
The Voluntaryist

Whole Number 137

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

2nd Quarter 2008

How I Became A Voluntaryist: A Farewell to Tax-Financed Murder

By Jeff Knaebel with Carl Watner

[Editor's Note: In December 2006, I received an order for books from Pune, India. The purchaser was Jeff Knaebel. In April 2007, Jeff sent me his book, *Experiments In Moral Sovereignty: Notes of An American Exile*, which he had published in October 2006. I discovered that Jeff was a tax expatriate, as well as a person who believes that "a man needs a country but would be better off without a government." I read Jeff's book and asked him to write the story of his life, explaining how he became a voluntaryist. The following article was pieced together from Jeff's writings and his correspondence with me during May-June 2007. He has read, edited, and approved the publication of this final version. His book, *Experiments In Moral Sovereignty*, is available from The Voluntaryist, \$ 20 postpaid. I highly recommend it. His personal website is www.Stateless-Freedom.org.]

Introductory Note

I was surprised and pleased to receive Carl's request to write this essay. It provides an opportunity to do my homework. My job is to send a voice—to speak truth to power. My mission is to reclaim the human birthright to self-ownership, together with the right to respect the lives of others. Life is liberty. Authority is violence. Blind obedience is insanity. I am refusing to be a tax-paying accomplice to State murder.

Although I seek mostly to write in terms of timeless, impersonal principles as they relate to individual action, I agreed to write this personal story in hope to help "spread the word" that we must elevate our consciousness or risk premature extinction as a species. The battle is for the mind of man, and it can be engaged only one by one. Perhaps these notes of my small efforts might be of use to others in the struggle. Ultimately the power of ideas must translate into individual action on the ground.

The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.

—Stephen Biko, quoted in *Endgame*, by Derrick Jensen

**"Free Your Mind," says The Voluntaryist.
Be Not State Property, if I may add.**

Study of *The Voluntaryist* has been influential and helpful. I support all the goals of "voluntaryism" as known to me at this point. As a philosophy of life and social harmony, I believe it is the way we must go. However, I am instinctively wary of personal labels. They seem intrinsically dangerous because they tend to put us into ideological boxes from which heart-to-heart communication is distorted or muted. We are actually being-becomings whose language is older than words. When we place ourselves into mental boxes, we tend to bump into each other, rather than flowing in the constantly changing flux of energy in which we have our being.

I would label myself an "absolute freedom-seeker," acting in accord with the laws of equal liberty and nonviolence, guided by an unspoken charter of free inquiry. We must tear apart the boxes around our minds, board by board, so that we may relate to each other as equal beings in an energy field of loving kindness. As said by Kurt Vonnegut, "We are here to help each other get through this thing, whatever it is."

Carl has asked for a biographical sketch of my life. So here it is.

* * *

Tagging along in the wake of my father's career as mining engineer kept me on the move during the first twelve years of my life. Born 1939 in San Francisco, within two weeks I was in Canada, thence upstate New York, on to New Mexico, Utah, New York, Brazil, and British Guiana, followed by a return to boarding school in New Hampshire at age 11.

We lived in mining exploration camps of thatched-roof huts in South America, swept away tarantulas before showering with rain water collected in a converted 55 gallon drum, and ate game procured from the jungle by native hunters using bows and arrows. Experiences during a brief stint in a Brazilian school had included my younger brother (age 5) having his left arm tied and his palms struck repeatedly with a ruler in order to force him into right-handed penmanship—to suit the authorities of an education system grounded in structural violence.

The mindless violence of American adults "sport fishing" the Essequibo River with dynamite, along with airborne "sport" hunting of crocodiles, etched a deep negative impression into my young mind. In a land of brown people, we were clearly invaders.

Interaction since early childhood with multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual peoples is perhaps the origin of my conviction that all people are "my relations" and that no person is less than me.

The Voluntaryist

Editor: Carl Watner

Subscription Information

Published quarterly by The Voluntaryists, P.O. Box 275, Gramling, SC 29348. A six-issue subscription is \$20 or .07 ounce of fine gold. For overseas postage, please add \$5 or 1/3 of the regular subscription price. Single back issues are \$4 each or 1/5 of the regular subscription price. Please check the number on your mailing label to see when you should renew. THE VOLUNTARYIST is online at www.voluntaryist.com.

