

The Voluntaryist

Whole Number 79

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

April 1996

The Tragedy of Political Government

By Carl Watner

Tragedy—"A lamentable, dreadful, or fatal event or affair; a disaster or calamity."

"What is tragic about political government?" you might ask. Let us return to that question once we have examined the nature of political government and the State.

In order to distinguish between government and other institutions in society we must look at the ways human behavior can be organized and human needs and desires satisfied. There are only two ways: peacefully or coercively. There are no other alternatives. If people rely on peaceful cooperation, they must necessarily offer products or services for which other people are willing to trade. If people use coercion or fraud, we call it obtaining goods or services under false pretenses, robbery, or larceny. However we label it, the basic contrast remains the same: one relies on voluntarism or one relies on force.

A stranger knocks at your door and, upon opening it, he requests money. He represents the March of Dimes, and is asking for donations to support its activities. Unless you feel generous, you dismiss him. You have no particular obligation to support his cause, and the fact is you have already contributed to other charities, such as the United Way. Unless the stranger is a blatant thief, he leaves. He doesn't deal with you by using force, or its threat, to collect the money he is soliciting.

Compare this to what happens every April 15th in the United States. Granted, most "good citizens" send in their tax payments to the Internal Revenue Service. The IRS does not need to send out a representative to collect the tax; and if there is any need to do so, he generally needn't carry a gun or make any direct display of force.

Why don't people dismiss the IRS in the same manner as they would the solicitor who is collecting for a private cause? Many would, except they know that there is a big difference between the March of Dimes and the IRS. The March of Dimes organization is a group of private individuals assembled together for the common purpose of overcoming polio, muscular dystrophy, and birth defects. They do not use force, or the threat of force, to accomplish their goals. Should they, we would have no hesitation in

calling the March of Dimes, and its solicitation agents, criminal.

The IRS, on the other hand, represents the government, which—when all else fails—uses force to accomplish its goals. If you do not voluntarily pay your taxes, your property is confiscated, or you are jailed. The amazing thing about our government in the United States is that it rarely has to resort to force. There are tax resisters, but they form a small percentage of the population. Except for these few people, no one calls IRS agents criminals even when they brandish guns, confiscate property, or put people in jail. Despite the fact that they engage in the same type of behavior as the private thief or kidnapper, it's seldom that their behavior is called criminal.

Why is this so?

Government is the only institution in our civilized society that is able to cover its coercion (and its use of threats) in a shroud of mystique and legitimacy. There are other individuals and groups in society that use force: individual criminals (the lone burglar, rapist, etc.), and groups of criminals (the Mafia or gangs of thieves, etc.). But none of these claim their activities are proper and useful. Government is the only one of these coercive groups that claims its use of force is legitimate and necessary to everybody's well-being.

Government is the institutionalization of conquest over the people and property in a certain territory. The stated purpose of government is protection. In reality it is exploitation: to extract resources which otherwise would not be voluntarily handed over to the governors. Governments excel in the use of force and threat—the political means of survival—by combining military conquest and ideology. Though

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"Every action and every agency of contemporary government must contribute to the fulfillment of its fundamental purpose, which is to maintain conquest. Conquest manifests itself in various forms of control, but in all those forms it is the common factor tying together into one system the behavior of courts and cops, sanitation workers and senators, bureaucrats and technocrats, generals and attorney generals, pressure groups and presidents."

—Theodore Lowi,

INCOMPLETE CONQUEST, 1981, p. 13.

The Voluntaryist

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Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

No. 1 "What Makes A Country A Police State?"

"In a free country you have a right to be left alone as long as you don't hurt anybody else. You have a right to live your own life peacefully and enjoy your property, and to be free from government interference.

"In a police state, the government can legally ransack your house; they can come into your business; they can take whatever you own; they can assault you with impunity; they have no accountability. In a free society, government can't do that. And we're not a free society any more. People have to recognize that."

- Aaron Russo, "Russo and Revolution: The LIBERTY Interview," LIBERTY Magazine, (Box 1181, Pt. Townsend, WA 98368), January 1995, p. 33.

No. 2 "Capitalism and Peace"

"In the absence of force, peace and liberty simply exist; they do not have to be created or supported. Capitalism has its beginnings in a condition under which no man can be dispossessed of what he has produced or discovered except with his own consent. In the absence of force, capitalism automatically exists in the same sense that peace and liberty automatically exist."

