has been diverted from his principal objectives and is wasting time and energy on punitive matters. Thus, although he is still acting volitionally, the stick wielder has injured himself by choosing a secondary rather than a primary course of action.

What if the carrot method doesn't work? The *only* alternative within the context of freedom is to leave the individual alone to his own pursuits.

With this in mind, how do we move toward greater freedom in our society? Only by influence and persuasion, entailing the use of reason. The moment we become frustrated and begin to rely on force or the threat to use force (implicit in political processes), we have abandoned our objective and to some degree are reducing the amount of freedom.

The very first requirement, then, if we sincerely wish to achieve a greater measure of freedom, is intellectual. We must not only establish the goal but we must understand the nature of the goal. And we must be correct, in the sense that our definitions correspond to reality; either a reality that exists or a reality that can be brought into existence.

So far as I can determine, many libertarians have not as yet taken this first step. While it is true that most of those who speak up for liberty are intellectually involved, many of them are cringing before the onslaught of the anti-intellectuals who carp at virtually all intellectual activities.

The anti-intellectuals criticize the libertarian as a person who spends a great deal of time discussing ideas; in debating and probing the subject. Those who are uncomfortable in this area constantly tell me, "You've got to come up with a program of action or we won't have any libertarians left." "We want to DO something." "Don't give us all these theories, tell us what to do."

Another complaint is that "libertarians are completely impractical. They accept a principle or two and lose touch with the real world. They've got to get out of their ivory towers and come to grips with reality." "We need action!"

So libertarians are prone to get involved in politics, or they shoot off on scores of tangents of greater or lesser merit, with few holding the main thrust of freedom in the center of their objectives. Or as another alternative, they isolate themselves in disgust.

Thus, I find many fine people whose major concern is opposing the I.R.S. Or I find those whose principal concern is obtaining the legalization of drugs; or special laws respecting the status of women; or justice for the American Indian. Some become primarily concerned with repeal of income tax. Some seek to champion the concept of atheism. Some wish to promote certain psychological theories. The bulk of those calling themselves libertarian are pursuing their own individual ends, each more or less worthy in itself. But who speaks up for liberty as a primary goal? Who puts liberty at the top of his scale of values?

To move from a controlled society, taxed, regimented and stultifying, into a great new world of human liberty requires a revolution. But the revolution is one of thought, not of guns and bombs. What is required is for people to think differently than they presently do in respect to human relationships.

John Adams, after a lifetime of service first to the Colonial and then to the early Constitutional cause, had what to me is a remarkable insight that might apply today. In a letter to Hezekiah Niles dated February 13, 1818, and commenting on the American rebellion against Britain, Adams wrote: "The (American) Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the hearts and minds of the people.... This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affection of the people was the real revolution...."

It took Adams a lifetime to realize that the importance of the decades through which he had lived was not the number of battles, the casualties, the war itself, but rather the change that had come in the way people thought; in their affections, opinions and sentiments.

They had moved from believing in the divine right of kings to a position in which they believed in the equal rights of man. Unfortunately, this great intellectual attainment was quickly lost in a new wave of dependence upon a centralized state—not a king, but an all-powerful state, nonetheless.

The libertarian revolution, as I see it, must achieve that same objective. We must have a change in the sentiments, opinions, and affections of the people themselves. How is that brought about? Clearly, the task is one that involves education.

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The Struggle for Religious Freedom and the Voluntaryist Tradition

By Carl Watner

Voluntaryism has played a significant part in the long struggle for religious freedom in England and the United States. Since the early 17th Century, when many of the Puritan sects originated, the arguments for separation of Church and State and for freedom of conscience have rested on the "voluntary principle." The advocates of religious voluntaryism demanded that all religions and churches should be supported by voluntary membership and voluntary giving. They opposed taxation for the purpose of maintaining a State religion, and resisted compulsory attendance and membership in State churches. The opponents of religious voluntaryism were quick to point out its radical implications. If the only true church was the voluntary church, then the only true political organization was a voluntary State. Disestablishment of the State Church of England would inevitably lead to a state of "religious anarchy", just as abolition of the monarchy would lead to political anarchy. The purpose of this article is to briefly sketch the historical connections between the arguments for religious voluntaryism, and some of our 20th Century defenses of an all voluntary society.

Even though the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guards against a State religion, it was not until the 1820s and 1830s that religious taxes and the last vestiges of a state church were extirpated in many of the original thirteen states. Most of us have probably forgotten Henry David Thoreau's clash with ecclesiastical law in Massachusetts, which he refers to in his lecture on "Civil Disobedience" (1848). "Some years ago (1838, when he turned twenty-one) the State met me in support of a clergyman, whose preaching my father attended, but never I myself. 'Pay,' it said, 'or be locked up in the jail.' I declined to pay. But, unfortunately another man saw fit to pay it." The same problem had plagued many Baptists, Quakers, and other dissenters in Massachusetts.

