
A Real Education

James Ostrowski

The single greatest obstacle to creating a free society is government's control over education. Government dictates that children attend a school, and taxpayers pay enormous sums to subsidize "free" government schools. The frightening result is that the vast majority of citizens—nearly 90 percent—end up sending their children to government-subsidized schools.

The government school monopoly strengthens the state and harms the cause of liberty in many ways. On the state and local levels, education accounts for an enormous percentage of expenditures. It is absurd to suggest, as most Republican candidates do, that they will cut the size of state government but not touch the school system. Federal expenditures on education are still relatively small, but wait five minutes: the foot is in the door.

Next comes the complex web of educational special interest groups: teachers and their unions, suppliers, publishers, administrators, and even parents who get a free babysitting service. Three million government schoolteachers form a powerful army for statism. Since every subsidy is an argument for every other subsidy, the education lobby rolls logs with the best of them. They support not only the cause of ever-greater expenditures on education, but also the entire statist program of endlessly creative wealth redistribution and the ever-increasing bureaucratization and regu-

lation of society.

Most importantly, public schools allow government to determine the political ideas that children are allowed to learn about. Libertarians are always struck by the consistently statist perspective exhibited by the vast majority of government school inmates and parolees. These students just "know" that we needed the Constitution because the nation was in chaos, FDR saved us from the Great Depression, and TR saved us from the "robber barons."

Such ideas and more and worse are inculcated in young minds when they are soft and malleable. They gradually harden like concrete long before any of our libertarian institutions can supply an antidote. Is it not the case that most lovers of liberty formed their views as teenagers or young adults? I personally do not know a single person who became a libertarian after age thirty. You have to get them while they're young or forget them. Presently, that task is impossible.

The present ban on religion in government schools aids the statist viewpoint. As all totalitarian regimes know, religions posit a scheme of values prior to and superior to the state. It is not the case, however, that no religion is taught in government schools. If religion is broadly defined to include even "one's ultimate concern," it becomes obvious that the religion taught in government schools is that interventionist government is the ultimate human value. Govern-

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The Voluntaryist

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The Voluntaryist

Whole Number 140

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

1st Quarter 2009

Only Freedom Breeds

Excellence

One voluntaryist's reaction to a reading of THE DISSENTING TRADITION IN AMERICAN EDUCATION, by James C. Carper and Thomas C. Hunt (New York: Peter Lang, 2007. ISBN 978-0-8204-7920-0. See www.peterlang.com.)

By Carl Watner

It is often said that the victorious side in a war gets to write its history. This observation is no less relevant to philosophical disputes than military confrontations. In the case of schools and schooling, the dominant, winning side in the struggle over control of the education of the young in the United States has been American governments, at all levels. This is evidenced by compulsory school attendance laws and government-run schools supported by local, state, and federal taxation.

In their book, THE DISSENTING TRADITION IN AMERICAN EDUCATION, James Carper and Thomas Hunt point out that education was either church or familial throughout most of the early American colonies and states. "[T]he colonial approach to education continued virtually unchanged throughout the late 1700s and early 1800s." Much of colonial and pioneer America was so far from the seat and power of governments that there were few compulsory attendance laws or taxes for the purpose of supporting what few government schools there were. It was then accepted as a common law right that parents were responsible for the educational, moral, and religious upbringing of their children. Anyone trying to assume control of the children against the parents' wishes (at least on the frontier) would have probably been shot peremptorily. This was the attitude of the rugged individualist whose schooling was "unsystematic, discontinuous, and unregulated" by the State. [241]

So how is it that people who rejected government schools, objected to paying taxes for their support, and opposed compulsory attendance laws are today called "dissenters"? How and why is it that Americans have moved from the acceptance of parental responsibility for their children's schooling to a position according the State the major decision-making power over their children's education? In short, why aren't the "dissenters" those who called for State control? The short answer: the State so legitimized itself in the eyes of its citizens that they readily acceded to the State's philosophical position. Thus, the new

norm became State control and those who opposed it became dissenters, even though parental control has been the naturally accepted way throughout much of human history.