- Thomas Nixon Carver, THE PRESENT ECONOMIC REVOLUTION IN THE UNITED STATES (1926), p. 5.

No. 3 "Debt and Bankruptcy"

"We also have a problem believing that rescue packages are the correct solution to such financial crises. The problems arise from debt — you cannot go bankrupt if you don't owe anybody any money. Debt, as we have often said in the past, is like alcohol or narcotics in that it is a mind-altering substance and can be highly addictive."

—Ian Lamont in YORKTON NATURAL RESOURCES, Feb. 6, 1995. Yorkton Securities, Suite

406, Salisbury House, Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 5RQ, England.

No. 4 "Only In America"

"Unique in the world's legal systems, any person, American or not, at home or abroad, who participates in any [way], however insignificant, in helping an American citizen or resident to break the law (no matter how trivial), is part of a 'conspiracy'. This conspiracy is another crime usually considered more serious than whatever is being done. To put it in perspective, if a Frenchman in Paris advises an American to show his contempt for his own government by spitting on the sidewalk in front of the nearest USA embassy, the FRENCHMAN is guilty of a conspiracy to commit misdemeanor. This is a felony under existing USA laws. Under those same USA laws, his (French) home can be raided by USA law officers, and searched. Any of his property can be confiscated by USA agents even if they are illegally in France and even if those USA agents are breaking the laws of France. Further those USA agents can, legally under USA laws, as in the recent Noriega case, legally KIDNAP the Frenchman, and legally torture him on the way back to the USA in order to legally extract a false confession to a more serious crime. Or the kidnappers can legally secure fraudulent testimony to convict. They can legally arrange to have him placed in custody with known rapists and killers, and have him physically and mentally abused by other prisoners and interrogators. And it is all legal (from a USA point of view)."

—Dr. W. G. Hill, THE PASSPORT REPORT, Waterlooville, U.K.: Scope International, 7th ed., 1992, p. 265.

No. 5 "The More Legitimacy, The Less The Use of Overt Force"

"[T]he importance of force and force-threat in human behavior is richly demonstrated by the rarity of its use. Living as we do in protected environments, we rarely see anyone manhandled or hear an overt threat . . . [E]very social system contains mechanisms, processes, and patterns whose results and often intention is to prevent the outbreak of overt force.

"... Much force appears to people not as a threat of violence, but simply the rules of the game, the obvious reality of the cosmos, to which one must bow unthinkingly.

"... It follows from this orientation that all highly industrialized societies are high force systems, by comparison with almost all societies that have gone before them. No dissident groups of substantial size can hide out and engage in armed resistance, set up a competing regime, or impose a radically different system. ...

"In general, the widespread use of physical force by the regime or dominant groups in a society is prob-

ably negatively correlated with that country's position on the scale of the force it commands, because the application of overt force tells us that many people in the society oppose the political or social system, and are unwilling to back it by force. ...

"... [A] society's total force is not a summation of the individual capacity to kill, but a function of the social organization of force. Consequently, armed but unorganized citizens may be, and indeed usually are, helpless before the organized might of a tyrant's army and police, even when these are few in number.

"The force of a free citizenry is not, then, determined by how many guns they possess, but by their collective determination to resist. This in turn is primarily a function of their faith that their fellow human beings will not let them stand against the physical force of a ruler, but will rather risk individual injury to prevent collective injury. Thus, in ranking a citizenry by the force it commands, the question is not so much whether it owns more guns than the government, but whether its members can count on each other for support against encroachments on their freedom. That is the measure of its force. With that capacity, guns can be obtained; without it, guns have historically been of little use.

"... In older terminology, military analysts spoke of the will to battle, an imponderable that has more than once outweighed firepower.

"... One might, then, as a challenge to rulers everywhere, point out that we can in fact test their claim that their system is based on justice and on people's allegiance to it, by reducing the use of physical force to buttress it. ... [T]hat system which requires the least physical force [and threats] would more closely approximate justice than any we now know."

—William J. Goode, "Presidential Address: The Place of Force in Human Society," 37 AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW (October 1972), pp 507-519. Excerpts from pp. 511-518.

No. 6 "A Consistent Pacifist"

Eileen Egan, a member of the editorial board of THE CATHOLIC WORKER, was mugged on August 30, 1992 on Manhattan's Upper East Side. It took her a year to recover from her injuries, and to decide to become an "advocate of helping prisoners turn away from lives of crime and violence." Her outlook remains optimistic, although her attempts to help her assailant have been mostly rebuffed.