Age 12 found me in New Mexico, during the breakup of my parental family. I was shuffled among relatives and boarding school in California and New Mexico. The U.S. government public school system exposed me to a lot of violence. Corporal punishment was routine. Schoolyard fights were sometimes instigated by teachers and staff. My short term in the Boy Scouts was led by a Scoutmaster just returned from the Korean War. He seemed to think his mission was to train the coming generation of infantrymen, which he did by putting us through live-fire exercises in remote areas.

My point here is to provide a glimpse into the effects of World War—State Terrorism—on human consciousness. Structural, systemic violence is deeply embedded in the dominant culture. Well before completion of high school, I had been subjected to the continuous cognitive dissonance of verbalized ethical norms versus observed facts of physical and emotional violence (including wounds to my own body) in homes, schools, and communities.

It challenges one's balance of mind—even sanity—to live with continuous hypocrisy of "leaders" who preach the ethical norms of peace while practicing violence upon others. This double-speak ends in language itself becoming useless—in the public arena, we no longer actually communicate. It is all lies and pretense. As Solzhenitsyn said, "Once violence is chosen as method, falsehood becomes principle."

"Education—compulsory schooling, compulsory learning—is a tyranny and a crime against the human mind and spirit. ... No other institution does more lasting harm or destroys so much of curiosity, independence, trust, dignity, self worth and sense of identity."

—John Holt, renowned educator and author.

I was taught to compete, to succeed at every endeavor at any cost, that "winning isn't everything, it is the only thing." Dutifully, I collected academic honors and earned letters in football and boxing. Blue ribbons on the outside, seething with resentment and anger on the inside, I crossed the threshold of adult life with the certainty that no one could be trusted. The child had been molded by the system.

Contrapunto, I can recall that during these years I also studied the words of Founding Fathers George Washington, Ben Franklin, Thomas Paine, Patrick

Henry, James Madison, and especially Thomas Jefferson. Entire passages were committed to memory, and I made both written and silent vows to adhere to their (publicly-published) ethical values. I also imbibed the "freedom poetry" of some of the English poets of yore. How often have I failed these vows, these brave words!

All wars are basically civil wars because all men are brothers.

—Joseph Abileah

At age fourteen I held my first adult male job—as a mucker in an underground uranium mine. I earned my private pilot's license at age sixteen. My seventeenth summer was spent in the remote bush of North Ontario, working on drill rigs that were supported by float planes as we moved among the lakes.

Having enrolled in the civil engineering program at Cornell University in 1957, the next six years were spent studying there and at the Colorado School of Mines, where I graduated with an Engineer of Mines professional degree. My university education was financed by scholarships and jobs as underground miner, junior geologist, surveyor, and oil rig roughneck.

Faced with immediate conscription upon graduation, I applied and was accepted into the U.S. Navy Officer Candidate School. Commissioned in November 1963, most of the next four years were spent rotating through "tours" in Vietnam while serving as a Company Commander of Navy Seabees near Da Nang and Chu Lai.

Upon discharge as an early-selected, full Lieutenant, I took up engineering and supervisory duties at open pit copper and molybdenum mines in Arizona and New Mexico. However, two summers as a junior geologist in Alaska had lodged seeds of the "Great Land" in my heart. One winter night of 1969, looking out over the rolling moonlit sea from a Coos Bay pier, the pull of the North could no longer be dismissed. Feet were compelled to obey mind. Mind was compelled to obey heart. Destiny beckoned North.

I mailed dozens of resumes and finally landed a job as Assistant Chief Mining Engineer for the State of Alaska Division of Mines and Geology.

My first assignment was to map 1,500 sq. mi. of the Wrangell-St Elias wilderness area. I worked mostly alone with a string of six pack horses, provisioned by air drops about twice per month across a span of six months. I learned about myself and about nature—of risk and solitude and the brave promise of untrammelled horizons. Unlike city man, raw nature does not condemn.