Thoreau's parish in Concord claimed the right to tax him for support of its church because his father had attended the parish church, and Thoreau had been baptized into it as an infant. Though a Massachusetts statute of 1836, declared that "no one can be made a member of a religious society without his consent in writing," Thoreau made what was known as a "certificate bow" or request for exemption from the town clerk of Concord. "However, at the request of the selectmen, I condescended to make some such statement as this in writing:—'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.' The State, having thus learned that I did not wish to be regarded as a member of that church, has never made a like demand on me since; though it said that it must adhere to its original presumption that time."

Much of Thoreau's argument reflects the voluntaryist heritage which had been the backbone of the dissenting stand. "I did not see," he wrote of this threatened arrest for refusing to pay religious taxes, "why the schoolmaster should be taxed to support the priest, and not the priest the schoolmaster; for I was not the State's schoolmaster, but I supported myself by voluntary subscription. I did not see why the lyceum should not present its tax-bill, and have the State to back its demand, as well as the church. If I had known how to name them, I should then have signed off in detail from all the societies which I never signed on to; but I did not know where to find a complete list." The Eleventh Amendment to the Massachusetts State Constitution, which was adopted in November, 1833, was supposed to abolish compulsory support of religion, but it overlooked young men like Thoreau, who came of age without formally presenting a certificate either signing off from their parish or attesting to their membership in some dissenting society.

While Thoreau was protesting religious involuntaryism in Massachusetts, his spiritual cousins in England, known as the nonconformists, were renewing their demand for the disestablishment of the Church of England. Following the Reform Act of 1832, dissenters formulated a list of their major grievances. They objected to the Church's monopoly over birth

and death registration, over marriage and burial ceremonies; they resented their exclusion from the ancient English universities, and specially demanded relief from the church rates they had to pay for the upkeep of parish churches which they did not attend. In short, they were upset by all the civil and religious penalties they suffered by not being members of the State Church.

Some nonconformists went so far as to organize the British Anti-State-Church Association in 1844. Edward Miall, a leading dissenter, was the guiding light behind this organization for many years. As editor of *THE NONCONFORMIST*, Miall roused many Baptist and Congregationalists to attack the root from which their grievances sprang. He argued that the State should accord no special position to one church. Disestablishment became his cry. Miall elaborated a whole political theory, voluntaryism, on the basis that religion should always be supported by voluntary giving and not by State aid. The voluntaryists taught that no acceptable or effectual service could be rendered in the spiritual realm which did not first rest on individual conviction and individual conscience. Coerced support for the State church was not only a violation of conscience but also resulted in a weakened church. (Apparently, neither Miall nor any of the other leading voluntaryists attacked the church rates on the ground that it constituted an unjust confiscation of property.) The association which Miall helped found changed its name in 1853 to The Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control and it eventually became known as "The Liberation Society." It existed well into the late 1800s and by then had achieved most of its goals.

An interesting connection is to be made between Miall and early voluntaryist political radicalism. The conviction that the churches should be free from State interference coincided with the views of the free traders in the Anti-Corn Law League, for example. One critic of Miall went so far as to sever his relationship with the British Anti-State-Church Association on the ground that it had become "a school of anarchy." The young Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) published a series of letters in Miall's paper in 1842. These letters were known as "On the Proper Sphere of Government." Here the young Spencer expressed his "juvenile radicalism" by championing the causes of the dissenters. He defended free trade, Church disestablishment, opposition to war and imperialism, and support of voluntary education. In a number of instances Spencer used "the argument for religious freedom to buttress his case for freedom in other spheres." He wished to demonstrate that "natural rights are the foundation of religious freedom" and he insisted that these rights should be "extended consistently to all spheres of human activity."

It was in the United States that the voluntaryist tradition was most widely recognized, even though not always put into consistent practice. The "voluntary principle" in religion became an axiom for nearly all Americans. This formed the underlying basis for separation of Church and State in the United States. Foreign observers of America during the 19th Century were particularly struck by the religious voluntaryism practiced here. De Tocqueville noted the vitality of the churches. James Bryce reported that the American places of worship were usually well attended. The most striking feature of American religious life to many European visitors was the legal status of the churches. "Of all the differences between the Old World and the New," Bryce wrote, "this is perhaps the most salient. ... All religious bodies are absolutely equal before the law and unrecognized by law, except as voluntary associations of private citizens."

