
The Voluntaryist

Whole Number 149

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

2nd Quarter 2011

K. I. S. S. A Pig! - Anarchist or Minarchist?

By Carl Watner

In recent years, there have been countless words exchanged between free market anarchists and limited government minarchists concerning such questions as:

1. Must every human society have a government?
2. Is government necessarily coercive?
3. Can government be financed voluntarily (i.e., without coercion)?

Debates over these questions have been going on for well over a hundred years and include such authors as Charles Lane (*A VOLUNTARY POLITICAL GOVERNMENT*, [1843]), Herbert Spencer ("On the Proper Sphere of Government" [1842/1843] and "The Right to Ignore the State" [1850]), Benjamin Tucker (*INSTEAD OF A BOOK* [1897]), and Auberon Herbert (*TAXATION AND ANARCHISM: A Discussion Between the Hon. Auberon Herbert and J. H. Levy* [1912]). Although I am familiar with these authors, and have written about some of them (my Introduction to Lane's book [1982], and my overview of "The English Individualists as They Appear in LIBERTY [1985]), the article you are now reading was originally sparked by a December 20, 2009 interview with Dr. Tibor Machan in which he stated:

Rothbard said governments are necessarily coercive and I disagree; he thought government must be a coercive monopoly and I disagree. ... I'm a principled minarchist like Rand. ... I am convinced that minarchism can avoid all coercion and Rothbard was wrong claiming otherwise. ... If all citizens select a group of them to administer the just laws of the land, coercion is absent. [1]

Dr. Machan then adds a parenthetical note to see his essay, "Reconciling Anarchism and Minarchism," in *ANARCHISM/MINARCHISM: Is a Government Part of a Free Country?* (2008), the book he co-edited with Roderick T. Long. Of course, Dr. Machan has a long list of contributions he has made to this controversy, including his discussion of "The Anarchist Thesis" in *HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN LIBERTIES* (1975); "Financing Government without Coercive Measures" in *THE LIBERTARIAN READER* (1982); and "Defining Government, Begging the Question: An Answer to Walter Block's Reply" in *JOURNAL OF LIBERTARIAN STUDIES* (Spring 2007).

Undoubtedly many readers are familiar with the general principle of logic behind Occam's razor or its

popularized version, Keep It Simple, Stupid! Referred to as the "Law of Economy, or Law of Parsimony" it points out that entities and questions "are not to be multiplied beyond necessity." So to cut to the quick and cut through the thousands of words of controversy, generated by anarchists and minarchists alike, I would like some minarchist to answer the following question:

What would their defense service organization do if it could not attract enough voluntary customers?

If the minarchist acknowledges that his limited government organization would go bankrupt or disappear, then the discussion is ended and the anarchist argument prevails. For if the government's response to a loss of customers is to go out of business (like every other business that loses patronage and cannot sustain itself financially), then it is clear that such a government has no coercive monopoly on the administration of justice and protection of property within the area in which it operates. Other defense agencies may arrive to take its place, and there is nothing the bankrupt defense agency can do about it, since it is no longer in existence. In short, as Gustave de Molinari described it in 1849, there would be a free market in "the production of security."

This is nearly the exact question I presented to Dr. Machan in an email of February 21, 2010:

What happens to a minarchist government if its citizens for whatever reason withdraw their financial support and boycott it?

Such reasons might reflect the fact that they have all become pacifists, or that they all have decided to choose personal self-defense in lieu of minarchist protection, or that they have decided to choose another agency to provide them with protection.

In other words, what happens to a limited government organization if its citizen/customers choose not to patronize it? Will it go bankrupt? Will it disappear - if not, by what means will it survive?

To which Dr. Machan replied:

"Such a country would vanish, as any other establishment lacking support would."

Enough said!

There are two other comments worth making. First, in the last line of the quoted interview, Dr. Machan pointed

(continued on page 3)

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. Permission to reprint granted without special request.

Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

No. 1 "Legitimacy: The State's Need for Moral Validity"

Despite an institutionalized authority structure, an ideological basis, and a monopoly of force, the rulers of states share at least one thing in common with chiefs and Big Men: the need to establish and constantly reinforce legitimacy. In complex as well as simpler societies, leadership activities and societal resources must be continuously devoted to this purpose. Hierarchy and complexity, as noted, are rare in human history, and where present require constant reinforcement. No societal leader is ever far from the need to validate position and policy, and no hierarchical society can be organized without explicit provision for this need.