*"It's the great big, broad land way up yonder,
It's the forests where silence has lease;
It's the beauty that fills me with wonder,
It's the stillness that fills me with peace."*

—Robert Service

Despite their restless, independent spirit, an unbreakable bond grew between me and my horses. It was communicated through rub-downs, nuzzles and nudges, clucks and whinnies. Many a black night Little Joe or Bay or Bimbo would bring me back to camp across swollen glacial torrents, reins draped loose over the neck, useless in a dark so thick I could hardly see the ground. These were embodied experiences of mutual inter-dependence and cross-species loyalty. These things are not intellectual. The intellect is not much more than a calculator.

Just shy of one year into my job, the Chief Engineer sent me to Yukon Territory to report on the burgeoning mineral industry there. By this time, I'd had a bellyful of government employment. Upon seeing what young, independent Canadian geologists were doing, I determined to imitate them. I would start an exploration company.

With four other Directors—whose credit worthiness was required for a bank line of credit—Resource Associates of Alaska, Ltd. was capitalized on two hundred dollars. One of these men left his secure job to join me as full-time member, and during a lean year our little outfit was supported on my savings account. Luckily, our first contract produced a copper prospect that launched the company.

We grew, eventually opening offices in five cities the U.S. and Canada. We were first on the ground with mining claim posts at what is now the big Red Dog zinc mine of Cominco. Our discovery of the Donlin Creek mineralization for Calista is now shaping up to be a world-class gold deposit. Our scope of operations expanded through subsidiaries to include civil engineering, architecture, and city planning.

During this time, our firm was engaged as resource consultant-advocate for an Alaska Native Corporation involved in litigation with the United States pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. For this I became a registered lobbyist and spent considerable time in Congress and negotiating with members of the President's Cabinet. I was constantly accompanied by a cadre of high-powered lawyers.

It was an intense time, living out of hotel rooms in Washington. One of my firm's other partners took turns with me in a watch-standing rotation. A piece of legislation affecting my client required conformation between the House and Senate versions of the Bill. This had been done in a joint legislative conference committee in which our lawyers had participated.

It was late at night and there was a rush to have the Bill typed in time to meet the printing deadline for the next day's *Congressional Record*. The draft Bill was handed to one of our lawyers for conveyance to the stenography section in the basement of Congress. He arranged to have the final typed version changed in favor of our client. Land demarcations and acreage figures were altered in the draft

that went to the typists. This became law as published in the *Congressional Record*. Oil and mineral-bearing lands of tremendous value moved from the public domain into the hands of a private corporation.

There is no pillow so soft as a clear conscience.

—French Proverb

The event had taken place on my partner's watch. He reported to me his eyewitness account. This experience—together with the lies of Congress swirling all around me and delivered right into my face—resulted in complete disillusionment with the government that had sent me overseas to a foreign war against a people who posed no threat.

I had been so naive, so gullible. The 'patriotism' conditioning had penetrated deep within my psyche. I had come to identify myself as an American, yet I was facing a process of disillusionment with the United States government. America was supposed to be the "land of the free and the home of the brave," but I could begin to see that this was not true. It was a charade and an appearance, not the truth. I remember walking through the Capitol Rotunda and fighting back tears at the sight of sculptures of the Founding Fathers. Feelings of deep bitterness overwhelmed me. They, as well as I, were being betrayed by the politicians with whom I was negotiating. This goes to show my then naivete, for subsequent study has taught me that none of these men were pure either. See, for example, the *Politically Incorrect Guide* series of Regnery Publishing.

It amazes me how long men remember eloquent words while so quickly forgetting the bloody deeds they conceal. Who can doubt the absolute evil of power, no matter in whose hands?

Another deeply disturbing experience remains with me. In the mid-nineties, I made a visit with my children to the Los Alamos Museum—the shrine of the Mother of All Laboratories of the Science of Total Annihilation. I recall feelings of repugnance at the message of "national pride," the arrogance, the hubris expressed in write-ups accompanying the displays. Perhaps even more repelling were the momentos sold there and at Sandia Labs in Albuquerque, such as pocket-size trinkets of the Hiroshima bombs, that we may remember with satisfaction how we delivered agonizing death to hundreds of thousands of human beings, and thus feel "national pride."