"The answer to [the] question [of whether trying to help her attacker has accomplished anything] was quoted by Gandhi from a Hindu treatise, years ago," she said. "It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your time, that there'll be any fruit. But that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results are coming from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result."

—Michael Ryan, "I Refuse to Live In Fear," PARADE MAGAZINE, October 23, 1994, pp. 73.

No. 7 "Taxes, Taxes, and More Taxes!"

Writing about a small business tax strike in Athens, Greece in May 1995, the editors of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (May 19, 1995, p. A14) noted that the Greek government had passed a law "that independent professionals will pay taxes not according to what they earn, but according to what they could be expected to earn on the basis of criteria such as their occupation, their number of employees, and their place of business." According to a book review in the same newspaper (July 10, 1995, p. A12) Switzerland imposes an annual wealth tax. Those advocating such a tax in the United States, want it annually imposed in addition to existing estate taxes. Meanwhile, the United States Congress has considered legislating an "exit tax" on the wealth of those Americans whose renunciation of citizenship and emigration abroad are motivated solely by tax motives.

No. 8 "Books Received For Review"

Chuck Shiver, THE RAPE OF THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION. Available from Loompanics Unlimited, Box 1197, Port Townsend, WA 98368. Non-voluntaryist, analysis of the violation of rights encountered in American history. Concludes that the "Constitution is just a piece of paper" that provides some mystique and legitimacy to the current political rulers.

Larry Pratt, editor, SAFEGUARDING LIBERTY: THE CONSTITUTION AND CITIZEN MILITIAS. Available from Legacy Communications, Box 680365, Franklin, TN 37068. Fifteen non-voluntaryist essays on the 2nd Amendment right to bear arms. Refers to the privately organized rifle movement in Denmark, which traces itself back to the British "National Rifle Association in 1860. ... [C]ivilian corps of motorcycle-mounted machine gunners ... possessed more automatic weapons than the Danish army in 1914 (when they covered the latter's mobilization)." After World War I, the Danish Parliament abolished the voluntary rifle corps because "it was simply felt that national defense should be the business not of the individual citizens but of the state. In 1937 the corps were disbanded, [much] to their country's rue on April 9, 1940 [p. 88]." [V]

Statement of Purpose

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

The Defacto Bill of Rights

1. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, except to mandate explicit reference to the Christian God on the currency; or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, aside from oddball cults- whom the Attorney General and the FBI may freely smear in the mass media and then wipe off the face of the Earth; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, except in the case of pornography, hate speech, movies containing excessive violence, or any other form of expression which somebody somewhere may find offensive or disquieting.
2. A well regulated militia of free men being an intolerable menace to the totalitarian designs of the State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall apply only to those people employed by the Organs of State Security, and of course to muggers, rapists, burglars, gangsters, and other criminals who don't obey other laws and can't reasonably be expected to obey this one.
3. No soldier shall, in time of peace, be quartered in any house without the consent of the owner, since it's much easier to just seize the entire house if the Authorities really want it for something (see Amendment 4).
4. The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be construed in such a way as to prevent the Authorities from seizing any property which they may believe, infer, suspect, imagine, or assert to be in some way involved with anything whatsoever to do with drugs, money laundering, or tax evasion.
5. No person shall be subject for the same offense to be twice put in Jeopardy of life or limb, except in cases whereby the mass media and public opinion hold his acquittal to have been a miscarriage of justice, in which case he may be retried on Federal charges as many times as necessary to secure a conviction, or in case of parole violation whereby the convicted may be subject to re-incarceration as many times as the Authorities deem necessary to ensure rehabilitation; nor shall any person be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, except when the Authorities grant him selective immunity from prosecution to force him to do so, then find some legal technicality enabling them to use the information thus gained against him anyway.
6. In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, except where there are interminable delays due to the system being clogged with victimless drug cases, and shall be entitled to the assistance of counsel for his defense, although the Authorities may seize and confiscate any assets, without due process, that he might otherwise use to afford such counsel (see Amendment 4).
7. In suits at common law, where the value at contro-

versy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved; however, persons accused of rape, child molestation, and other sexual offenses whereby it is generally recognized that no one is ever falsely accused, may be tried and summarily found guilty by the mass media.

