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

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"Freedom an' whisky gang thegither": The Problem of Governance in the Early American Republic

By Carl Watner

Imagine that you were the leader of a revolutionary government that had recently and successfully wrested power from its parent country. Imagine that some of your citizens refused to obey the laws that you and your legislature had promulgated. What would you do? Would you ignore their disobedience; or would you send the police and army after them? How would you assert your authority, and maintain the power and legitimacy of your government?

Such a situation faced President George Washington and Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton after Congress passed a federal revenue law on March 3, 1791. [1] How they responded to this and other early threats to their power illustrates that even newly-founded and limited governments, so-called, share the same predicament as established States. They must collect their revenues regardless of the cost. If they fail to suppress disobedience, they will only be faced with more disobedience, with the end result being an ultimate challenge to their existence.

Over the years, I have published articles describing the western Pennsylvania Whiskey Rebellion of 1794. My purpose in those articles has generally been to demonstrate that our early American government has always had, and always exercised, its sovereign power to tax and seize the property or body of anyone refusing to pay their taxes. [2] What recently renewed my interest in the topic was reading an article on civil disobedience in the Kentucky territory during the same era. [3] As it turns out, resistance to payment of the federal excise tax on whiskey was widespread in all American frontier areas, from northern New York to southern Georgia. Furthermore, as Mary Tachau, author of this study, observes; until recently "this remarkable story of tax evasion" has experienced a near blackout and cover-up. [4]

Resistance to the excise was part and parcel of the frontiersman's British heritage and tradition. The inhabitants of the British Isles, especially Irishmen, had distilled their own whiskey for centuries. When a levy on spirits in Ireland was introduced in 1661, "it was totally

ignored." [5] Englishmen, too, developed a "hearty dislike" for excise taxes. [6] In the era before modern science, whiskey was valued not only for its intoxicating effects, but for its use as an anesthetic, antiseptic, and common everyday medicine. To the frontier farmer, distilling was not only a natural birthright, but a condition necessary to his economic survival. It was practically the only way to convert his grain into ready money, by transporting it over the mountains to where there was a cash market for his brew. As far as the American frontiersman was concerned, his whiskey and freedom hung together. [7] He owned the seed grain, he owned the land, he labored to harvest the crop, and he used his own equipment to distill the brew. Whose property had he violated; whom had he hurt; and was there any identifiable party to whom he owed money for the right to do as he pleased? "To convert [his] grain into spirits was considered to be as [much] a natural right as to convert grain into flour" for his bread. Why should he be subject to a duty for drinking his grain, rather than eating it? [8]

Throughout much of the 18th Century, vast stretches of the American frontier "were left without the slightest" trace of government authority. [9] To the American frontiersman, London might as well have been in another universe, and the new capital of the United States, Philadelphia, on another continent. Central government could be safely ignored. Other than attempting to deliver the mail, it had practically no presence on the frontier. It offered little protection from the Indians. In 1791, while Kentucky was still officially part of Virginia, "it was difficult to organize a tax collection system" because tax collectors resigned just about as fast as new ones could be appointed. [10] Most Kentuckians viewed the excise law as so odious that between 1792 and 1796, no lawyer could be found to represent the federal government and prosecute those who failed to pay their whiskey excise. [11] Even the governor of the state refused to pay. [12]

The frontier regions west of the Allegheny mountains had a long history of ignoring governmental authority. During the 1760s, Governor John Penn of Pennsylvania had referred to his western citizens as a "lawless ungovernable crew." [13] After the start of the American

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Spending Other People's Money Is Wrong - Some Observations on the Bailout of October 2008

By Carl Watner

[Editor's Note: The following essay was written in early October, but not distributed or posted until mid-December. In the interval, two additional observations occurred to me. First, implicit in the term "bailout" is the assumption that it be a "government" bailout. Although there could be such a thing as a "private, voluntary" bailout, that is beyond even the pale of the imagination of most Americans. Thus, in the context of voluntaryism, to be opposed to the government bailout is to be opposed to the "government," not the bailout per se (e.g., a voluntaryist's opposition to government schools is to the government, not to private schools, per se.) We are opposed to the means, the coercion; not the end, which in these cases would be "saving" a business organization or schooling. Second, another reason to oppose the "bailouts" is that it sets a precedent for the bailout of every other industry. If a bailout is good for the Big Three carmakers, why not bailout the airlines, the franchised car dealers, all the local used car lots, the few surviving buggy makers, and the mom and pop groceries? There is no principled way to answer the question, except to say there should be no bailouts for anyone unless done voluntarily.]