By the late 19th Century, the American experience with the separation of Church and State, embraced by the First Amendment to the Constitution, meant voluntaryism in practice. Since the government took no part in the religious life of the people, it became the sole responsibility of the churches to attend to such matters. The churches and their clergy realized that "the church as a spiritual entity will be happiest and strongest when it is left absolutely to itself." Disassociation from the government also led to religious peace. As Bryce noted, at least half of the internal troubles in Europe stemmed from theological differences. However, since the State played no religious role whatsoever in America, this strife and rancor were largely avoided.

It was his conclusion that, "So far from suffering from the want of State support, religion seems in the United States to stand all the firmer because, standing alone, she is seen to stand by her own strength." Depending solely upon voluntary support, the churches are subjected to a form of moral coercion, which makes it necessary for them to discharge their own responsibilities if their own institutional life is to remain strong and vigorous. American experience has proven that churches tend to flourish and become strong and influential when they are subjected to the coercion of a purely voluntary status. In this respect, they are much like any competitive business offering their customers a service. It is only by free trade in religion that the truth can be tested and abuses be guarded against. Persuasion rather than government dictation was the only means that made this possible.

But this was not always so. Although it is thought that many of the New England colonies were founded as havens from religious persecution in England, the original colonists themselves were often bigoted and did not extend the religious freedoms they sought to others outside their own faith. Connecticut, in particular, offers a very interesting example, because it was not until the first State Constitution was ratified in 1818, that any sort of separation of Church and State took place. Up until that time, the clergy and supporters of the existing order believed that the State church must be tax supported if religion were to survive in Connecticut.

State guardianship of the churches was the keynote of the policy of the founders of Connecticut from the early decades of the 1600s. They believed that the church must train its members in civic responsibility and moral uprightness if a well-ordered community was to be protected "against the dangers of theocracy on the one hand and of religious anarchy on the other." Congregational churches were established by state legislation between 1644 and 1657, and steps were taken to assure them full financial security and support by the government. This was accomplished by legislating that the salaries of ministers were to be guaranteed by tax collection and that "no church was to be organized or to engage in religious activity without the consent and approval of the legislature." All citizens were subject to ministerial taxes (whether they were believers or non-believers) and were fined for refusal to pay and for failure to attend religious services.

As a result of this stewardship of religion, the state religion, Congregationalism, became strong and dominant. Nevertheless this protection did not guard it from becoming lax in matters of faith and morals. Quakers and separatists of all sorts challenged the legitimacy of a church which required state support. Although some tax relief was given to members of recognized churches, the courts and legislature in Connecticut were not prone to extend the principle of toleration to the multitude of sects they feared would spring up in the absence of a state church. During the mid 1700s (largely as a result of the Great Awakening), more than thirty separatist churches sprang into existence, despite the persecution and tax burdens that their members suffered.

The pleas for religious freedom never ceased in Connecticut, but they made head way slowly. The voluntarist flavor of these arguments is interesting and also indicates the amount of ridicule and suffering that their supporters underwent. One of the most striking examples of their opposition to the religious establishment took place in a public debate between a Baptist (separatist) minister and a Congregational minister in Lyme, Connecticut in 1727. One section of the debate was devoted to "Whether ministers of the gospel ought to be maintained in the least, by goods taken away by force from men of contrary persuasion?" Wightman, the Baptist, took the negative on three grounds:

1. Because there is no precept nor precedent for so doing in the New Testament.
2. Because so to do is what we would not be done unto ourselves.
3. Because the Lord requires only volunteers and not forced men in his service.

Wightman was convinced that there was no other way for sup-

port of the gospel "but what is from the freewill offerings of the people." Bulkley, his opponent, hurled the accusation that the sectaries in Connecticut had called the Standing Ministers (himself included) "Greedy Dogs and Ravenous Wolves" and that since the Bible did not prescribe how ministers were to be financially supported it was up to the legislature to make that determination.

By the time of the American revolution, public opinion in Connecticut had reached the point where conscientious dissenters were excused from attending worship in established churches, provided they attended worship elsewhere. In 1777, separatists were exempted from taxes for the support of the established church if they could furnish proof that they had contributed to the support of their own churches. These concessions failed to wholly satisfy the dissenters because they desired complete religious liberty. When the final break with England took place, Connecticut passed into the union of the 13 colonies with its old colonial charter still intact. Therefore Congregationalism still maintained its place as the state church.