8. Excessive bail shall be imposed to keep persons who are obviously guilty behind bars until the Authorities can get around to trying them, or in such cases of suspected parole violation whereby the Authorities, regardless of evidence against the accused, may completely deny bail; cruel and unusual punishment shall not be inflicted, except as required by both State and Federal mandatory-sentencing guidelines.

9. The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the Authorities, including the right to control economic activity through taxes and regulation, the right to impose mandatory racial and gender favoritism, the right to collect and monitor vast amounts of personal data on citizens on the pretext of the Census, the right to arbitrarily bar citizens from visiting certain foreign countries, and other rights which it may occur to the Authorities to decide they currently have.

10. The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people; however, any State which attempts to enforce this provision by seceding from the Union in the face of flagrant violation of its sovereignty by the Federal Authorities shall be subject to invasion, militarily occupied, and razed to the ground at the discretion of the President, while any lesser attempt by any State to assert its rights under this Amendment shall be punished by occupation by the National Guard, withholding of Federal Funds, or other means at the disposal of the Federal Government. ▣

"Participation is an instrument of conquest because it encourages people to give their consent to being governed. ... Deeply embedded in people's sense of fair play is the principle that those who play the game must accept the outcome. Those who participate in politics are similarly committed, even if they are consistently on the losing side. Why do politicians plead with everyone to get out and vote? Because voting is the simplest and easiest form of participation by masses of people. Even though it is minimal participation, it is sufficient to commit all voters to being governed, regardless of who wins."

—Theodore Lowi,
INCOMPLETE CONQUEST, 1981, pp. 25-26.

The Tragedy of Political Government

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throughout history, governments have been of many different types, their reason for being and modus operandi have never changed. Governing requires that those who govern authorize or commit criminal acts,—actions which, if used by any but the agents of the government, would be deemed criminal.

Governments seek the voluntary obedience of their populace. The continual use of physical force is not only expensive, but often of uncertain results. If the governors can get the governed to accept their conquest as being consistent with widely accepted norms and standards, there is little need to use raw force to continually compel submission. The primary tools which governments use to establish their legitimacy are: 1) the use of nationalism and patriotism to inculcate the belief that the entire nation is a single community with a manifest destiny; 2) the use of mass public “education” to socialize the younger generation and instill “acceptable” values in them; (3) the use of psychological warfare to “brainwash” the populace into supporting the government at all costs. The truth of the matter is that governments use every means at their command to insure their control over society. Other methods include support of special interest groups with legislation and subsidies, celebration of national holidays, frequent elections, use of the secret ballot, sustaining foreign enemies to help maintain internal control, and the full panoply of patriotism.

The main tragedy of political government is that few people realize it is an immoral and impractical institution. Nor do they realize “that the power of any government is dependent on the cooperation of the people it governs, and that government power varies inversely with the noncooperation of the people.” They have been conditioned to accept government as a natural part of their environment. After being raised in a culture in which “politics” is the norm, and after attending years of public school and being taught that political government is a necessary component of society, most people place government in the same category as the weather—something they complain about, but can’t change. As people accept the structural trap called politics, they fail to realize that their actions support and undergird the State. Their demand for government services—from Social Security benefits to police protection—is what fuels the State.

Most people are capable of high values and responsible behavior, but once they enter the seductive garden of politics, they no longer notice that its wonders cannot be reconciled with individual responsibility and their own personal moral values of honesty and hard work. It is not usually apparent that what they are doing or supporting is vicious and would not pass the test of ordinary decency. So long

“The decisive means for politics is violence.... Anyone who fails to see this is, indeed, a political infant.”

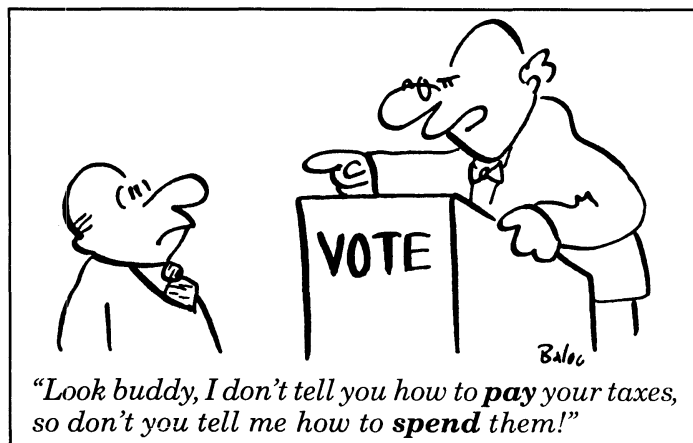
—Max Weber, 75 AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW 901 (1981)

as the criminality is veiled by the political process, most people accept it because they do not see that it conflicts with their basic values. The main tragedy of political government is not only that the voters are the ones pointing the gun, but, most importantly, that the indecency of this act is concealed from them by the political process. It is the concealment that is the tragedy. The concealment is not the result of some conspiracy by some distant elite: it is inherent in the political process.