The "dissenting tradition" in England and the United States traces its roots back to the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 in England. Anyone who refused to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church found themselves labeled as a "dissenter" or "nonconformist." Every schoolmaster and every private school had to "conform to the liturgy of the Church of England." In order to avoid both persecution and prosecution, much of "Nonconformist education went underground, so to speak." The Dissenting Academies became well-known for "their innovation and scholarship." "No one, indeed, in eighteenth-century England, could claim the title 'friends of liberty' ... with more justification than the Dissenters, for they were enamoured not only of their own liberty in matters of religious conscience but also of secular causes resting on the inherent rights of human personality, wherever they were in question." [Smith 114]

The main theme of THE DISSENTING TRADITION IN AMERICAN EDUCATION is that

As was the case with the traditional established churches in Old Europe and early America, however, individuals and groups have expressed objections to [both government control and support of religion and schooling]. Since ... [public schooling's] inception in the mid-1800s, they have dissented on religious, cultural, philosophical, and/or pedagogical grounds. [4] [D]issenters have claimed that tax-supported, state-regulated, compulsory public schooling violates the rights of conscience and religious liberty. Specifically, they have objected to the prevailing orthodoxy, purveyed by the state through its public schools in a given era, to paying twice for mandated education (taxes and tuition) in order to exercise their right to educate their children according to their beliefs, and to intrusive state regulations of alternative educational arrangements that embody worldviews that differ from ... [the] public orthodoxy. [266-267] The present volume focuses on episodes of religiously and/or culturally motivated dissent from the prevailing orthodoxy of public [school] education, universal taxation for public schools, government responsibility for schooling, and state attempts to control nonconforming schools. It is not a

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The Voluntaryist

Editor: Carl Watner

Subscription Information

Published quarterly by The Voluntaryists, P.O. Box 275, Gramling, SC 29348. A six-issue subscription is \$25. For overseas postage, please add \$5. Single back issues are \$5. Gold and silver readily accepted. Please check the number on your mailing label to see when you should renew. THE VOLUNTARYIST is online at www.voluntaryist.com.

The Obviousness of Anarchy

By John Hasnas

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

LOOK AROUND!

By Carl Watner

Lector, si documentum requiris, circumspice.

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

John Hasnas has done the same thing. He writes that "A wise man once told me that the best way to prove something is possible is to show that it exists." Well? If proof (*documentum*) is required, LOOK AROUND! There are countless examples of voluntaryism in everyday life and in American history. We know that "a stable, successful society without government can exist" because it "has, and to a large extent, still does" exist. This, in fact, is one of the ongoing purposes of THE VOLUNTARYIST and my anthology, I MUST SPEAK OUT: to document the historical instances of non-political cooperation among human beings.

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

voluntaryism, not statism.

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

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

The Obviousness of Anarchy

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

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

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

Societies do not spring into existence complete with government police forces. Once a group of people has figured out how to reduce the level of interpersonal violence sufficiently to allow them to live together, entities that are recognizable as government often develop and take over the policing function. Even a marauding band that imposes government on others through conquest must have first reduced internal strife sufficiently to allow it to organize itself for effective military operations. Both historically and logically, it is always peaceful coexistence first, government services second. If civil society is impossible without government police, then there are no civil societies. ...

When government begins providing services formerly provided non-politically, people soon forget that the services were ever provided non-politically and assume that only government can provide them.

"The worst lesson compulsory government schools teach [their students] at an early age is that it's okay to rob at gun point from others to solve your problems."

—Stormy Mon, IMAGINE FREEDOM (1999), p. 47.

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ment schools forbid the teaching of any religion but state worship.

Government schools introduce and reinforce the bureaucratic mentality, the opposite of a free and spontaneous attitude toward life. To the bureaucratic mind, life is about unthinking adherence to a set of arbitrary rules of behavior established by superiors in a chain of command. No heavy thinking is required; just follow orders. By their very nature, such rules do not differentiate between individuals, but treat all as a mass. Twelve years of habituation to such a mode of living generally inoculates students from resistance to the bureaucratic state they will be suffering under for the remainder of their lives.