Legitimacy is the belief of the populace and the elites that rule is proper and valid, that the political world is as it should be. It pertains to individual rulers, to decisions, to broad policies, to parties, and to entire forms of government. The support that members are willing to extend to a political system is essential for its survival. Decline in support will not necessarily lead to the fall of a regime, for to a certain extent coercion can replace commitment to ensure compliance. Coercion, though, is a costly, ineffective strategy which can never be completely or permanently successful. Even with coercion, decline in popular support below some critical minimum leads infallibly to political failure. Establishing moral validity is a less costly and more effective approach.

- Joseph A. Tainter, THE COLLAPSE OF COMPLEX SOCIETIES (1989), p. 27.

No. 2 "Some Basic Truths"

The most basic principle of all is that of not harming others, and that includes all people and all life and all things. It means not controlling or manipulating others, not trying to manage their affairs. It means not going off to some other land and killing people over there --- not for religious or politics or military exercises or any other excuses. No being has the right to harm or control any other being. No individual or government has the right to force others to join or participate in any group or system

or to force others to go to school, to church or to war. Every being has the right to live his own life in his own way.

Every being has an identity and a purpose. To live up to his purpose, every being has the power of self-control, and that's where spiritual power begins. When some of these fundamental things are learned, the time will be right for more to be revealed and spiritual power will come again to this land.

- Doug Boyd, ROLLING THUNDER (1974), p. 199.

No. 3 "Show Him Your Badge"

A DEA officer stops at a ranch in Texas and talks with an old rancher. He tells the rancher, "I need to inspect your ranch for illegally grown drugs." The rancher says, "Okay, but do not go in that field over there," as he points out the location.

The DEA officer verbally explodes saying, "Mister, I have the authority of the federal government with me." Reaching into his rear pants pocket he removes his badge, and proudly displays it to the rancher. "See this badge? This badge means I am allowed to go wherever I wish. ... On any land. No questions asked or answers given. Have I made myself clear? Do you understand?"

The rancher nodded politely and apologized and then went about his chores. A short time later, the old rancher hears loud screams and sees the DEA officer running for his life, chased by the rancher's big Santa Gertrudis bull. ...

With every step, the bull is gaining ground on the officer, and it seems likely that he'll get gored before he reaches safety. The officer is clearly terrified. The rancher throws down his tools, runs to the fence, and yells at the top of his lungs ...

"YOUR BADGE. SHOW HIM YOUR BADGE!"

- Author Not Known

No. 4 "On Deleting the State"

Say for the sake of argument that the state is illegitimate, that it is true that all states violate rights and hence lack true authority. Would it follow that violent action against the state would be justified? I suspect the answer is no, for the following reasons. For better or worse, the state exists, and most people regard it as legitimate, ... So a small-scale act of destruction such as killing a judge or blowing up a federal building would only be perceived as a nihilistic and destructive act, one which itself lacked moral legitimacy. And since such acts would likely harm people who are not active participants in the state's coercion, those acts would lack moral legitimacy. ... On the other hand, what of large-scale acts of violence against the government? Say we took a page from contemporary thrillers and managed to destroy the Capitol Building, while the entire legislature and executive branch was inside. That would not mean the end of government at all. People for the most part would

consider the state to still exist and have legitimacy, and would call for all the vacated positions to be filled. Put more theoretically, destroying the current members of the government would not destroy the idea of government. The vacuum would be filled immediately, and no one's mind would be changed about the ideas of spontaneous order and social rules, or the relationship between liberty and human flourishing, or the coercive nature of government. Anarchism on a libertarian model is only possible when people's ideas about freedom and the state change, and this cannot be accomplished by violent means, only by philosophical means. . . . Deleting the state means something more effective than violence: it means deciding the state is not necessary. It means deleting the notion that we have no choice but to submit. The point is to peacefully change people's minds by reasoned argument, and ultimately to create the conditions in which they can flourish, not to kill them. So my philosophical defense of anarchism is not violent and doesn't entail violence, but rather implies evolutionary change in attitudes and institutions.

So if it is not justified to take violent action against the government the other side wonders, what is the point? What is the 'payoff' of a theory in which government is illegitimate? It is to undermine the idea that coercion is necessary for social order, or that it is beneficial to human society. . . . It is to affirm the priority of liberty and its necessary connection to human flourishing, and keep us mindful of the ways in which the state, and our often unthinking obedience to it, hinders that flourishing.