Perhaps the tragedy can be made more plain. Look at the daily news. At least half of every day’s news consists of accounts of one pressure group or another noisily appealing to the government for greater support of its special agenda. The tragedy is that the people making the demands do not perceive that it’s their own neighbors from whom they are stealing and sacrificing in order to support their special programs. The political process—purposefully—is an impersonal one. The secret ballot and the use of majority vote obscure the fact that it is the struggling family next door or the bachelor down the street who are being threatened at gunpoint if they do not fill the government’s coffers or follow its mandates. The resources for every government program come from hundreds of millions of people across the United States—most of them personally unknown to those who campaign for these programs. Few people would directly confront their neighbors with such demands (“Your money or your life!”), but the structure of politics permits this to be done anonymously, and allows the supporters and perpetrators to conceal—even from themselves—the evil nature of what they are doing.

Such is the tragedy of political government. ▢

[Author’s Note: John Kreznar suggested and assisted in the preparation of this essay.]



The Historical Origins of Voluntaryism

By James Luther Adams

In modern history the first crucial affirmation of voluntaryism as an institutional phenomenon appeared in the demand of the sects for the separation of church and state. In England, for example, and then later in America, the intention was to do away with direct state control of the church and also to remove official ecclesiastical influence from the political realm—toward the end of creating a voluntary church. In the voluntary church, religious faith as well as membership was to be a matter of individual choice. The individual was no longer automatically to become a member of the church simply by reason of his being born in the territory. Moreover, he could choose not to be a member of a church. Nor was rejection of the established confession any longer to be considered a political offense or to deprive the unbeliever of the civil franchise. In rejecting state control, the church (and the theological seminary) were no longer to be supported by taxation. The objection to taxation in support of the church was twofold: tax support, it was held, not only gave the state some right of control; it also represented a way of coercing the nonmember or the unbeliever to give financial support to the church. Freedom of choice for the individual brought with it another freedom, namely, the freedom to participate in the shaping of the policies of the church group of his choice. The rationale for this voluntaryism was worked out theologically by the sectarians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and more in terms of social and political theory by John Locke in the next century.

From the point of view of a theory of associations, the demand for the separation of church and state and the emergence of the voluntary church represent the end of an old era and the beginning of a new one. The earlier era had been dominated by the ideal of "Christendom," a unified structure of society in a church-state. In the new era the voluntary church, the free church, no longer supported by taxation, was to be self-sustaining; and it was to manage its own affairs. In the earlier era, kinship, caste, and restricted community groups had determined most of the interests and the forms of participation. In the new era these interests became segregated. In this respect the freedom of choice was increased. The divorce of church and state and the advent of freedom of religious association illustrate this type of increase in freedom of choice.

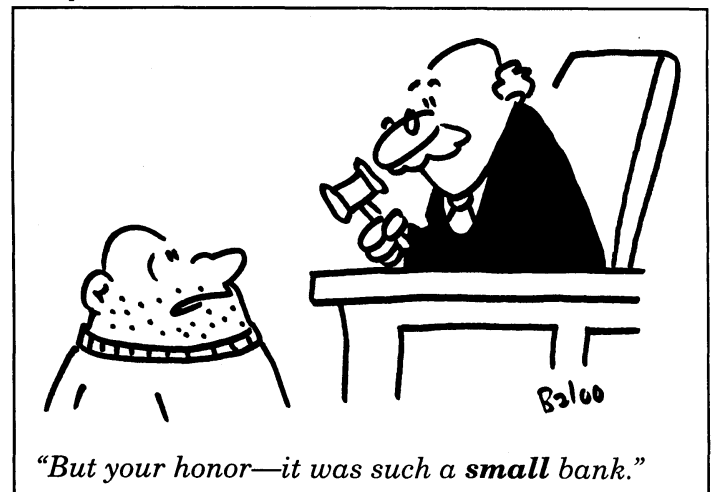
In accord with this new conception of religious freedom and responsibility one must view the collection plate in the church service on Sunday as a symbol of the meaning of disestablishment and of voluntaryism. The collection plate symbolizes—indeed it in part also actualizes and institutionalizes—the

view that the church as a corporate body is a self-determinative group and that in giving financial support to the church the members affirm responsibility to participate in the shaping of the policies of the church. Thus the voluntary principle amounts to the principle of consent. One must add, however, that although the struggle for voluntaryism on a large scale in the church began over two hundred and fifty years ago, it was not achieved generally and officially in the United States until the nineteenth century—that is, apart from the colonies that from the beginning had had no establishment.