The recent financial turmoil (circa September 2008) should, once again, remind us that the institutions of government money and fractional reserve banks are systemically unsound and inherently dishonest. To realize how far from reality we have actually strayed, consider the facts that the United States dollar was originally defined as 371.25 grains of fine silver (roughly three-quarters of a troy ounce). Until 1933 it was possible to exchange 20 government paper dollars for a \$20 gold piece (containing 96.75% of a troy ounce of .999 gold) at the US Treasury. Today (October 4, 2008) it takes more than ten government dollars to buy an ounce of

silver and eight hundred government dollars to buy an ounce of gold. Furthermore, the only thing the government will give you for its paper dollars is more paper dollars. In short, government paper money is an IOU and the only thing that the government will give you in exchange for it is another one of their IOUs. The value of the government dollar rests on confidence, confidence that others will accept them in exchange for real goods and services and an expectation that the government will continue in existence and accept its own IOUs in payment for the coerced tribute (taxes) it levies. When people lose confidence (as when the government issues so many IOUs that hyperinflation sets in) or when the government disappears (as when its territory is taken over by another government after an unsuccessful war), then those government IOUs become valueless.

When money was real (had an intrinsic value) and banks were warehouses for gold and silver, the expansion of the money supply could only come about through the discovery and mining of new metals. A false expansion of the money supply could come about by the fraudulent issue of warehouse receipts in excess of the gold and silver on deposit in the banks. When fractional reserve banking became a governmentally chartered and legally sanctioned activity, bankers began lending the government money in exchange for government bonds. Thus, the stage was set for an expansion of the money supply (and for enslaving the taxpayers by way of forcing them to pay interest on government IOUs [literally created out of thin air as bookkeeping entries]). This, in turn, caused the boom/bust scenarios described by the Austrian theory of the business cycle. When the mal-investments created during the boom are discovered, the bust occurs. The bust (or depression) is a healthy phenomenon because it represents a recognition of and return to reality. Anything that delays that catharsis is unhealthy.

The federal government bailout of late September and early October 2008 is only an attempt on the part of the government to continue its stimulation of the economy. ANY such stimulation is inherently misguided and will ultimately prove to be counterproductive. In other words, there is no such thing as a sound or wise government intervention in the economy. Consequently, the bailout is wrong for numerous reasons:

1. It is wrong from a practical and economic point of view because more government intervention to solve the problems caused by earlier government intervention is never a solution. Government intervention always

produces unintended and unforeseen consequences, which, even from the point of view of the government, are undesired.

2. The bailout is wrong because it will significantly contribute to the supply of fictitiously-created government IOUs circulating in the economy.

3. It is wrong from the point of view of personal responsibility for one's actions. If some people and organizations make mistaken investment decisions, in the natural course of events they should shoulder the burden of their mistakes. If a group of gamblers goes to Las Vegas, they should garner their winnings, but they should also shoulder their losses. Under no circumstances should others be forced to pay their losses.

4. The bailout is wrong because it permits the US Treasury to spend other people's money in ways that many of them would probably not choose. Anyone who wants to contribute to a bailout fund may do so. However, it is clear from public opinion polls that nowhere near \$ 700 billion would be collected voluntarily.

5. The bailout is wrong because it will inevitably lead to more graft and corruption in the government circles responsible for dispensing such huge sums.

6. The bailout is wrong because it, for all practical purposes, makes the Secretary of the federal treasury the economic dictator of the economy and increases the powers of the US federal government over the national economy.