The federalists and supporters of the new federal constitution in Connecticut defended the need for a church-state system, even when experiments in many of the other thirteen states proved that religion and civil government could survive independently of one another. They and especially the Congregational clergy were convinced that disestablishment would result in nothing less than a return to "a state of nature." It was inconceivable to them that society could long exist without civil recognition and support of religion. Ex-governor Treadwell voiced his fears that "a voluntarist Christian commonwealth could not maintain itself in peace and order." Others opposed disestablishment because it meant that "everything might be safely left to each individual."

Lyman Beecher, a well-known Congregational minister, opposed the call for a state constitutional convention, which was agitated for several years prior to 1818. In order to push for complete religious freedom in the state, the rising democratic forces and the opponents of state religion banded together in what became known as the Toleration (or Republican) party. The first state constitutional convention brought forth a document which largely guaranteed the religious freedoms the separatists had been so actively seeking. The union of church and state was dissolved in late 1818. Beecher expected the worst from disestablishment: the floodgates of anarchy would be loosened in Connecticut.

As Beecher relates the story in his autobiography, the ratification of the new constitution was "a time of great depression and suffering. ... It was as dark a day as ever I saw. The odium thrown upon the ministry was inconceivable. The injury done to the cause of Christ, as we then supposed, was irreparable." But soon a new, revolutionary idea occurred to Beecher. True religion might stand on its own. "For several days (after disestablishment became a foregone conclusion) I suffered what no tongue can tell 'for the best thing that ever happened to the State of Connecticut.' It cut the churches loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God." Before the change:

Our people thought they should be destroyed if the law should be taken away from under them. ... But the effect, when it did come, was just the reverse of the expectation. We were thrown on God and on ourselves, and this created that moral coercion which makes men work. 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 tax law had for more than twenty years really worked to weaken us" and strengthen our opponents. Ministers supported by voluntary offerings exerted an influence

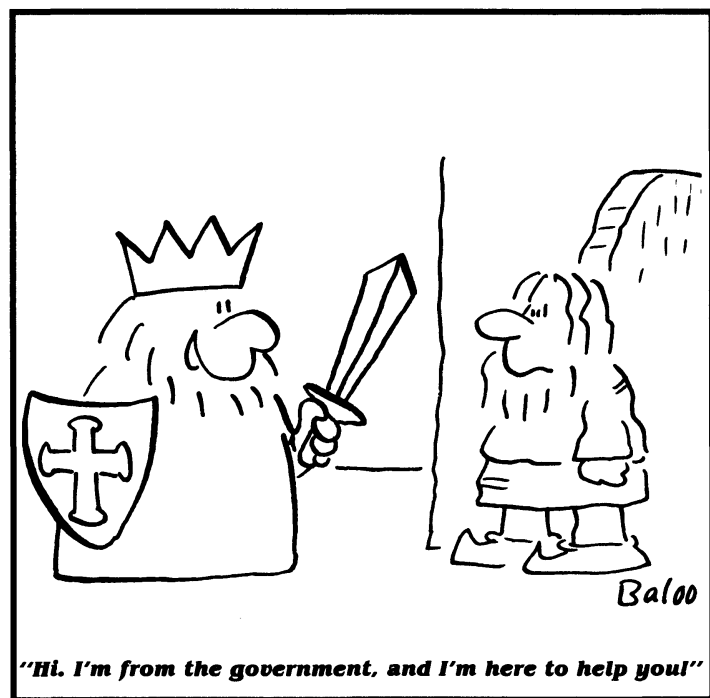
deeper than they ever could have if they continued to be tax supported. Neither Beecher nor many of his contemporaries originally conceived that true religion and good morals could exist without governmental support, but their experience in Connecticut, proved otherwise. The voluntary system did not lead to the decay of religion or morality or to the host of evils which all defenders of the established order predicted.

There is a clear parallel between the predictions of those who opposed disestablishment in Connecticut and those who cannot believe that an all voluntary society could exist today. Neither group could believe that the spontaneous order in the religious market place or the commercial market place would provide any sort of natural order. If nothing else, the historical case in Connecticut proves them wrong.

The lack of a compulsory, coercive authority in both religious and commercial organizations does not lessen their authority, but in fact increases it (however paradoxical this may appear). Precisely because such voluntary groups of people lack the coercive authority of a government, they are obliged to direct their efforts to establish a powerful moral authority over those whom they would exert an influence. There is simply no other legitimate way to deal with people. They are either voluntarily persuaded to take a course of action or they are compelled to do so through the use of force. Authority voluntarily accepted is far stronger and a more powerful factor than violence can ever be. To understand and come to an appreciation of this paradox would seem to be a valuable lesson to be learned from an examination of the struggle for religious freedom in the voluntarist tradition.