After the Los Alamos visit, I began thinking that surely the American feats of atom smashing and nuclear weaponry have carried us across a threshold of world-ending destructive power. When we split the atom, we rent asunder the basic building block of material life. Can there be any more powerful statement of utter contempt for life? Can there be any

more clearly stated suicidal intention? Is it other than madness?

I thought of the hard words of Native American elders repeated to my face in about the same terms as Chiksika (1779), "The whites seek to conquer Nature, to bend it to their will and to use wastefully until it is all gone, and then simply move on, leaving behind the waste and looking for new places to take." This mentality of exploitation has now metastasized as the globally infectious disease of wantonly wasteful mass consumerism and endless war-for-profit.

Now to return to my story.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement battle involved years of working as resource consultant-advocate on behalf of Alaska Native tribes (later formed into corporations mandated by law, and thus deliberately destroyed). I read *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (Dee Brown) and *Black Elk Speaks* (Neihardt and Black Elk). I participated in tribal council meetings, funerals, potlatches, talking circles, community fish cleaning and Board meetings. We worked with "Power Lawyers," lobbied the Congress, negotiated with Cabinet Secretaries and Governors and State Legislatures and the Military and environmental groups by the dozen.

"The only agreeable country is the one where no one is afraid of tax collectors."

—Alejandro Chafuen (quoting Pedro Fernandez Navarrete), FAITH AND LIBERTY (2003), p. 58.

This experience opened my eyes and began a process of life change. The Native cause became so much a part of me that one day George Miller, Chief of the Kenaitze, introduced me to a tribal gathering as "a better Indian than most of you Indians."

I became more and more disenchanted, disgusted with industrial "civilization" and my role in it. I loved the land and the wilderness in which I spent long periods alone with only tent and backpack. Yet, paradoxically, I was running a rapidly-growing mining exploration firm among whose clients were world-class mining and oil majors with whom we promoted joint ventures on Native as well as public lands.

On the one hand my work enabled me to earn a livelihood in the wilderness, flying the length and breadth of Alaska and Yukon Territory in choppers, seeing places that looked as if no man had ever trod. On the other hand, my work and the ensuing mineral discoveries would lead inevitably to further destruction of the wilderness. The stress of cognitive dissonance and inner conflict continued to build. Contempt for the insufficient-negative-adjectives-in-my-vocabulary-to-describe the U.S. government continued to grow. Federal bureaucrats—parasites and freeloaders—were taking over the "Last Frontier" of Alaska.

Then came a major "wake-up call" (unrecognized

as such at the time) in the form of a personal blow which initiated a mini-scale Shakespearean tragedy. An internal dispute-betrayal, unskillfully managed by me, led to my ouster from the firm I had founded. Like a fool, I litigated, eventually losing after seven bitter years. Most of my savings had gone into the pockets of lawyers.

I learned that a justice system devised by constitutions and lawmakers and administered through courts, judges, and attorneys is as far from justice as peace is from war. The U.S. justice system IS war, and to the moneyed go the spoils. It is a game played by liars, thieves, and bloodsuckers. A government-enforced "rule of law" cannot deliver justice, but it can transfer wealth from those who work and earn to those who have power.

This first crisis precipitated others, including divorce and separation from my two children, as well as breaks with other business associates. I started over economically as a small-scale placer gold miner and bush pilot, and I began the spiritual quest for the meaning of life. The long, slow, tedious, painful process of de-conditioning the mind had begun in earnest.

I had now embarked upon what Comanche medicine man Edgar Monatche told me was the longest journey for the white man—the journey from the head to the heart. It became more and more clear that modern "civilization" is a structure maintained by systemic violence of man against man, and of mankind against nature.

Almost like a wounded animal, I set out on a search for a community of love and reason that revered goodness, beauty, and truth. This led me into the literature of Eastern Masters such as Paramahansa Yogananda, Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi, Neem Karoli Baba, Sri Yukteshwar, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Satya Sai Baba, Sayagi U Ba Khin, Ajahn Chah, the Bhagavad Gita, and more current writers such as Henepola Gunaratana.