7. The bailout is wrong because it steals from some and gives to others. And it makes no difference if it is the poor stealing from the rich, or the rich stealing from the poor. It is the stealing that is wrong; not what or how or to whom it is dispensed. Spending other people's money is wrong because you cannot rightfully spend what belongs to someone else. Spending other people's money without their permission is simply theft. ▣

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Revolution, David Rittenhouse, treasurer of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, stated that "adversaries of the Pennsylvania government were loath to pay taxes." He predicted that the likely consequence of non-payment would be "the early demise of the state." [14] Other frontier areas had their own backlash against state and colonial government. In the early 1770s, North Carolina regulators attacked their local courts, and the same thing had occurred in western Massachusetts during Shay's Rebellion of 1786-1787. There, the local state authorities had suppressed the disorder. The case of western Pennsylvania was only different in the sense

that it was in closer geographic proximity to federal officials in Philadelphia, and thus a direct and "embarrassing challenge to [their] authority." [15] Hamilton and Washington chose to crush resistance to the federal excise in western Pennsylvania, not only because it was closer to them, but because it would be less expensive than sending troops to North or South Carolina, or Kentucky. As Hamilton observed, "Crush resistance at the most vulnerable point and the more remote regions will fall into line." [16]

Unlike the situation in Kentucky, there were politicians in western Pennsylvania who were willing to serve the federal government and collect the excise. Pennsylvania Congressman William Findley explained this distinction to Governor Mifflin of Pennsylvania in 1792. "'It is well known,' Findley reported, 'that in some counties, as well of Virginia as of Pennsylvania, men have not, and cannot be induced by any consideration to accept of the excise offices. In those counties there have been no riots nor threatening resolutions; but this arises from the perfect unanimity which subsists in the dislike to the law.'" [17] However, in western Pennsylvania, the Treasury repeatedly pressed the issue of collection and found John Neville, a well-known state official to represent the federal government. Neville was wealthy by local standards and had originally opposed the federal excise tax when he "was a member of the Pennsylvania assembly when that body adopted a resolution condemning the tax in 1791." When he later was appointed to the office of excise inspector, his neighbors thought that he "was giving up his principles for a bribe and bartering the confidence they had in him for" a federal salary. "He became a catalyst for mounting opposition to the law." [18]

Although all the key political players in the decision to snuff out the Whiskey rebellion were Federalists and supporters of a strong central American government, there were some differences among them as to how government force was to be used. The general Federalist outlook was that any opposition to the whiskey excise was a challenge "to the very roots of authority and order." [19] Federalists believed that every good government "must provide for its own security and preservation," [20] and they saw "a permanent standing army" as a way "to coerce the people and silence them into obedience to authority." [21] President Washington took opposition to the nation's law as a personal affront to himself. "He felt that the excise was a just law," and he viewed any opposition to it as "equivalent to advocating separation from the union, 'the most dreadful of all calamities'." [22] Washington certainly

“exemplified the Federalist belief that a display of force was necessary” not only to subdue the rebels, but to show the world that his government was committed to a lasting union” of the states. [23]

In early September 1792, Alexander Hamilton urged President Washington to issue a public proclamation taking a strong stand on the patriotic necessity of paying the excise. As Edmund Randolph, the United States Attorney General (1789-1794), pointed out, the enforcement of the excise law was “a delicate problem with potentially wide-ranging ramifications.” [24] The federal government had no soldiers of its own. It had to rely on state militiamen to enforce its laws. Governor Mifflin of Pennsylvania, a Republican, hesitated to commit his state’s militia, “and he argued heatedly that out of hatred for the excise, unwillingness to march on fellow citizens, or desire to avoid a long expedition, large numbers of [his] militia might ignore his orders.” [25] Instead of sending an army after the resisters, Randolph advocated the use of the civil courts by indicting the tax evaders and trying them in the regular courts. Only if that failed, would he consent to calling out the militia to enforce the law. [26] In contrast to Hamilton, Randolph argued, “The strength of a government is the affection of [its] people,” not their fear of its army. [27]