- Aeon J. Skoble, DELETING THE STATE (2008), pp. 118-119. ▣

K. I. S. S. A Pig! - Anarchist or Minarchist?

continued from page 1

out that "If all citizens select a group of them to administer the just laws of the land, coercion is absent." True enough, if there is unanimous consent and every "citizen" has a voluntary contract with the service provider. John Hospers made this same point in a written debate with Murray Rothbard in 1973.

Here is how Rothbard responded:

Dr. Hospers maintains that if one private agency should "predominate in a certain area, it would in effect be the government. ... [T]here would be very little difference" between that and a single government agency of protection. ... It must be pointed out that even in these conditions, it makes a great deal of difference, because (a) individuals can always have the right to call in another, competing defense agency, and (b) the private agency would acquire its income from voluntary purchases of satisfied customers, rather than from the robbery of taxation. In short, the difference between a free society and a society

with built-in legalized aggression. Between anarchism and archy. [2]

The second comment regards the answers to the three questions with which I opened this article. In order to do so, it is necessary to define "government" and distinguish its essential characteristics from other types of defense service organizations. In his article on "Defining Government," Dr. Machan makes the following comments:

"The gist of my case is that the anarchists' defense-insurance agencies or justice services are a version of noncoercive governments." [p. 91]

"Why are we to accept that the concept 'government' necessarily implies coercion (e.g. taxation)? The fact that most governments have been coercive is no more of a defense of this position than it would be to claim that the concept 'marriage' necessarily implies adultery because most marriages throughout human history have involved adultery [p. 92]

"Some ... libertarians chose to retain the term 'government' for the institution that would maintain law and order in society; others came up with new terms such as 'defense-insurance agency.' But both meant the same thing, namely, legal authorities who would proceed to establish, maintain, and uphold justice via a legal order without ever officially using coercive force." [p. 92]

"Defense-insurance agencies are governments of a certain type." [p. 94]

Apparently, Dr. Machan views government as a broad class of institutions that maintain law and order in society, and which can be either coercive or voluntary. Although I have not seen him use the terminology, he might describe the coercive versions of government as "political governments" and the non-coercive versions as "voluntary governments." He clearly rejects political government because it is coercive, and supports only voluntary government.

But how, we ask, are we to distinguish voluntary governments from all other voluntary institutions and non-coercive organizations in society? There are many, such as the family, the church, the various businesses we patronize, the various clubs we belong to, various associations, such as the Red Cross, the American Baseball League, etc., etc., all of which contribute to the maintenance of law and order. Every legitimate property owner and every peaceful person in society help maintain law and order by their exercise of self-control (not violating other people's bodies or other people's property). The spontaneous, free interaction among peaceful people is the only true form of law and order that is possible. Political governments can only produce "political" law. As John Hasnas explains in his "The Myth of the Rule of Law," coercive governments purposefully

associate "law" with "order" as a way to deliberately obfuscate the fact that a voluntary social order can be had without the presence of a political government. As John Blundell and Colin Robinson write in *REGULATION WITHOUT THE STATE* (2000), "Rules are an essential part of life. But making them is not necessarily a [political] government function: they can be (and usually are) established through voluntary action." The so-called law and order fashioned by political governments is not really true law or true order because it is not based on the voluntary interaction and the voluntary consent of the participants. Furthermore, whatever legitimate contribution political governments make to the voluntary social order could be provided in a far less costly and far more moral manner by private defense agencies. In short, just as we need food, shelter, and clothing, we need rules for peacefully interacting with others; but it is no more necessary that political government provide us with food, shelter, and clothing, than it provide us with the rules and regulations for peaceful interaction with our fellow man. Political government not only negates property rights, but rents asunder the peaceful fabric of society.

Finally, Dr. Machan asks "Why are we to accept that the concept 'government' necessarily implies coercion (e.g., taxation)?" In reply, let us quote Ayn Rand who asks: "Who has the final authority in ethics? ... Who 'decided' what is the right way to make an automobile ... ? Any man who cares to acquire the appropriate knowledge and to judge, at and for his own risk and sake." By Dr. Machan's own admission "most governments have been coercive." Governments have been construed as coercive institutions because that is the way their representatives and leaders have acted historically; because that is the way they behave today; and because there is no better way to view the difference between criminal institutions and voluntary ones than to identify those as governments which exercise coercive power. A government which resorts to no coercion is not a government because it is a voluntary organization claiming no special powers of obedience. To describe some governments as non-coercive is like painting the word 'dog' on the side of a pig, and then calling the pig a 'dog.' A pig is still a pig regardless of what you call it or how many times you kiss it or how many times you bathe it. It's the same with governments. As long as they continue to imprison people and/or confiscate the property of those who refuse to pay their taxes, they are coercive. Only when they stop doing these things and allow competition in the production of security will they have exchanged their essential coercive features for voluntary ones.