On the ground it led to Elders and Grandmothers of the Athabaskan, Yupik, Lakota, Ojibway, Zuni, Cherokee, Hopi, Acoma, Apache, Nambe, Taos, Huichol, Tarahumara, Gwich'in, Tlingit, and Comanche peoples. I lived briefly on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and was adopted as a family member by Zuni elders Bessie and Paxton Boone, in whose Zuni Pueblo home I lived for more than a year.

Here I learned the Zuni prayer in the frontispiece of my book.

*"I add my breath to your breath
That our days may be long on the earth
That the days of our people may be long
That we may be one person
May our Mother bless you with life
May we finish our roads together."*

I learned of tribal council decisions that take into account the welfare of the seventh generation hence, as they must live as provided by fruits of the earth.

Here I learned of “people’s courts” where telling a lie is unknown, where punishment is aimed at restoration and not retribution, where the most feared punishment is to be banished from the community. I learned of a culture of forgiveness that emerges from depths of the heart rather than intellectualized sermons. Here I learned of Pueblo holy men who have been offering prayers for the welfare of all beings on continuous rotating 24x7 watches since time beyond memory.

“When one is on the right road, one is bound to meet other travelers.”
—old Jewish proverb

I began to fly as a volunteer pilot for Lighthawk—The Wings of Conservation. My work in Alaska was to support the Gwich’in people against Big Oil invading the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I learned more about respect for life from Sarah James and Trimble Gilbert of Arctic Village than had been taught me by my own family or culture.

Trimble was then Chief of the Arctic Village band of Gwich’in, and Sarah was Chair of the tribe’s environmental defense organization. The Gwich’in had been on to global warming long before it was discussed in public science journals. Living organically on the good earth, they knew the land, used their powers of observation, tried to warn, but few listened.

The Gwich’in have inspired me by their long-standing adversarial position versus the United States government, by their unbroken struggle for self-ruled independence, and by their refusal to relinquish their land in exchange for the Federal gravy train of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

May the Gwich’in prevail. The right to life itself is on their side. The Settlement Act was intended “legally” to extinguish all aboriginal rights to the land which had sustained them since time immemorial. This is tantamount to extinguishing the right to live. What happens to an “American” man when his right to the land which sustains his existence has been removed—extinguished—and replaced with a Federal money welfare program administered by corrupt bureaucrats from a capitol so far away as to be a foreign country?

What happens to a man of India when his tribal forest or generational farm lands are condemned in favor of a “Special Economic Zone” (in which multinational corporations are given tax breaks), and he is rendered landless and homeless? Dependent upon the pittance of a compensation package that will be siphoned into the pockets of politicians before ever reaching him, his right to life has in effect been “legally” extinguished. Who has the power to do this? “Lawmakers,” who suck the life out of the rural poor on behalf of the corporatocracy.

Flying remote areas of Mexico’s Sierra Occidental on behalf of the Tarahumara—working off dirt

strips in the Copper Canyon country with aircraft doors removed for photojournalists—coalesced into another “Aha!” experience: Corn growing in dry sandy river banks seemingly by the power of prayer only; families living in clefts of sandstone cliffs, men catching tiny fish in traps laid across desert rivulets; villagers hounded by the logging mafia and drug runners servicing the insatiable Americans; women and children of the Tarahumara living in burrows dug into the Chihuahua City sanitary landfill, while bureaucrats and corporate executives debated their fate and exchanged bribes in air conditioned hallways of the University nearby.

An experience at a World Bank conference sponsored by the University of Chihuahua crystallized it all. A Tarahumara elder faced the staff of the World Bank and American multi-national corporations. Holding aloft a pulp magazine transmission of mental filth, he said, “You are cutting the last of our trees to make them into this. These trees are the life of my people. When you have finished the trees, we will die, and you will read this.”