The thrust toward the separation of church and state could succeed only by carrying through a severe struggle for freedom of association. Initially, the authorities who opposed it asserted that the health of society was threatened by the voluntary principle. They held that uniformity of belief was a prerequisite of a viable social order. As a separation of powers, voluntaryism was viewed as a wedge for chaos. In order to defend the unrestricted sovereignty of the commonwealth, Thomas Hobbes published in 1651 *LEVIATHAN*, the most cogent attack of the times upon the voluntary principle. In his view the church should be only an arm of the sovereign. Indeed, no association of any sort was to exist apart from state control. Therefore he spoke of voluntary associations, religious or secular, as "worms in the entrails of the natural man" (the integrated social whole). Analogous attacks upon the voluntary church came also from conservatives in the American colonies where establishment prevailed.

Hobbes recognized that freedom of religious association would bring in its train the demand for other freedoms of association. His fears were fully justified. Indeed, with the emergence of this multiple conception of freedom of association a new conception of society came to birth—that of the pluralistic, the multigroup society. [V]

[Excerpted from James Luther Adams, "The Voluntary Principle in the Formation of American Religion," in J. Ronald Engel, *VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS*, Chicago: Exploration Press, 1966, pp. 176-178.]



Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

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to assume control over their lives. In I Samuel, he correctly predicted that with the State would come taxation, conscription, and eminent domain.

The Roman stoics and Christian martyrs, a thousand years later, moved libertarian thought in a different direction. Epictetus the Stoic, around 90 A.D., urged men to defy tyrants in such a way as to cast doubt on the necessity of government itself. "If the government directed them to do something their reason opposed, they were to defy the government. If it told them to do what their reason would have told them to do anyway, they did not need a government."² The early Christians differentiated liberty and freedom. Liberty, they understood, has to do with the absence of physical restraints on the body. Their liberty was curtailed when they were tortured and told to renounce their beliefs. Their freedom, however, was untouched because their captors could not injure their philosophy or make them change their minds. The truth, they believed, would make men free, because freedom is an attitude of mind and spirit. A person may be free in his mind, even though his body be imprisoned.

Over fifteen hundred years into the Christian era, Etienne de la Boetie, a Frenchman, wrote the great libertarian tract *THE DISCOURSE ON VOLUNTARY SERVITUDE*. His argument is structured around the voluntarist insight that the State is grounded upon popular acceptance. La Boetie not only bitterly opposed tyranny, but objected to the public's consent to its own subjection on the grounds of natural law and a natural right to liberty. La Boetie called for civil disobedience and mass non-violent resistance because withdrawal of consent would quickly undermine the foundation of State power. As he put it, "The tyrant has, indeed, nothing more than the power that you confer upon him to destroy you. Resolve to serve no more, and you are at once freed."³ The remedy to political power is simply to stop supplying the rulers with the funds, resources, and obedience that they need. La Boetie's analysis of one-man tyranny was applied by 19th century libertarian anarchists to democratic as well as totalitarian forms of government.

Henry David Thoreau, Benjamin Tucker, and Leo Tolstoy, authors found in this book, all advocated non-violent resistance to the State. Opposition to the State on practical and economic grounds has only evolved in the last 200 years. Thinkers such as Bernard Mandeville, Adam Ferguson, and Adam Smith began this trend by pointing out the benefits of relying on "the invisible hand." Like the latter day adherents of the Austrian school of economics, these free-market oriented intellectuals analyzed such institutions as trade, money and language, and found they were the result of the natural, spontaneous social order, not governmental rules. Belgian-born econo-

mist Gustave de Molinari (1819-1912) was the first to reach the logically consistent conclusion of laissez-faire economics. His 1849 article, "The Production of Security," argued that the free market can and should supply all goods and services, including those public services, such as police, courts, and the armed services, which the State traditionally monopolizes. The state is not exempt from the natural laws of economics. If consumers of protection services are to receive the best product at the least cost, then the production of security should be left to the free market. Molinari, 150 years ago, painted a picture of exactly where we are today: Whenever "the consumer is not free to buy security wherever he pleases, you forthwith see open up a large profession dedicated to arbitrariness and bad management. Justice becomes slow and costly, the police vexatious, individual liberty is no longer respected, the price of security is abusively inflated and inequitably apportioned . . . In a word, all the abuses inherent in monopoly or in communism crop up."⁴