Though many government school products survive the experience with their minds intact, many hundreds of thousands emerge ill-equipped, intellectually or morally, to function independently in today's world. These misfits fill out the ranks of petty criminals, welfare recipients, drug users, and beggars of one form or another. Naturally, the existence of such folk leads to calls for more social service programs, police, prisons, and more spending on education! In this way, government creates its own demand, as the failure of one government program provides the impetus for the next one.

It is therefore no exaggeration to state that government control over education is the ultimate foundation of statism today. No substantial progress for liberty will occur unless this foundation is cracked. How do we go about this? Our only choices are to revolt, reform, or withdraw. Leaving revolt to a far corner of our minds for the time being, we are left with reform or withdrawal.

Can government schools be reformed? No. The only viable reform option on the table is vouchers. As Lew Rockwell took the lead in pointing out, vouchers do not move us in the direction of a free market in education. Rather, they constitute a form of educational socialism for the middle class. They provide an excuse for the total regulation of private schools as a condition of funding. "Whose bread I eat, his song I must sing."

Beyond the weakness of the leading proposal for reform, there is the sheer impossibility of defeating the education lobby in the political arena. These special interests simply care more about stopping reform

than the reformers do about enacting it. They have more bodies prepared to spend more money, time, and energy. They vote early and often. The laws of rational apathy and rational ignorance protect the present system as they protect all other aspects of the statist system. Reform will not be enacted, and even if it is, it will increase, not decrease, the size and power of government.

Private schools, in the short run, are not the answer. There are too few of them. Those close by tend to be too secular or too religious or the wrong religion, depending on one's point of view. Further, millions of parents, already taxed to death to support public schools, cannot presently afford expensive private schools.

Which leaves only one alternative; withdrawal. This is commonly referred to as home schooling. The spontaneous growth of the home-schooling movement with close to two million students has begun to capture public attention. I am not prepared to say that home schooling is the ideal form of education for everyone. I am prepared to say with certainty that it is the only political strategy that can destroy the public school monster.

Let's make the first day of government school a national day of home schooling. Imagine the embarrassment for the educational establishment if the classrooms were empty on the first day of school. Suppose they gave a bad education and nobody came? In our government-school-induced, semi-literate culture, that picture would be worth a thousand words.

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Bad Schools

Supporters of educational freedom have often been accused of advocating bad schools. Edward Baines, Jr. (1800-1890), an English voluntaryist, responded to this argument in the following manner:

In one sense I am [an advocate of bad schools]. I maintain that we have as much right to have wretched schools as to have wretched newspapers, wretched preachers, wretched books, wretched institutions, You cannot proscribe all these things without proscribing Liberty. The man is a simpleton who says that to advocate Liberty is to advocate badness. ... I maintain that Liberty is the chief cause of excellence; but it would cease to be Liberty if you proscribed everything inferior. Cultivate giants if you please; but do not stifle dwarfs. [Smith 123]

al. 133]

One of the chief aims of dissenters, both in England and North America was epitomized by William McLoughlin, author of *NEW ENGLAND DISSENT 1630-1833*, when he wrote that “the principal aspect of the struggle against the Puritan establishment” in America was “the effort to abolish compulsory tax support for any and all denominations.” But if religious taxes are coercive and to be resisted, why not school taxes, and every other form of taxation? The principle at work is the same regardless of the purpose behind the tax. Property must be forcibly taken from some people and applied in ways which they (the owners) would not ordinarily direct it. As McLoughlin wrote, taxes were justified because it was believed that “the authority of the church [wa]s as essential to the continued existence of civil society as that of the [S]tate.”

Good Schools

When a school is good, I conceive that it will support itself, and when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support it, so that its Professors are obliged to call for the help of the Civil Power, 'tis a Sign, I apprehend of its being a bad one.

—Paraphrasing Benjamin Franklin's comments on religion, from his letter to Richard Price, October 7, 1780.