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Voluntary Musings

A Column of Iconoclasm

By Charles Curley

"Nothing can defeat an idea

--except a better one."

--Eric Frank Russell

Requiescat in Pace

Robert Anson Heinlein

1907-1988

"You live and learn.

Or you don't live long."

--Lazarus Long

Worth Quoting: "For all we know, those children might have grown up to see other worlds under other suns. But the price of that would have been knowledge, and knowledge is the enemy of tyranny in any disguise. It has freed more people from poverty and oppression than all of the ideologies and creeds in history put together. Every form of serfdom follows from serfdom of the mind."

Jim Hogan, *GIANT'S STAR*, 1981

TO REIGN IN HELL There is a book which a great many voluntarists might do well to read. That is Steven Brust's *TO REIGN IN HELL*, Ace, 1985. It is an excellent fantasy work which is Brust's re-telling of the Fall of the Angels, the subject of Milton's *PARADISE LOST*. The title is taken, of course, from Milton's famous line, that it is "Better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven." (Book I, line 263) But the excellence of the work isn't enough for me to recommend it to you.

Wilson and Shea pointed out (in *ILLUMINATUS*) that libertarians are political non-euclidean. Libertarians simply don't think in standard left-right political terms. The choice of reigning in hell or serving in heaven is a metaphor for the standard political terms: will you be a conservative, and plunder on behalf of big business, or a liberal and plunder on behalf of the poor?

Brust's story line is that Yahweh has come up with a Plan to do something wonderful. But the plan requires that some of the angels sacrifice themselves. Literally. Yahweh is afraid that not enough angels will volunteer, so he institutes a secret police to coerce the angels into following his plan. Yahweh is the first Statist.

Several of the other angels see the flaw in Yahweh's Plan, and the oppose it. These are conned into believing that Satan opposes the Plan (he doesn't, actually), and that he will eventually tell Yahweh off and start a rebellion against him (again, a lie). They are victims of the first Big Liar. Satan becomes, quite against his will and even his knowledge, a Leader. But he is a mealy-mouthed, compromising Leader. Satan is the first bleeding Heart Liberal.

Any voluntarist who is capable of abstract political and philosophic analysis can see what will happen. We know how the book ends. The fascination is not in seeing where the characters end up, but how they get there. The reason I recommend the book to voluntarists is simply that, without the non-euclidean thinking of voluntarism, the processes of the book seem inevitable and natural. Of course Yahweh becomes a tyrant. Of course Satan dithers. Of course the whole of heaven is divided into armed camps. Of course the rebels are defeated.

Yet, had any of the angels applied the non-aggression principle rigorously early on, the Plan might have gone on, but no-one would have been forced into it. Indeed, the idea is breached: "Maybe, if the only way to handle those who don't like it is to force them, something's wrong from the beginning." But the wisdom herein is ignored, because it falls on the ears of the first Fanatic.

Satan figures it out, but doesn't take it far enough: "I wondered if it were really right that such a thing be done. Why should I ask someone to risk himself if he chose not to? Who gave me this right?" So he quits the job of chief enforcer, but never explains to Yahweh exactly why. Perhaps Yahweh might have reconsidered

PEACE or POLITICS

By Frank Chodorov

Peace is the business of Society. Society is a cooperative effort, springing spontaneously from man's urge to improve on his circumstances. It is voluntary, completely free of force. It comes because man has learned that the task of life is easier of accomplishment through the exchange of goods, services, and ideas. The greater the volume and the fluidity of such exchanges, the richer and fuller the life of every member of Society. That is the law of association; it is also the law of peace.

It is in the market place that man's peaceful ways are expressed. Here the individual voluntarily gives up possession of what he has in abundance to gain possession of what he lacks. It is in the market place that Society flourishes, because it is in the market place that the individual flourishes. Not only does he find here the satisfactions for which he craves, but he also learns of the desires of his fellow man so that he might the better serve him. More than that, he learns of and swaps ideas, hopes, and dreams, and comes away with values of greater worth to him than even those congealed in material things. ...

The law of association—the supreme law of Society—is self-operating; it needs no enforcement agency. Its motor force is in the nature of man. His insatiable appetite for material, cultural, and spiritual desires drives him to join up. The compulsion is so strong that he makes an automobile out of an oxcart, a telephone system out of a drum, so as to overcome the handicaps of time and space; contact is of the essence in the market place technique. Society grows because the seed of it is in the human being; it is made of man, but not by men.