End Notes

[1] 4th and 6th paragraphs from the end of "Tibor Machan on the Free-Market, the Problems of 'Mixed'

Economies and the Virtues of Minarchism," December 20, 2009, in the email newsletter *THE DAILY BELL*, from Appenzell, Switzerland.

[2] Murray Rothbard, "Will Rothbard's Free-Market Justice Suffice?" *REASON Magazine*, May 1973. Reprinted in Carl Watner (editor), *I MUST SPEAK OUT*, San Francisco: Fox & Wilkes, 1999, pp. 47-48 at p. 48. ▣

"In the real world, there is never any difficulty identifying a voluntary-funded firm and a coercive, tax-funded government agency. You simply look at how the organization obtains its funding - if the funding comes from voluntary payments, it is a firm or charity, while if the funding comes from sticking a gun to men's heads, it is a government agency or a criminal gang."

- Mark Crovelli, April 2010

Books Received

ANARCHISM/MINARCHISM: IS GOVERNMENT PART OF A FREE COUNTRY? Edited by Roderick T. Long and Tibor R. Machan, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008. This is a highly recommended collection of essays by both limited government and free-market anarchists. Excerpts from John Hasnas, "The Obviousness of Anarchy" have been previously published in *THE VOLUNTARYIST* (Whole No. 140). I have separately commented on Tibor Machan's attempt in "Reconciling Anarchism and Minarchism" in my "K.I.S.S. A Pig! - Anarchist or Minarchist?" For more information see www.ashgate.com.

WEAPONS OF MASS INSTRUCTION: A SCHOOLTEACHER'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE DARK WORLD OF COMPULSORY SCHOOLING By John Gatto, Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2009. When I first saw this book, I mistook the title to be *WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION*, which it could easily have been titled. This book "investigates the mechanisms of compulsory schooling which cripple imagination, discourage critical thinking, ... renders the common population manageable, and trains the next generation into subservience to the state." (from the dust jacket). Highly recommended. See www.newsociety.com for more information.

THE LEGAL FOUNDATIONS OF FREE MARKETS, Edited by Stephen F. Copp. London: The Institute of Economic Affairs, 2008. Can a free market develop its own legal framework or must it be dependent on government for the creation of such a system? This anthology attempts to address this and other questions about how legal systems come into existence, how they evolve, and how natural law and government law relate to one another. Peter Leeson's chapter, "Do Markets Need Government?" is especially interesting. See www.iea.org.uk for more information.

From Slingshot to Nukes

By Carl Watner

[Author's Prologue: This article was written in April 2005, and remained unpublished until this issue. My reason for hesitation is stated in my opening sentence: how could an advocate of nonviolence extend the argument for property rights to include nuclear bombs? What prompts publication at this time is the appearance of John Gatto's book, WEAPONS OF MASS INSTRUCTION: A Schoolteacher's Journey Through the Dark World of Compulsory Schooling (2009). First, a bit of humor and an example of serendipity. When I first read Gatto's book, I took the title to be WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION, which is how I view government, tax-supported, schools. It was only after discussing the book with friends that I realized my error.]

Then, as I read the book, I found a section titled "Building Bombs" (pp. 117-119), which made me think of this old article and gave me reason to publish it. Gatto explains that information on "how to produce powerful explosives cheaply and with ordinary materials" was widely available a hundred years ago. Why so?