The question of support for religion was often compared to the responsibility of the state toward all institutions concerning the general welfare - the courts, the roads, the schools, the armed forces. If justice, commerce, education, religion, and peace were essential to the general welfare, then ought these not to be supported out of general taxation? It was no more inconsistent in the minds of most New Englanders to require a general tax for the support of religion than to require, as Jefferson advocated, a general tax for the creation and maintenance of a public school system. [McLoughlin 610]

Who was being inconsistent? Those who called for the cessation of religious taxes should have also called for the cessation of school taxes, as well as of all other taxes.

Thus, the voluntarist does not argue for the abolition of school taxes, but for the removal of all taxes. The voluntarist does not argue for separation of church and State or for the separation of schools and State, but rather for the abandonment of the State. These issues, by the way they are framed assume that the State must, and should, exist. Freedom and men's natural rights are of one piece. If they may be violated in one area of life, they may by the same reasoning be breached in another. So long as the State exists, it must necessarily violate the property rights

of those over whom it rules. Religious freedoms, educational freedoms, commercial freedoms, are all endangered by the State. It is too bad that so few in the dissenting tradition have understood this truth. Carper and Hunt conclude their book with a plea for “disestablishment a second time.” As a voluntarist I advocate “disestablishment for the last and final time.” Hopefully, Messrs. Carper and Hunt and my readers understand the import of what I mean: the abandonment of the State and its replacement by voluntary organizations once and for all. [V]

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I complained that I had no shoes until I met a man that had no feet.

... Traditionally, police services were not provided by government and, to a large extent, they still are not. Therefore, government is not necessary to provide police services. ...

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

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

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

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State-Run Schools and Communism

A radical principle underlying the state school system is its unadulterated communism. The assertion that the state has the right to educate at the common expense ... is communism in its worst form. Every argument adduced to justify it in relieving parents ... of burdens they are able to carry may be brought forward to relieve them in other lines of duty. It is the duty of the father ... to feed, to clothe, to shelter, and to educate his children. ... Herbert Spencer in *SOCIAL STATICS* argues:

“If the benefit, importance, or necessity of education be assigned as a sufficient reason why government should educate, then may the benefit, importance, or necessity of good, clothing, shelter, and warmth be assigned as sufficient reason why government should administer these also?”

When parental responsibility abdicates in favor of government responsibility, encouragement is lent to mendicancy, and the breeding of pauperism begins. Shutting our eyes to this unwelcome truth does not make it less a truth. Having drifted away from the sound practices of our American forefathers who believed in paying for the education, secular and religious, of their children we find ourselves swept along in a flood of pernicious political principles.

—B.J. McQuaid in his article “Religion in Schools,” *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* (1881), and reprinted in his book *CHRISTIAN FREE SCHOOLS* (Rochester: 1882), pp. 148-149.

Only Freedom Breeds Excellence

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comprehensive history of dissent in American education. [4]

The book discusses a number of prominent personalities who opposed public education, in one way or another. “Chapter 2 features the dissenting role of the aggressive nineteenth-century Catholic Bishop of New York City, John Hughes, called ‘Dagger John’ by one of his biographers.” Hughes claimed that it was unfair to tax Catholics “for schools that their faith would not permit their children to attend.” [5] His support for parochial schools never wavered, even after he was unsuccessful in his campaign to obtain public funds for the schools run by the Church. Chapter 6 focuses on three nineteenth-century Presbyterian dissenters: Charles Hodge, Robert L. Dabney,

and William M. Beckner. Hodge, a long-time theologian who taught at Princeton Seminary for more than 50 years, advocated Presbyterian parochial schools unless the government-run schools embraced “religious instruction in the basic doctrines of Protestantism.” Dabney, of whom we shall hear more about later, opposed the establishment of state-run schools in his home state, Virginia, and argued that the family and parents, not the government, should be the primary agency responsible for the education of children. Beckner, a Presbyterian layman and Kentucky state legislator supported the “fledgling public school system in the 1870s and 1880s.” When the Kentucky state Constitution underwent revisions in 1890, he became concerned that all students would be forced to attend government-run schools. He sponsored a statement in the “Kentucky Bill of Rights that forbade the state from forcing parents to send their children to a school to which they were conscientiously opposed.” [7]