The only condition necessary for the growth of Society into One Worldism is the absence of force in the market place; which is another way of saying that politics is a hindrance to, and not an aid of, peace. Any intervention in the sphere of voluntary exchanges stunts the growth of Society and tends to its disorganization. It is significant that in war, which is the ultimate of politics, every strategic move is aimed at the disorganization of the enemy's means of production and exchange—the disruption of his market place. Likewise, when the State intervenes in the business of Society, which is production and exchange, a condition of war exists, even though open conflict is prevented by the superior physical force the State is able to employ. Politics in the market place is like a bull in the china shop.

The essential characteristic of the State is force; it originates in force and exists by it. The rationale of the State is that conflict is inherent in the nature of man and he must be coerced into behaving, for his own good. That is a debatable doctrine, but even if we accept it the fact remains that the coercion must be exercised by men who are, by definition, as "bad" as those upon whom the coercion is exercised. The State is men. ...

Getting down to the facts of experience, political power has never been used for the "general good," as advertised, but has always been used to further the interests of those in power or those who can support them in this purpose. To do so it must intervene in the market place. The advantages that political power confers upon its priesthood and their cohorts consists of what it skims from the abundance created by Society. Since it cannot make a single good, it lives and thrives by what it takes. What it takes deprives producers of the fruits of their labors, impoverishes them, and this causes a feeling of hurt. Intervention in the market place can do nothing else, than to create friction. Friction is incipient war.

["Peace or Politics" is extracted from an article, "One Worldism," by the late Frank Chodorov in the December 1950 issue of his small monthly journal, ANALYSIS.]

"For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once well done is done for ever."

*—Henry David Thoreau
"On The Duty of Civil Disobedience"*

forcing the angels to comply. Perhaps not. But Satan never argues to Yahweh for the abolition of the job of chief enforcer. Much of the conflict comes because Yahweh believes Satan opposed to the Plan, rather than to the idea of coercion.

Much of the tragedy of the book stems from this simple misunderstanding, and some ruthless political maneuvering.

The ends do not justify the means, as one character says: "Because someone performs an evil action, does not mean it can't be for a good cause?" "Yes, that is exactly what it means."

One reason for voluntaryists to read this book is that it will do us good to remind ourselves from time to time how other people think. They think the choice to be between reigning in hell and serving in heaven. Not so. Our job is to bring to their attention that, while it may be better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven, best of all is to do neither.

Speaking of the Devil... "There is no such thing as a good tax."

— Winston Churchill (1874-1965)

Dumping Protectionism: One of the latest follies of the people who favor trade barriers is the idea of so-called local content laws. In the beginning, there were tariffs on imports. One response to this was to bring kits for a product into a country and assemble them there. To stop this, the anti-traders are insisting that a minimum percent of a product must have originated in the country before it can be considered a product of that country. Right.

Bought a FAX machine lately? Chances are that it was made in Japan. (Hear the sheep bleat, Baaddd?) Ah, but chances are that the modem in it was made by Rockwell, an American company. (Hear the sheep bleat, Gooddd?) But only the modem chips were actually made in the US: the modem board was assembled in Mexico with other components made all over the world. (Baaddd!) Now, try applying the concept of local content to that one! (Duuhhh??)

Lie Detection Senators Kennedy and Hatch on the same side? Huh? Yep, both are sponsoring a bill to outlaw the use of polygraph lie detectors in private companies. Mr. Kennedy calls the polygraph twentieth century witchcraft (and what, pray tell, of Keynesian economics?). Mr. Hatch considers failure to pass a lie detector test a scarlet letter to be worn by the victim for the rest of his life.

Problem is, the damn things don't detect lies. They detect nervousness and other symptoms, which can be generated by lies, or other causes. A person made uncomfortable by the subject matter, or even by the fact of being questioned, will show a false positive. Some 300,000 people a year are falsely branded liars.

The Federal bill would ban the use of them in private companies for job applicants, except nuclear power plants and security firms. Polygraphs would be permitted in investigations of theft, embezzlement or sabotage. Exempt from the terms of the bill are federal, state and local governments, including, presumably, Congress. In the latter case, perhaps the Senators are afraid someone will come up with a lie detector that really works.

As for me, a politician detector will be quite sufficient.

This Should be Interesting The Vatican has announced that it will issue an audited budget this year. For the first time in a long time, if ever, the Roman See is opening its books to public scrutiny. An earthly deficit of \$61.8m. is expected.

Worth Quoting: "You can trace the same basic struggle right down through history," he told them. "Two opposed ideologies — the feudalism of the aristocracies on one side, and the republicanism of the artisans, scientists, and the city-builders on the other. You had it with the slave economies of the ancient world, the intellectual oppressions of the Church in Europe in the Middle Ages, the colonialism of the British Empire, and, later on, Eastern Communism and Western consumerism."