For anyone who understands what the miracle of America once was (and is no more), that it was a forge to convert slaves, serfs, peasants and proletarians into free men and women, explosives were an important part of self-reliance and liberty. They were important tools in clearing land, digging foundations, constructing ponds, building roads, moving stones, digging gold mines - perhaps in the gravest extreme defending your family's liberty from agents of the political state. Isn't that how we got a United States in the first place? Has the possibility of a tyranny here miraculously vanished? But violent conflict aside, and melodrama with it, the tool aspect alone ought to be the common right of free citizens. And whether you agree or not isn't as important as realizing that less than a hundred years ago, perfectly ordinary people were trusted to handle power like this with responsibility. (pp. 118-119)

Exactly my sentiments, and while one might argue that the only purpose of a nuclear bomb is an aggressive threat, one must keep in mind the similarity of the concluding word of Gatto's quote and my article: "responsibility" and "responsibly." Remember, one can make an aggressive threat with a tree branch. Should the ownership of trees be outlawed? As a wag once observed: the reverse side of the coin of freedom is responsibility. It is not the objects we act with, but rather how we act with them that determines whether or not they are invasive and threatening.]

It might seem strange that a voluntaryist who has published many articles advocating nonviolence would write a subsequent one arguing for private property rights

in heavy armaments, even nuclear bombs. Odd as this may appear, let me explain the genesis of this article and the logic that links the right to gun ownership and voluntaryist resistance together. First of all: the genesis of this article. My sons, William and Tucker, have been interested in hunting and target shooting for a number of years, and a friend gave us a copy of the December 2004 issue of the National Rifleman's Association magazine, AMERICAN RIFLEMAN. In that issue Wayne LaPierre, NRA Executive Vice President, had a column in which he mentioned his debate in London, England on gun control with Rebecca Peters of IANSA (the International Action Network on Small Arms). The debate was on video; I obtained a copy; and, as might be expected, Mr. LaPierre and Ms. Peters were asked: "Where would you draw the line in regulating weapons ownership?" If you "allow" small hand-held sporting weapons, what about semi-automatic rifles, shotguns, shoulder-fired rockets, and suitcase-size nuclear weapons? My answer was that ownership rights to properly homesteaded property extend all across the weaponry spectrum; from slingshots to nukes.

"History's most important lesson is that it has not been possible to make coercion compatible with truth."
- John Langbein in Alfred McCoy, A QUESTION OF TORTURE (2006) p. 204

I then wondered if any other libertarians had taken this position, publicly or privately. Robert Heinlein, the well-known science fiction writer, noted in his 1966 novel, THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS that it is still "some" lone individual, whether in his capacity as a private citizen or government official, that ultimately controls the disposition of nuclear weapons.

"Too much power in the hands of individuals -- surely you would not want ... well, H-missiles for example -- to be controlled by one irresponsible person?"

"My point is that one person is responsible. Always. If H-bombs exist -- and they do -- some man controls them. In terms of morals there is no such thing as 'state.' Just men. Individuals. Each responsible for his own acts. [Book One, Sec. 6] Hans-Herman Hoppe in his essay on "The Idea of a Private Law Society" noted that in a libertarian society "no restrictions on the private ownership of firearms or other weapons would exist." [http://www.mises.org/story/2265] [paragraph 23] Concomitantly, he observes that the statist provision of law and order "has led to the successive disarmament of the population." All governments have a natural inclination to disarm their

subjects because, as Hoppe puts it, “it is less dangerous to collect taxes from an unarmed man than from an armed man.” In a free society, where protection services are provided by insurance companies and private defense agencies, there would be an incentive for private citizens to be well-trained and certified in the use of weaponry of all sorts. Hoppe points out, that just as home owners with alarm systems often receive insurance discounts, so, too, “those able to certify some level of training in the handling of arms” would be charged “lower premiums reflecting the lower risk they represent.”

The main proponent of private ownership of nuclear weaponry, however, is the libertarian newspaper writer Vin Suprynowicz. In his book, *THE BALLAD OF CARL DREGA* (Reno, 2002), Mr. Suprynowicz relies on the United States Constitution, and its Second Amendment, to defend gun ownership. For example, he argues, “All federal lawmaking authority is vested in Congress. Is the Congress authorized to permit or ban or allow or infringe the private ownership of arms? ... Under our [constitutional] system, th[e federal] government can acquire no right, power, or authority except those delegated to it by the people [via the Constitution].” [pp. 340-341] He concludes that any Congressional regulation of the private ownership of firearms is, ipso facto, unconstitutional. Instead of questioning the legitimacy of the Constitution, Mr. Suprynowicz blithely asserts that, “The founders were careful to note that they found mankind’s natural rights to be pre-existing” and “insisted that the ‘securing’ of those pre-existing rights [wa]s the only legitimate purpose of government.” [p.468]

“So long as there is government, there shall be no peace and no justice.”