The next three chapters of the book deal with dissent during the last half of the twentieth-century. During the early 1970s, numerous Christian day schools appeared “throughout the country and were often involved in clashes with state authorities regarding regulatory issues.” In 1976, the Ohio Supreme Court handed down a decision regarding the legality of The Tabernacle Christian School founded by Pastor Levi Whisner. “It ruled that Ohio’s detailed accreditation standards” were unconstitutional when applied to religious schools, and that those religious schools “were not subject to regulations that in effect compromised the ability of the schools to carry out their mission.” As homeschooling became popular during the 1980s and 1990s, school officials in nearly every state tried to impose reporting, teaching certification, and testing requirements. In South Carolina “a group of homeschool advocates mounted a successful effort to pass legislation that recognized the supervisory authority of an association run by and for homeschoolers as an alternative to government approval.” [8-9]

As long-time readers of THE VOLUNTARYIST know, I am a homeschooling parent and have written many articles in defense of parental control and educational freedom. I am what our authors would call a dissenter, but it is strange that only one of the dissenters they describe comes anywhere close to the voluntaryist position. Robert L. Dabney (1820-1898) was born and raised in Virginia, pastored his first church in 1846, and eventually became a professor of theology and philosophy at the University of Texas, Austin. In 1879 and 1880, he published two articles against government-run education in the PRINCETON REVIEW. “Dabney vigorously asserted that God had designated the family, not the church or the state, as the agency in charge of the education of children.” He prophesied (correctly) that “state-sponsored schooling would inevitably devolve into a

thoroughly secularized, atheistic education.” [178] As our authors explain, Dabney

rejected the very concept of state-sponsored schooling. His argument against public schooling rested on the assumption that the family was the primary unit of society. He maintained that parents were, or ought to be, the sole agents of the family. The state’s duty was to protect the family, not to interfere with it, especially by usurping one of the family’s principal functions, namely, the education of children. Basing his position on, among other things, an exegesis of Genesis and the Fifth Commandment, the Presbyterian theologian asserted that God held parents alone responsible for their children’s intellectual, moral, and spiritual training. [179]

Government “education has torn us from our moorings, our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us.”

—M. K. Gandhi quoted in Gene Sharp, THE POLITICS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION (1973), p. 57.

In his article, “Secularized Education,” Dabney pointed out that his theory of parental control makes the parent sovereign “during the child’s mental and moral minority.” What, he asks, if the parent forms “his child amiss”? Well, “inasmuch as that supreme authority must be placed somewhere, God has indicated that, on the whole, no place is so safe for it as the hands of the parent, who has the supreme love for the child and the superior opportunity. He acknowledged that parents occasionally neglected their children, but so did the government.” [paragraph 43, page 13, and also see 184]

‘In an imperfect state of society,’ Dabney reasoned in language similar to that of today’s educational dissenters, ‘the instances of parental abuse of the educational function will be partial and individual.’ [184] Yes, [but] does the State never neglect and pervert its powers? With the lessons of history to teach us the horrible and almost universal abuses of power in the hands of civil rulers, that question is conclusive. In the case of an unjust and godless State, the evil would be universal and sweeping. [paragraph 43, page 13]

And have we not seen this coercive monopolization of education nearly result in the abandonment of the most effective method of early reading instruction (phonics)? The widespread disaster of teaching several generations of children the look-say method of reading could have only been avoided if educational freedom had been embraced. [Coulson 367]