'Keep 'em working hard, give 'em a cause to believe in, an don't teach them to think too hard, huh?' Caldwell commented.

'Exactly,' Pacey nodded. 'The last thing you want is an educated, affluent, and emancipated population. Power hinges on the restriction and control of wealth. Science and technology offer unlimited wealth. Therefore science and technology have to be controlled. Knowledge and reason are enemies; myth and unreason are the weapons you fight them with.'

Jim Hogan, GIANT'S STAR, 1981

Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

1. "Who Says There are No Exchange Controls in Effect? or Currency as Contraband?"

A recent article on "Getting Along at Customs" noted that it is legal to export or import any amount of money into the United States, but that declaration of the amount must be made if it is more than \$10,000. If the money is not declared it is subject to confiscation. The purpose of the declaration is to alert the I.R.S. to large sums of cash, which may be unreported earnings. U.S. Customs reports that they confiscate more than one million dollars a month from drug runners smuggling money out of the country via Kennedy International Airport in New York. At most international airports throughout the United States, "customs agents are changing the way they work to ease passengers' entry into the country while stopping contraband at the door. ... Arriving at the customs area, you head for a red lane if you were on a farm while abroad and have agricultural products; if you have more than \$10,000 in currency or monetary instruments;" The noose is tightening even more!

2. "The Freedom Rule"

"The free society depends not merely on what we want for ourselves, but also on the freedom each of us is prepared to extend to others. Our social conduct determines our social freedom. If we conduct ourselves so as to avoid the use of force to impose our will on others, the result is a society of free people." Robert Anderson, NOTES FROM FEE, March 1988.

3. Nock on Voluntarist Social Change

"Even a successful revolution, if such a thing were conceivable, against the military tyranny which is Statism's last expedient, would accomplish nothing. The people would be as thoroughly indoctrinated with Statism after the revolution as they were before, and therefore the revolution would be no revolution, but a coup d'Etat in which the citizen would gain nothing but a mere change of oppressors. There have been many revolutions in the last twenty-five years, and this has been the sum of their history. They amount to no more than an impressive testimony to the great truth that there can be no right action, except there be right thinking behind it. As long as the easy, attractive, superficial philosophy of Statism remains in control of the citizen's mind, no beneficent social change can be effected, whether by revolution or any other means." Albert Jay Nock, "Introduction," to Herbert Spencer's THE MAN VERSUS THE STATE, Caldwell: Caxton Printers, 1940, p. xiv.

4. "The Man in the Middle"

James Carroll in his novel about the Irish rebellion and World War I has the following to say about the men in No Man's Land who refused to fight. These were soldiers who escaped to the area between the opposing military lines. "The attitude of the men in the ranks toward them was profoundly conflicted. Because the deserters lived in an underworld and looted the dead, they were thought to be devils. But because of their nightly treatment of the wounded they were regarded as friendly apparitions, as angels, even, and by some as the spirits returned of the men who'd fallen first. But the commanders, German and British alike, felt no conflict, for the men in the middle made the act of desertion thinkable for every man in both armies, and their refusal to treat each other like enemies undercut the supreme nationalism that was essential if the soldiers were to continue to fight each other. The men in the middle embodied the idea that there was an alternative to orders. If that idea spread, then the war was over." James Carroll, SUPPLY OF HEROES, New York: American Library, 1986, pp. 424-425.

5. "Who To Avoid!"

"In my decades in the libertarian movement, I have seen no positive correlations whatever between honesty or ability in business and the degree of a person's commitment to libertarian doctrine. To the contrary, the facts cut the other way, and in general, in seeking out business or consumer services, I would tend to go out of my way to **avoid** libertarian dentists, plumbers, carpenters, etc. My experience, and it is not unique, is that the proportion of incompetents, moochers, hustlers, and quack-crooks in the libertarian movement is far higher than in the general business population." Murray Rothbard, "The Libertarian

Family and Entrepreneurship," in LIBERTY Magazine, July 1988, \$18 for six issues, \$5 for back issues, Box 1167, Port Townsend Wash. 98368.

6. "Problems, if Shot at, Do Not Disappear!"

"Armed conflict does not train its participants for future peaceful resolution of conflict. Those who rise to leadership tend to be those most skilled in combat and least prepared for future conciliation; Furthermore, when there are winners there are losers and the losers may seek revenge (and have the common sentiments of 'justice' to back them up). ... Many Americans have internalized the lessons of Western movies: problems will disappear if shot at. ... Problems if shot at do not disappear, they multiply." William Kelsey in LIBERTY Magazine, July 1988, p. 35. (See item 5 above for ordering information.)