President Washington took the position that military force was only to be used as a last resort. His Anti-federalist opponents had adopted the Whig opposition to standing armies. “[O]therwise there would be a cry at once, ‘The cat is let out; we now see for what purpose an army was raised’.” Washington feared that the use of troops to enforce the law would shift the public argument from the question of law enforcement to the question of standing armies. [28] In its final version, the presidential proclamation of September 15, 1792 was issued as a public broadside and published in the leading newspapers. “It decried all actions ‘tending to obstruct the operation of the laws of the United States for raising a revenue upon [distilled] spirits ... subversive of good order, contrary to the duty that every citizen owes his country and to the laws, and of a nature dangerous to the very being of government’.” Washington warned all opponents of the government and its excise that they “would be dealt with harshly.” [29]

Of all the participants in the discussions about how to enforce the law, Alexander Hamilton was, from the beginning, the most militant. He had originally conceived the idea of the whiskey tax as part of his plan to fund the Revolutionary War debt, and as early as July 1792, he had advocated proceeding against the non-payers in western North Carolina. He was dissuaded from this idea

by Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, John Jay, who warned that nothing could be worse for the new federal government than a military humiliation at the hands of tax rebels. “No strong declarations should be made unless there be ability and disposition to follow them with strong measures.” [30] Nevertheless, Hamilton feared that “if forceful action was not taken ‘the spirit of disobedience ... [would] naturally extend and the authority of the government will be prostrate’.” [31]

During the two years following the issuance of the federal proclamation, little progress was made in satisfying the concerns of the excise resisters. In February 1794, President Washington received what he perceived to be a treasonous petition of grievances against the national government sent by the members of the Mingo Creek Society in Washington County, Pennsylvania. [32] They sought free navigation of the Mississippi River, government protection from the Indians, and relief from the excise. The following month, John Neville, their regional supervisor for the collection of the excise, was accosted. In July, his house was surrounded and fired upon by a crowd of fifty men. The next day it was torched by a mob of over 400. Several men were killed, but Neville escaped. When this news reached President Washington and Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton in Philadelphia, they conferred with other officials. At a conference on August 2, 1794, Hamilton told the representatives of the Pennsylvania state government that the moment of crisis had arrived. [33] “The immediate question,” he concluded, was “whether the government of the United States shall ever raise revenue by any internal tax.” [34] Hamilton advocated raising a national militia of 12,000 men and marching them to western Pennsylvania to put down the rebellion. As Hamilton put it, “Government can never be said to be established until some signal display has manifested its power of military coercion.” [35] President Washington was of a like mind, accepting “Hamilton’s premises about the necessity for strict enforcement lest the laws and government itself be undermined, but he was [also] cognizant that force would not only need public support but would also have political overtones beyond the simple enforcement of the law.” [36] As a result of this conference Supreme Court Justice James Wilson certified on August 4, 1794 that a state of rebellion existed in western Pennsylvania. Washington put out the call for 12,950 militia men from the states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. [37] As Governor Mifflin had predicted, “[d]raft resistance was common,” [38] and even after being enrolled, the desertion rate was high. [39]

By the time the national army arrived near Pittsburgh,

whatever rebellion may have existed had practically disappeared. “[P]erhaps as many as 2000 ‘rebels’ had fled deeper into the wilderness before the army arrived.” [40] An amnesty was declared for those who would swear their loyalty to the government. Ultimately, about 150 suspects were rounded up and about 20 were transported back to Philadelphia for trial. Two were ultimately convicted, and then later pardoned. [41] Washington “believed ‘this event having happened at the time it did, was fortunate’. The troops had ‘terrified the insurgents,’ and the government had taught its enemies within and without the nation about the spirit and power that bolstered the Union.” [42]

It was Hamilton who first coined the term “whiskey insurrection.” In a December 1794 letter he wrote, “Our insurrection is most happily terminated. Government has gained from it reputation and strength.” In an earlier letter of late October 1794 he had written that “the insurrection will do us a great deal of good and add to the solidity of everything in this country.” [43]

If Hamilton learned any lesson from the Whiskey Rebellion it was that it was best for the government to never employ an inadequate force in subduing its opponents. “‘Tis far better to err on the other side. Whenever the government appears in arms, it ought to appear like Hercules and inspire respect by display of strength.” [44] In retrospect, this was certainly the case. “President Washington raised more troops to put down the Whiskey Rebellion than were ever used to fight the Indians on the frontier and more than any force he had commanded in the American Revolution.” [45]

The main purpose of raising and marching an army to western Pennsylvania was to demonstrate that the federal government was a permanent and secure fixture in the American political environment. It was successful in the sense that it showed the federal government could flex its military muscle hundreds of miles distant from its center of power, but it failed to insure the collection of the excise tax, for in fact, nonpayment of the tax continued for years after the insurrection was suppressed. [46].