- John Simpson

In summary, Mr. Suprynowicz argues that since the federal government possesses nuclear warheads, it must have derived that right from somewhere. That “somewhere” he finds is in the individual American’s right to own them. In other words, since individual Americans have the “right, power, and authority to own nuclear weapons,” they may delegate that right to their protector, the American government. [p. 341] In response to a reader’s question: “Do ‘I advocate the unrestricted right to own weapons of mass destruction’?” he replies, “No, I *acknowledge* this pre-existing right of all individuals” to own such weapons.” [pp. 419-420, emphasis in the original]

As I pointed out in my article about the Bill of Rights, “The Illusion Is Liberty - the Reality is Leviathan,”

[I MUST SPEAK OUT (San Francisco, 1999)] the first ten amendments to the Constitution were essentially a legitimizing device used by those favoring a strong central government. James Madison believed that the amendments were needed to forestall Anti-Federalist criticism of the Constitution. Under the English common law “basic, natural, and fundamental individual rights were protected whether enumerated specifically in the Constitution or not,” so there was really no reason to have a Constitution or Bill of Rights. Depending upon the Second Amendment to defend individual ownership of weapons has only led to insuperable difficulties (as evidenced by the question: where do you draw the line?). The Second Amendment is at most superfluous to the case for gun ownership for two reasons. First, it implies that gun ownership rights may be subject to change if enough votes are garnered to amend the Constitution. Second, it ignores the point that weaponry ownership is not a special case, but rather depends upon the justification of property ownership in general.

As a voluntaryist, my starting points are the libertarian self-ownership and homesteading axioms. Each person has the absolute right, by virtue of being a human being, to own his or her own mind and body; that is to control that body and mind free of coercive interference. Similarly, each person, by virtue of his or her owning his or her own labor, owns previously unused natural resources which he or she is the first to claim and transform by that labor. Nuclear weapons are the end product of the application of human labor to natural resources. If they were conceived, invented, and built on the free market (a big assumption, indeed - the development of such weapons was strictly the outgrowth of government wars) then there can be no objection to the ownership and sale of such property. From a straight property rights/property title view point, so long as the property has been homesteaded or voluntarily transferred, there is every reason to argue for unrestricted ownership of weapons, of whatever type. The caveat is that the owner is always liable for their responsible use, just as the owner of a car or a knife is responsible for its safe use and handling. One well might ask: Can nuclear weapons be used responsibly and in a strictly defensive manner? But that question is irrelevant to the considerations of proprietary justice and ownership. (One might well own something, without ever using it.)

At one point, Vin Suprynowicz refers to a “God-given constitutionally guaranteed right to self defense.” [p.376] Voluntaryists would recognize a natural right to self-defense, which includes using their bodies and properties

in a defensive manner, albeit, violently or non-violently. If the right to self-defense is “constitutionally guaranteed” does not this imply that such a right might be changed by constitutional amendment? Individuals have the right to use their bodies and property to resist what we collectively view as evil or wrongdoing. As the voluntaryist insight points out, no ruler exists without the cooperation and/or acquiescence of the majority of his subjects. The revolutionary implications which stem from this simple observation are earth-shattering. Non-violent resistance, which flows directly from the self-ownership and homesteading axioms, is the political equivalent of the atomic bomb. From sling shots to nukes to nonviolent resistance, these choices all flow from the individual’s right to use his or her body and property responsibly. ▣

NONVIOLENCE: A Review of Mark Kurlansky’s 2006 Book by That Name

continued from page 8

his ways, but when the Christian church was subsumed by the Roman Empire during Constantine’s reign, Christianity betrayed the teaching of Jesus. Augustine concocted a theory to justify war, and Christians have been warring ever since. Kurlansky refers to its amalgamation with Rome as “a calamity from which the Church has never recovered.” And he adds, “One of history’s greatest lessons is that once the state embraces a religion, the nature of that religion changes radically. It loses its nonviolent component and becomes a force for war rather than peace.”

Kurlansky’s narrative illuminates twenty-five lessons from the history of nonviolence, which he enumerates at the conclusion of the book, but there are certainly others to be found therein by the discerning reader. Here are a few of the enumerated lessons that have not already been mentioned:

- Nations that build military forces as deterrents will eventually use them.
- Practitioners of nonviolence are seen as enemies of the state.
- A propaganda machine promoting hatred always has a war waiting in the wings.
- People who go to war start to resemble their enemy.
- A conflict between a violent and a nonviolent force is a moral argument. If the violent can provoke the nonviolent into violence, the violent side has won.
- The problem lies not in the nature of man but in the nature of power.
- The state imagines it is impotent without a military

because it cannot conceive of power without force.