While I share Dabney’s emphasis on parental control over the educational process, he still admitted a certain ancillary role for the State, one which I

cannot accept. Nevertheless, he was at least aware of the dangers of having government involved in education. In the second of his two articles he “noted that the primary problem of free government was ‘How to trust to fallible men enough power to govern, and yet prevent its perversion?’ ... The very selfishness in them which makes them dangerous, Dabney maintained speaking of government officials, ‘will be just as certain to prompt them to pervert the proposed check as to pervert any other public power.’ He worried that with the power concentrated in the state school system those in control would be tempted to use the schools as ‘propaganda for the rulers’ partisan opinions ...’” [185] In short, he correctly perceived, as Jonathan Kozol wrote over a century later, that the “first goal and primary function of the U.S. public school is not to educate good people, but good citizens. It is the function which we call in enemy nations state indoctrination.” [Kozol 1]

Dabney, it seems, never imagined that a free and virtuous society might function without the coercive institution known as the State. He never came near to embracing my oppositional principle to government. He opposed the operation of the State in specific areas of life, but he never wished to extirpate it entirely. In the mind of the voluntaryist, the State is an invasive institution because it monopolizes certain public services in a given geographic area and because it obtains its revenues via taxation. The uniqueness of the voluntaryist position within the dissenting tradition is that while it recognizes the deleterious effects of government involvement in specific areas of life, it goes further and questions the justice of taxation and the State itself. Thus, the question is not: “Is it right to spend public monies on religion or education, etc.,?” but rather: “Can taxation, as a coercive practice, be justified at all?” In other words, it doesn’t matter how the State spends the money it coercively collects in taxes: taxation itself is theft and should be abandoned as a method of supporting social activities. Is the State a peaceful institution that society requires in order to survive, or is the State a parasitical and inherently criminal organization because it confiscates property and/or imprisons people who choose not to contribute to its support? Are people who offer peaceful and voluntary methods of competing with the State’s provision of schools, mail delivery, medical care, etc. to be called outlaws and imprisoned?

Inasmuch as the dissenting tradition originated in opposition to State control and State support of religion, Carper and Hunt emphasize the similarities in the arguments of those who argued for religious freedom centuries ago, and those who have or now argue for educational freedom. However, it seems they fail to recognize that every argument in favor of religious freedom and educational freedom can be equally applied to arguing against the existence of the State itself. Just as religious dissenters demand-

ed that all religions and churches be supported by voluntary membership and voluntary giving, so the educational voluntaryist demands that all schools be supported by voluntary participation and voluntary giving. Both groups oppose taxation for the purpose of maintaining a State religion or State educational establishment, and members of both groups resist compulsory attendance and/or compulsory membership in churches and schools. As Herbert Spencer recognized in 1842, the argument for religious freedom can be used to buttress the case of freedom in other spheres. The true basis of religious freedom is the natural rights of every man to his own person and property. The voluntaryist insists that these natural rights be extended consistently to every sphere of peaceful human activity.

[T]o proclaim a people free to choose their own government but then to insist that the government determine, through a government-controlled compulsory educational system, the very attitudes and values by which the people will choose becomes the most insidious and pernicious form of tyranny: it gives the people the illusion of freedom while all along controlling them through a form of governmental programming.

—Blair Adams, WHO OWNS THE CHILDREN? (1991), p. 46.

In fact, during the 1830s and 40s, there was a group of English voluntaryists who urged free trade in education, just as they supported free trade in corn and cotton. Such leading voluntaryists as Edward Baines, Jr. and Edward Miall “argued that government should have nothing at all to do with education.” They believed that “government would employ education for its own ends,” (teaching habits of obedience and indoctrination) and that government-controlled schools would ultimately teach children to rely on the state for all things. Baines, for example, noted that “[w]e cannot violate the principles of liberty in regard to education without furnishing at once a precedent and inducement to violate them in regard to other matters.” He also argued that deficiencies in the then current system of education (both private and charitable) were no justification for State interference. Should freedom of the press be compromised because we have bad newspapers? “I maintain that Liberty is the chief cause of excellence; but it would cease to be Liberty if you proscribed everything inferior.” [Smith 121-124] As advocates of the free market have constantly pointed out, schools that do not offer educational services that are satisfactory to their customers “will be forced out of existence by competition, because parents will not have to continue sending their children to those schools. Excellence will breed further excellence.” [McCarthy, et.