Modern readers should use this book to familiarize themselves with some of the historical and intellectual roots of libertarianism. If an update to this collection were made, I would include such libertarian "greats" as Frank Chodorov, Andrew Galambos, Henry Hazlitt, R. C. Hoiles, Rose Wilder Lane, Robert LeFevre, H. L. Mencken, Ludwig von Mises, Albert Jay Nock, Isabel Paterson, Ayn Rand, Leonard Read, and Murray Rothbard. Spradling's "greats" and these more contemporary libertarians form a series of connecting links in the search for freedom and liberty. Every individual, every generation, stands on the intellectual shoulders of those who have gone before. Let us be among those who stand on the shoulders of the "giants" of liberty. ▢

¹ Gerald F. Seib, "Libertarian Impulses Show Growing Appeal Among the Disaffected," *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*, January 20, 1995, A1.

² William D. Grampp, *ECONOMIC LIBERALISM* (New York: Random House, 1965), vol. 1, *THE BEGINNINGS*, p. 26.

³ Etienne de la Boetie, *THE POLITICS OF OBEDIENCE: THE DISCOURSE OF VOLUNTARY SERVITUDE*, trans. Harry Kurz (New York: Free Life Press, 1975), p. 16.

⁴ Gustave de Molinari, *THE PRODUCTION OF SECURITY*, trans. J. Huston McCulloch from *JOURNAL DES ECONOMISTES*, February 1849, pp. 277-290. (New York: The Center for Libertarian Studies, 1977) pp. 13-14.

"Democracy is essentially coercive. The winners get to use public authority to impose their policies on the losers."

—Chubb and Moe,
*POLITICS, MARKETS AND
AMERICAN SCHOOLS* (1990), p. 28.

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

By Carl Watner

[Editor's Note: The following was published as the "Foreword" to Charles Sprading's **LIBERTY AND THE GREAT LIBERTARIANS** (1913), which was recently reprinted by Fox and Wilkes (1995). Available from Laissez Faire Books, 938 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, Tel. 1-800-326-0996.]

In a recent **WALL STREET JOURNAL** news column about libertarians, a computer consultant said, "government isn't simply irrelevant, it's totally irrelevant."¹ If that comment can make the front page of the **JOURNAL**, then the re-publication of **LIBERTY AND THE GREAT LIBERTARIANS** is both pertinent and timely. In the **JOURNAL** article, libertarians were described as those who "question the need for a government role in virtually every area of their lives, personal as well as economic." The motivation for this current skepticism is mostly pragmatic. When the war on drugs is failing, when the government cannot deliver the mail on time, or fails to deliver on any of its promises, people begin to ask: "Who needs it, anyway?"

Charles Sprading, the editor of this early 20th century anthology, has left us a record of liberty as it appeared to him during the early years of this century. As might be expected, the authors assembled

here are a diverse group of libertarians. Some advocate limited political governments, others believe in nothing but personal self-government, but whatever their persuasion, they all hang together by dint of their objection to what they see as the wrongful invasion of person and property. Not having the benefit of Austrian free market economics, many early libertarians were often voluntary socialists in outlook. (In fact, one of Sprading's earliest mentors, Francis Tandy, wrote a well-respected libertarian tract entitled **VOLUNTARY SOCIALISM** [Denver, 1896]). They often attacked interest, rent, and profits because they believed these forms of wealth rested on state privilege, not market forces. However right or wrong their economic analysis, they always supported individual liberty over enforced collectivism.

Sprading only looked as far back as the 18th century for his sources. Had he been familiar with them, he might have included several instances of libertarian thinking and non-State alternatives that are much older. One of the earliest examples is from the Old Testament prophet Samuel. From the time of Moses to the monarchy of Saul (circa 1240 B.C. to 1020 B.C.), the Jews of the Old Testament lived without any coercive governmental authority in their lives. When the institution of a kingship was broached, Samuel warned the people that they would rue the day when they made it possible for the State

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