How Can We Do It?

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Once a significant number of persons become convinced that we are dealing with an intellectual revolution rather than a political or military one, the practical steps to be taken reveal themselves.

When the individual sees through this problem clearly, he himself takes action. He does so by hitching his activities to that blazing comet of freedom speeding across our skies. How does he do this? He studies, learns, and communicates. And if his studies and his learning are incomplete (as must be for all of us), he begins the process of communicating what he does know.

The more you try to explain ideas to others, the more the others will challenge and correct you. A teacher is no more than an active student.

To whom does he communicate? It really doesn't matter. The whole world is his artichoke. Logical starting places are with his own children, spouse, and friends who evince an interest. The job is not to persuade others to his opinion. The job is to encourage the others to formulate their own opinions in harmony with the reality of human liberty. The person who convinces himself remains convinced. The person who is persuaded by another can be re-persuaded later on. It is better to work a year or two with a single person until that person convinces himself than to labor in an effort to sway thousands.

What are the tools that will be most useful? They are the tools of education: the books, the films, the blackboards and chalk, the classroom—the log shared between someone eager to learn and someone eager to let him learn.

The school and the church can provide the proper climate and tools. To be effective, however, both school and church ought to be outside the conventional groves of academy or ordination. There is such a vested interest in most established institutions of learning and communication that the most skilled communicators will be more concerned with defending and enhancing their credentials or personal reputations than blazing a revolutionary trail.

Years ago, I accepted as a personal motto: "The man who knows what freedom means will find a way to be free." In short, I cannot "organize" a free society. Freedom emerges as the natural result of men working together in liberty when we stop "organizing" a free society.

Within the existing society, what we organize are specific units of production and distribution. We learn to support ourselves, pay our own bills, and champion the cause of liberty by consistent advocacy. As others glimpse the merit, they, one by one, join the effort. They do not have to join each other. They enlist in the *concept*.

From this procedure there can be no backlash. More and more persons, self-motivated and self-controlled, simply stop engaging in the existing social devices which impose on others. They break their ties with the existing political structures; not by violence, not by trying to obtain majorities or by using force, but by understanding and then thinking differently about the whole area of human relationship.

I know of no other practical method for moving from where we are to where at least some of us can see new hope and light. (This article first appeared in LeFevre's JOURNAL, Vol. 4, Spring 1977, pp. 8-9.)

Fable for the Silly Season

By "Clem Johnson"

Once upon a time there was a ruler, cunning and unscrupulous, whose advisors told him in a period of economic decline, that he need only monopolize money, and then he could "spend their way to prosperity." To monopolize money, he inflated the dollar *seventy-five percent* and *criminalized transactions in gold*. (Incredibly, his victims did not rise indignantly and throw the plunderer out.)

To gain the favor of farmers, he instituted price supports and destroyed surpluses; to win support of the idle, he issued "unemployment compensation" **not** to be productive; to buy votes (under the guise of aiding the indigent and elderly) he started a terrible "pyramid game," passing the spiraling costs to **unborn** generations. For that he was called a "humanitarian!"

After two terms, unemployment was worse than when he assumed office, and the national debt had doubled in peacetime. War clouds gathered, but his assurance was: "Our boys will never tread on foreign soil." When the echo of his words had died away, the nation was engaged in war on three fronts around the globe in the costliest conflict of the century. Government debt mounted alarmingly — a debt **never** to be repaid.

With disastrous socialist precedents and great loss of freedom, an unconscious electorate returned him to office three times, proving he could perpetuate himself indefinitely, and that he was right in his assessment: Voters are too stupid to see they are being bribed with their own money.

Moral of the story: Two hundred years of voting have brought us **fifty** percent taxation. Anyone for **seventy** percent?

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Does Freedom Need to be Organized?

continued from page 1

not exist, no funds, organization, staff, etc., etc., etc., will do anything at all—but waste the money.

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, just as changing society must begin with each one of us. This is a very slow process, one with which we must not become impatient. We must be satisfied with concentrating on mastering our own self-control and with explaining to others why they should govern themselves. The truths of the world—if they are truly truth—do not, never have, and never will require an organization to support and promulgate them. Freedom does not need to be organized.

*"A Review" by Murray N. Rothbard in THE STORM, No. 16-17, 1986-1987. Available for \$5 from The MacKay Society, Box 131, Ansonia Station, New York, New York 10023.

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