Contemporaneous TV images of the U.S. bombing of Baghdad during the Gulf War of Bush the Elder stirred emotions of anger, grief, shame, and disgust. My stomach churned at the depraved senselessness of it all. Denial was no longer a psychological option for me. Everywhere I turned—from the tribal women of Mexico to the bloodstained streets of Iraq—my tax money was being employed in the name of death-for-profit.

It was then that I made the final decision to leave my native land forever. I would become a man without a country. I would owe allegiance to all of humanity and to no State. I would no longer be the indentured servant of a gang of murderers sitting in a legislative body. By saying no to the taxes of the State, I would finally make a farewell to arms. Without the State, no man is my enemy.

Much earlier, I had begun to ponder deeply what I was doing with my life. Does one work, profit, consume and assuage his conscience with mercy missions among the exploited—or, finally seeing the imminent destruction of the entire planetary commons, does he abandon his profligate lifestyle altogether? See John Perkins’ *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. Every corporate employee is a mini-economic hit man. We are cannibalizing the earth and ourselves. I think Perkins’ book is one of the most important of our time.

Service as a co-founding Trustee of Spiritual Unity of the Tribes generated more catalysts. I discovered deep inner connections to Black Elk and Chief Joseph. I felt more comfort and happiness among Native Elders than with any group of so-called “advanced educated” people. The Elders spoke of love and acceptance, the “civilized” spoke of money and of war. Unable to maintain a livelihood within Native culture, disgusted with my own, I became more and

more alienated.

Study, together with personal interaction with East Indian teachers of consciousness, convinced me of my ignorance of even the physical-matter universe, let alone the nature of consciousness and the laws which govern it. My studies drew me to India. One teacher had said "Go and live among the poor," and I determined to do that. I dwelt in stone huts with earthen floors and fetched water. The Native American reverence for the circle and the Buddhist cosmology of endless cycles of birth and destruction seemed to coalesce in my personality. It became clear that Truth can be seen only through the eyes of simplicity. One must become like a child.

"Taxation is the root cause of war because without taxes there could be no wars."

—Jim Russell

Conscience brought the dilemma into clear focus. I was faced with unacceptable choices. One seemed to be cutting corners and lying on my tax return in order to prevent my work and sweat from becoming State-financed murder. The other was to acquiesce to the system, file an honest return, and become a fully paid up accomplice to the war mongers. I had pondered long about fighting the system, and in the end it seemed clear that this would be a life-consuming waste of energy. Imagination, linked to conscience, found the way out. As a human being, I am a citizen of Earth, not any particular arbitrary "Nation." I would divorce myself from my government.

I decided to arrange my affairs so that I could leave the United States and cease paying tribute to the Internal Revenue Service. Since the ouster from my firm and my near-bankruptcy, I had formed several public and private corporations and limited partnerships based on my mineral exploration and discoveries. Three placer mines and one small hardrock mine had been brought to production, and I had recovered to some extent from my financial losses.

In the early 1990s, I worked out the mechanics of how to sever all personal connections with the U.S. economy, and to arrange my financial affairs so that I would never again have taxable income as defined by the IRS. The purpose of my life—and the fruits of its labor—is not to murder, but to learn to love. I was not born upon this earth to be slave to a gang of murdering thieves, no matter by what high title they may be anointed.

When I began my tax avoidance program, I was able to use operating loss carry-forwards to offset current income. By liquidating enterprises at "going out of business" sale prices, my "adjusted taxable income" was reduced to below the reporting threshold, but the problem remained of how to deal with income reported to the IRS on Form 1099B. Without a full tax return from me, the 1099 forms filed with the IRS would seem to indicate that I had taxable

income. I felt that preparing tax returns was a waste of life, but the IRS took the position that "not filing" (even if ultimately there is no "taxable" income) is against the law. The burden of proof was on me: they wanted me to prove that I owed them no tax. I resented this intrusion into my life. Why should I have to prove to them that I owed no tax? Let them shoulder the burden and prove that I did!