This exercise of national power at the time of the Whiskey Rebellion represents a number of “firsts.” It “marked the first time that the federal government used military force to exert its authority [directly] over the nation’s citizens.” [47] It was also the first time that a sitting president personally commanded the military in the field. The Whiskey Rebellion also marked the first time anyone in the United States was arrested and tried for treason in the federal courts. “These trials established the precedent that armed opposition to the

execution of a United States statute was equal to ‘levying war’ against the United States and thus was within the constitutional definition of treason.” [48]

The Whiskey Rebellion also clearly demonstrated the nature of limited, constitutional government. As Albert Jay Nock and Walter Lippmann pointed out, the American revolutionaries wanted to separate themselves from the British empire so they could assume the powers hitherto exercised by the English Parliament. The evidence is clear: the heroes of the American revolution and the Founding Fathers opposed the Stamp Act when they were out of power, but supported the whiskey tax when they were in power. Even most frontiersmen and whiskey rebels weren’t against taxes, per se. [49] They had a long history of willingly paying direct land taxes, and simply wanted to lessen their own tax burden by shifting it to the merchants and “large-scale speculator[s] in western lands”. [50] The Federal Constitution gave Congress “the unlimited ‘power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises’ . . . The taxing authority of the . . . national government . . . was no less, and was certainly designed to be even greater, than anything attempted by the British government during the 1760s and 1770s.” [51]

During the debates over the Constitution, critics pointed out that “the collection of taxes would be enforced . . . by [a] standing army.” “William Goudy of North Carolina feared that the taxation clause of the proposed Constitution ‘will totally destroy our liberties’ .” [52] Thus, it was with some justice that the Scottish poet, Robert Burns, wrote that freedom and whiskey hang together. Taxation is the linchpin of every government. Without the revenue provided by taxation a government could not recruit, field, and pay its soldiers; without soldiers a government could not enforce its laws.

The problem of governance under the new constitution was certainly a many nuanced one. As the Voluntaryist Statement of Purpose points out, “governments must cloak their actions in an aura of moral legitimacy in order to sustain their power,” and the early American politicians certainly understood, recognized, and acted on this insight. The necessity for, and the widespread use of, force by a government is indicative of its unwilling acceptance by those over whom it rules. “The application of force tells us that many people” will not willingly comply with the law. [53] As George Smith observed: the more force, the less legitimacy; the more voluntary compliance, the less need for force, and the higher the legitimacy level of a given government.

The lessons of the Whiskey Rebellion for the

voluntaryist are numerous. First, we must recognize the damaging effects that arise from the government's initiation of force in the conduct of otherwise benign human affairs. Second, we see that we must delegitimize the State through education; that violence must not be used to oppose state violence (because the resort to violence only gives the State an excuse to use its armed forces). Finally, we must see that the strength of a free citizenry is not in how many guns it possesses, but in its collective determination to resist. Opponents of the State must have faith in their fellow human beings - that they will not let them stand alone against the physical force of government; that they will stand together and risk individual physical injury in order to prevent collective injury to their social freedoms. [54] ▮

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book: “Would you let people smoke dope and buy penicillin without a prescription? What would happen if people were turned loose that way?” he responded,

“Yes, they would become *responsible* or they would *die* of irresponsibility. ...We create a responsible populace by giving them responsibility. Take responsibility away and you create a lethargic mentally sleeping populace. People smarten up quickly about responsibilities [they] have to make decisions for. [III-4]

Many other libertarian proclivities are apparent throughout the book. Joel says he currently opposes, and would have opposed from their inception, all child labor laws. “A willing worker and a willing employer should be able to come to agreement without governmental intervention.” [190] Children should be encouraged to learn and hone their skills by engaging in productive work, especially on the farm, under the supervision of their parents and relatives. He goes so far as to claim that making child employment illegal (as we almost do today) amounts to cultural abuse because children are prevented from coming into direct contact with the world around them.