— All debate ends with an “enforced silence” once the first shots are fired.

— Violence never resolves. It always leads to more violence.

— Once you start the business of killing, you just get deeper and deeper without limits.

— Violence always comes with a supposedly rational explanation.

— Violence is a virus that infects and takes over.

— The hard work of beginning a movement to end war has already been done.

Here are a few other lessons extracted from Kurlansky’s work:

— Government propaganda makes war out to be a holy crusade for freedom.

— It is much easier to start a war than to stop it.

— A war will never end wars; it always leads to the next one.

— If one doesn’t stand up for what’s right, what’s wrong will never change.

“History gets written by the winners... and when crooks win, you get crooked history.”

-Jeannette Wall, *HALF BROKE HORSES* (2009), p. 36.

I find only one flaw in Kurlansky’s brave book. He fails to notice the obvious connection between the violent nature of the state, which causes every war, and the predatory means by which the state obtains funds that are vital to its wars and to its very existence. I am referring, of course, to taxes, without which a state must wither and die. The collection of taxes requires the initiation of force, or threat thereof, against otherwise peaceful, harmless, innocent individuals. Force is but another word for violence, and violence begets only its kind—more violence. Directly and indirectly, then, taxes cause wars. No war has ever been fought without taxes or an equivalent form of state plunder.

When Kurlansky writes that the hard work of beginning a movement to end war has already been done, he wasn’t referring to his book, but to the words and deeds of the practitioners of nonviolence, such as the Chinese rebel, Mozi (470 - 390 B.C.), Jesus, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King (among the most famous). With the publication of his book, *Nonviolence*, Kurlansky joins that illustrious group of workers who have shown us the whys, the hows and the ways of nonviolence. ▣

NONVIOLENCE: A Review of Mark Kurlansky's 2006 Book by That Name

By Ned Netterville

I seldom come across a book by an Earthling (voluntaryists and Austrian economists are from Mars or Venus, depending on their gender) that sends me to my feet pumping my fist like Tiger Woods when with talent and force of will he sends a forty-foot putt curling into the cup. But that's what I caught myself doing as I read Mark Kurlansky's 2006 book, *Nonviolence*, subtitled *Twenty-Five Lessons from the History of a Dangerous Idea*. This is a must-read for anyone desiring world or local peace but perplexed by how to achieve it.

The clarion-clear message of this narrowly focused history of the use of violence versus nonviolence is that when it comes to throwing off forcible oppression, nonviolent resistance beats violence hands down. Yet so little is understood regarding its effectiveness and accomplishments that there is no word in any language for the opposite of violence beyond the negative, nonviolence. Kurlansky shows that failure to understand that nonviolence is an efficacious means and a potent force in the hands of peacemakers or the oppressed is a serious mistake benefiting only warriors and tyrants. The author points out, "it has always been treated as something profoundly dangerous" by the rulers of states.

His concise history traces the concept of nonviolence among ancient people of various religions up to the recent past. He deduces from his examination that "Though most religions shun warfare and hold nonviolence as the only moral route towards political change, religion and its language have been co-opted by the violent people who have been governing societies."

Kurlansky distinguishes between pacifism and non-violence: "Pacifism is passive; but nonviolence is active. Pacifism is harmless and therefore easier to accept than nonviolence, which is dangerous... Nonviolence, exactly like violence, is a means of persuasion, a technique of political activism, a recipe for prevailing." And, I might add, nonviolence has a potent spiritual component that the initiators of violence cannot comprehend and have no means to counter.

Kurlansky's narrative points to the almighty state as the ultimate villain in causing wars, although he doesn't explicitly say so. He does say that when church and state combine, both become depraved. Jesus was both a pacifist and so dangerously nonviolent that the Roman Empire murdered him. His early followers adopted

(continued on page 7)

<p>"War is the most expensive things humans do." - Rick Maybury, EARLY WARNING REPORT, May 2008, p. 5.</p>
--

The Voluntaryist

P.O. Box 275 • Gramling, South Carolina 29348



FIRST CLASS

Please renew your subscription if the number on your address label is within one digit of this issue's number.