I have now been a non-filer for about eleven years. For the first seven years, the IRS hounded me with letters forwarded through the American Embassy. I never responded, and apparently they eventually gave up on me. I felt comfortable not filing a return since I knew that no tax was due or would ever be due. Currently, I have no taxable income, either in India or the United States. My daily expenses in India are minimal. I own no dwelling, nor vehicle, telephone, credit card, TV, insurance, driving license, social security pension, or securities. I live on after-tax savings, which are set up in non-interest-bearing accounts. I don't worry about paying income tax on interest "earnings," nor about the principal being loaned to companies that make instruments of war (or being invested in U.S. Treasury Notes which support the Corporate-State war machine).

For every minute you are angry, you lose sixty seconds of happiness.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

At the time that I moved to India, I held the fantasy of eventual dual citizenship. Later, serious consideration of Indian citizenship dropped out of the picture because of red tape and regulations. However, being a foreigner without income, at least I pay no taxes except the excise, sales, value-added, and other taxes in the chain of production and distribution that are built into my ordinary daily consumables. Nonetheless, because of these taxes, my bread labor of the past still finances a big war machine.

The fact of unavoidable, built-in taxes is one of the reasons for not being a "legal citizen" of any country. People support the structural violence of the State simply by maintaining their citizenship status. When one becomes a non-citizen, as I would like to be, then one's position becomes that of someone who has been robbed. One is thus not responsible for what the thief does with the stolen money he takes from his victim.

In both the United States and India, governments have made it nearly impossible to live a decent and honest productive life. The State makes it impossible to live a decent (meaning non-destructive) and productive life—because its tax-levies upon our labor are employed to finance murder. The State has also made it impossible to live an honest life. In India, quite literally the sustenance of life depends upon bribes and kickbacks—because of government controls over the absolute basics (food, fuel, shelter). You can neither construct nor sell a house without gov-

ernment permission. Propane cooking gas requires a government license to purchase. Telephone connection requires government paper including photo ID. Food in government shops—sometimes the only available—requires a “ration card.” Admission to government hospitals—the only ones affordable to the poor—requires “grease.” All these and many other things require bribes: telephone line maintenance, electrical connection and line maintenance; reliable postal service; a seat in a good school; water connection; clearance of property title transfer; obtaining a bank account in government bank (often the only available); obtaining a passport and driving license. The list is endless. The pit of corruption is bottomless.

“The Law of Two Feet”: If a person is in a place where he or she doesn’t want to be, and is not learning or contributing, the individual should use his or her own two feet and leave.”
—(Shabbat 54b)

Since 1995, I have made my full-time domicile in India. I became Trustee and co-manager of meditation centers, helping to design and construct two centers. Working with Indian colleagues, I served as a small-time village social worker. I have assisted in small-scale school and library construction, village water works, and farming technology projects, book distribution, and an adult literacy program. I support education of Tibetan refugee children and have assisted Buddhist monks, a Gandhi Ashram, and a free school for children of widows. These are small-scale individual efforts. I am a member of Friends of Gandhi Museum Pune, and gandhisalt.org.

Current activities of my Indian wife include work for Indo-Pakistan people-to-people peace conferences, adult literacy for slum-dweller women, night shelter for the homeless, a municipal waste management composting project, saving old-growth trees of Pune city, peace education manuals (adopted by the central government), peace library and book distribution, and an international peace website. She is a member of National Society for Clean Cities, World Foundation on Reverence for All Life, and co-founder of Friends of Gandhi Museum Pune.

On philosophical grounds, I would like to implement my decision to terminate my United States citizenship, and to become a citizen of no Nation-State. I have published my personal Declaration of Severance and Independence from the United States at page 227 of my book. Its Preamble is a long list of the chain of abuses of my human rights by the United States. As a stateless person, I plan to ask—by laying my life on the line—the question whether humanity, with its political institutions, is capable of allowing a man to live free, without the State. I plan as an act of civil disobedience not to renew my passport and visa. This is my claim to self-ownership, and the freedom of movement without which sustenance of life is not possible. This is

my claim to the right to life.

I will claim my right to ignore the State. At www.StatelessFreedom.org, I have created a website that will feature more details. Soon (already there is the “deadline tension” of getting documents prepared for my heirs), I will be outside the “law,” subject to the whims of Power. What destiny awaits an “illegal alien”? Whatever the consequences, I’ve had enough of voluntary servitude to lies and murder. Let me live out my twilight years in a manner worthy of the human being.