Joel rejects the idea of having a federal and/or state-level Food and Drug Administration for a number of reasons. First, he realizes that the functions performed by government bureaucrats in the areas under their jurisdiction could be accomplished by private inspection and certification agencies. Government bureaucrats have little to lose when their inspections fail and an outbreak of disease occurs. Independent farmers put their reputations on the line when they market their own farm-grown food to the consumer. Private inspection agencies have the same

positive incentives. In addition, both the farmer and the private inspection agency are liable to those to whom they cause provable harm. Since when is the bureaucracy responsible for its failed actions? Furthermore, government programs, after they start, take on a life of their own, whether they do a good job or not. “[T]he inertia to keep ... [them] going is stronger than anything else.” [122] Joel realizes that no system of food protection, government or free market, is perfect. However, since personal integrity and accountability can never be legislated, he would prefer the latter. [69,142]

Joel is a proponent of total freedom in the food trade. He wants the farmer to have the freedom to grow what he wants and the freedom to sell to whomever he pleases. He wants every American to have the right “to decide what to eat,” from whatever source he or she chooses. “In other words, people would sign a ‘I Am Responsible for My Food’ waiver that would give them the right to opt out of government-sanctioned food,” much as they have the right to opt out of the government public schools, by either home schooling, or sending their children to private schools. Without specifically identifying it, Joel wholeheartedly embraces the libertarian self-ownership axiom.

What good is the freedom to worship, the right to keep and bear arms, and freedom of the press if we don't have the freedom to choose what to feed our bodies so we can go sing, shoot and speak? The only reason the founding fathers did not grant [us] the freedom to choose our food was because it was such a basic, fundamental personal right that they could not conceive that special protection would be needed. Granting citizens the right to choose their food would have been similar to granting them the right to see the sun rise, or to breathe. [230]

Joel talks about being at the dedication of a new public school building a few years ago. In the course of his address, the speaker said that “Every child belongs to the state.” [288] He was shocked but no one else was, but that also explains why many of his opinions shock others. All government regulation and control is premised on the idea that the citizen belongs to the state and must be protected from him-or her self as well as from others. That is why Joel is in favor of legalized drugs and alcohol. As he explains:

The same thinking that assumes it's okay for the government to keep me from smoking dope - to protect me against myself - also justifies the government to regulate my use of Vitamin C or homeopathy [or raw milk, un-inspected chicken

or homemade cookies]. My fundamentalist Christian friends go apoplectic when I say such things, but I would rather a few people blow their brains with cocaine than that my uncle be denied an unconventional medical treatment of his choice. [314]

As soon as the freedom for me to choose one thing I can ingest becomes a government issue, then that oversight can consistently be extended to any and all of my ingestion choices. If we can't own our own bodies, then what can we own? When I hear people say, 'We need a law' to correct some perceived life risk or supposed societal avarice, I cringe. Just like technology [which] can be used for good or evil, the political process is the same way. And my experience teaches me to be dubious whenever the power of government is invoked as a cure. [314-315]

Although I disagree with Joel's assertion that the political process might be used for good, there are many other libertarian themes in EVERYTHING I WANT TO DO IS ILLEGAL, and I will give a few of them only passing mention. One is the observation that all government regulation aims to stifle competition to the benefit of those companies that have current market share. Another is that the political rationale for food safety regulations is that we are property of the state. Third is that government regulations, building codes, etc. deny us the right to experiment with new methods of production and new products. "The only safety [there is] comes in our communities, our homes, our families, from the bottom up. And these institutions must be free to experiment, to innovate." [316] We can never know "how many farms and how much good, locally produced food is unavailable because of" government regulations. [180] Another is to distrust all official government pronouncements by bureaucrats or "experts," because they are usually either wrong or full of self-serving propaganda. [III-14]