I, Jeff Knaebel, undertake this risk as a duty to humanity and the ideals of liberty. Guided by my conscience, I openly declare my repudiation of U.S. income tax laws and declare my disobedience thereto. I do not labor that my earnings should end up as bombs which shred the bodies of women and children.

My purpose on this earth is not to finance destruction and murder, but to learn the practice of gratitude and reverence for all life. I seek a life of love and reason.

I have no loyalty to the Constitution of the United States. My loyalty to humanity supersedes any loyalty to a State or any other “constituted authority” founded upon and maintained by violence and coercion. How can a rational man be loyal to a frozen-in-time document which had been drawn in secrecy for their own self-interest by a few rich and powerful men long since dead? What can be a man’s “loyalty” to a document which his so-called “representatives” and “leaders” have for generations abused, distorted and bent to their own evil purposes? Who did I appoint to commit murder in my name because of “loyalty” to the politically shrewd and cunning words of self-proclaimed “representatives” of people who never knew them? I disown all of this.

The greatest and closest threat to your liberty is generally one’s own government.
—paraphrased from a Fully Informed Jury Association (Helena, MT) pamphlet (2006)

Acquiescence to this charade makes us sheep, corralled behind a fence of words, herded by rapacious lawmakers, marched to slaughter under the delusion that we voted for it.

What do we think we are doing? How can the dead bind the living? How can the words of dead men—now ink stains upon old parchment—render current justice among the living? Life is lived by the living. The decisions of justice, of war and peace, are for the living to make according to prevailing circumstances. The metes and bounds of liberty and justice are not to be marked out by words once employed by rich men of the past to hold their power. How can you bind and shackle Life with words? Can you grasp the wind? Live and let live, we the living.

We make a mistake to plead and litigate with our

masters using only the tools they have provided us. We cannot prevail within a frame of the same rules by which we are enslaved. By this pleading, we only feed the monster with our energy and money. We must take back personal responsibility for our independence and for our survival. One way is to exercise our natural right to ignore the State, to renounce it, and to work at building an independent life, accepting neither the State's "benefits" nor its costs, to the extent we are able to avoid them.

Gandhi's example of Satyagraha (strong adherence to truth) with Ahimsa (non-violence) points to the method. Gandhi wrote that "if we take care of the means, the end will take care of itself." Thus, we must be the change we wish to see. I submit that a simple first step is to tell the truth in every transaction, to every person, at all times, in every situation. When we begin to call things by their true name—for example, "collateral damage" is murder pure and simple—we will begin to wake up to the reality of the human condition created by The Powers That Be, and to which we have acquiesced for far too long.

For me, the great challenge of nonviolent resistance has been learning—by quotidian inner application and with many (continuing) stumbling defeats—to rotate anger at senseless destruction and murder into proactive work grounded in compassion and kindness. It has been difficult to understand that the problem is more of an evil system than evil people. The institutional system exists. Weak people succumb to the temptations

of power and learn to murder. We must change the system-structure toward the feminine, toward nurturance, toward love and away from war.

"When your premise is 'Thou shalt not kill,' you can skip a lot of boring and distracting discussion and just get to work [improving yourself and the world around you.]"

—Alia Johnson

I conclude that there is no political institution or political "ism," no authoritarian person, no economic policy, and no government that can save us from the self-inflicted disaster bearing down upon us. Only the freedom to be in love with life and to express that love without arbitrary institutional barriers that label us as "the other"—and thus block person to person natural expression—can save us. This is the freedom to live in the original, unconditioned character—found deep within each of us—of total, sweeping, deep, overflowing, unconditional love of life, of this earth, of its creatures, of ourselves, of each other. To express this love, we must get the State out of our way.

May all the readers of *The Voluntaryist* live long, and live free. ▣

"If one can protest and prevent the commission of a sin by one's household, one's fellow citizens, or the whole world and does not, one is accountable for those sins."

—(Shabbat 54b)

The Voluntaryist

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