Perhaps we have proved that Joel Salatin is a libertarian, albeit one who stops short of totally abandoning government the way voluntaryists do. Voluntaryists surely wish that he had a firmer grasp on the importance of property rights. For example, he never points out that all government regulations violate the property rights of peaceful people to produce, use, and trade their property as they wish. Government regulations which inhibit the sale of raw milk, butter, moonshine, or hemp, cocaine, or marijuana are all violations of the producers' rights to buy, sell, or trade

their products. Indeed, many back country moonshiners "didn't feel like the government should tell them what they should do with their property, or what they should do with the products from the land. ... [T]hey felt that they had the right to do as they pleased with their own land and the products of their own labor." [Moore, 153]

Surely one of Joel's main differences with voluntaryism is found in his discussion of "Taxes" (Chapter 18). Never once does he point out that taxes are theft. At one point he asks "How high should taxes be?" assuming that taxes are necessary to a civilized society. His answer, based on Genesis and the story of Joseph and the Israelites in Egypt is 10%. Hence his conclusion: "all taxes are too high," and, being a farmer, he thinks they fall unfairly on farmers. Just as he fails to see that property rights are violated when governments regulate property, so he fails to realize that property rights are violated when governments coercively take money from their citizens. Indeed, the very existence of government negates property rights.

Perhaps he will see this one day. In the meantime, however, Joel Salatin says that his farming "is not just a business, it is a sacred calling, a sacred ministry, serving people who seek truth and are willing to travel dirt roads to get it." [59-60] He chides those who would follow his advice to farm and homestead, yet hesitate because they fear some of their commercial activities would not be legal. In his response we find the kind of disrespect for government that voluntaryists want to inculcate:

Who *cares* if it's legal? If it's right, do it. We've raised a culture of people who want to ask permission to scratch their nose[s]. We need to examine what is *right*, then ... *do it*. [II-4] [V]

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“If It’s Right, Do It!”

By Carl Watner

In *EVERYTHING I WANT TO DO IS ILLEGAL*, retail farmer, composter, homeschooler, Christian, and herb-healing environmentalist Joel Salatin takes off where Walter Block left us in *DEFENDING THE UNDEFENDABLE*. Joel doesn’t want to do the roguish things that our society usually frowns upon, like dope dealing, pot growing, or being a slum lord or pimp. Instead Joel, the owner and operator of Polyface Farm in Swope, VA describes the innocent, peaceful, and consensual activities that have led to his confrontations with “the law.” Like Joel, if you have ever employed under-age children, erected a shed or a house without a building permit or government-approved materials, butchered and sold beef, poultry, or pork for off-the-farm consumption, taught your children or others at home without government permission, sold un-inspected eggs or raw milk to a neighbor, or simply gone about your business in complete disregard or ignorance of government rules and regulations, then you will appreciate the comic gravity and wholesome stoicism of the author. As Joel puts it, he has that rare ability to make conservatives, liberals, socialists, and Greens all mad at him at the same time: that is because he is fed up with government intervention in his affairs, in what he consumes, in what he sells, and in how he treats the land under

his stewardship. [24]

Joel’s grandfather was a charter subscriber to *ORGANIC FARMING*, and his parents bought a 550 acre parcel of land on the edge of the Shenandoah Valley in 1961. Joel has lived there since then, and in later years has been joined by his children and grandchildren. Joel has been one of the most vocal and ardent leaders of the homesteading and “back to the family farm” movement, developing profitable methods and local markets to survive in an increasingly agribusiness world. His approach, as found in his books *PASTURED POULTRY PROFITS*, *HOLY COWS AND HOG HEAVEN*, *SALAD BAR BEEF*, and *FAMILY FRIENDLY FARMING*, has been to raise “animals that require very low inputs but return very high profits.” By focusing on his competitive advantage, which Joel describes as “our ability to manage the land with intensive, controlled grazing and direct marketing,” he and his family have been able to double and even triple the income potential of their land. [I-2] Joel has also been a constant contributor to and supporter of such publications as *ACRES USA* (dedicated to Organic Farming, Homesteading, Specialty Crops, Ecological Farming, Natural Health, and Eco-Living) and *STOCKMAN GRASS FARMER*.

I think Joel would describe himself as a libertarian. When asked in an interview after the publication of his

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