
The Voluntaryist

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

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Freedom to Choose Your Own Money

By Carl Watner

- 1) *Should the Federal Reserve System be abolished?*
- 2) *If so, what monetary system should take its place?*

My answers to these questions are:

(1) *No*, the Federal Reserve System *should not be abolished*. If some people want to continue to use Federal Reserve notes as money they should be able to do so. However, they should not be able to impose their choice on others.

(2) The only monetary system to take the place of Federal Reserve notes, *if they were to fall into disuse*, should be a voluntary one; a monetary system in which people freely choose what they use for money.

These may seem surprising and even contradictory responses, so please read on to understand my reasons for answering this way.

Money is a commodity people use to facilitate their exchanges with other people. Economists refer to money as a commonly used medium of exchange. For long periods of history, money has usually been characterized by having a large value relative to its bulk and weight; by being homogeneous (one part being just like every other part); by being easily divisible into smaller parts (with each smaller unit retaining its proportional value to the whole); by being durable (not easily destroyed); and by generally maintaining its exchange value relative to other desirable things.

In a free society, the production of money would be a matter left to private enterprise. Money producers would compete with one another to offer the best product at the lowest cost. Such a system would be devoid of State coercion and government interference. The law of natural displacement (the best money will be used by traders and will displace less suitable ones) would minimize useless innovations because people would only accept new forms of money if they saw value in the improvements offered. Monetary freedom means that whatever is chosen for money must be able to survive on its own merits. A money that people must be forced to use has already lost its credibility. If the money the government wants people to use and accept had any inherent advantages over other monies, then there would be no reason to pass laws that force them to use it.

Just as there is more than one kind of credit card and

payment system, e.g., Visa, MasterCard, PayPal, etc., there could be more than one kind of money, each touting its advantages to the end user. No one can tell in advance what form these monies might take because no one can know for sure what choices individuals would make or what new technologies might be discovered. Laws forcing people to use the Federal Reserve System money have frozen monetary developments at a certain stage. There is no way to determine the advances that might have occurred due to the government's discouragement of competition. Just imagine if Congress had protected the Post Office by passing laws that would have prevented people from communicating via the internet. We would never have experienced the marvels of e-mail. What we do know, however, is that ever since the Civil War between the States, the federal government has successfully prosecuted competing providers of money. As recently as 2011, the principal of NORFED, the National Organization for the Repeal of the Federal Reserve, was convicted of violating the provisions of 18 United States Code, Sections 2, 371, 485, 486 and 1341, which prohibit the creation of "private coin or currency systems [designed] to compete with the official coinage and currency of the United States" government. At the conclusion of the trial, the United States Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina, Anne T. Tompkins, issued a press release (March 18, 2011), reiterating the government's harsh attitude in suppressing potential competition:

Attempts to undermine the legitimate currency of this country are simply a unique form of domestic terrorism. While these forms of anti-government activities do not involve violence, they are every bit as insidious and represent a clear and present danger to the economic stability of this country.

Despite the government's claims to the contrary, it is not necessary that money be provided by government or that there be only one monetary system in place. Gold and silver were commonly used media of exchange for centuries. No person or institution has the right to prevent people from using their property and exchanging it in a peaceful manner. The history of private gold coinage in the United States shows what happened when the government was not there to force people to trade with a certain type of money. It was a natural right of the miner to pan or dig for gold. He could coin whatever

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The Voluntaryist

Editor: Carl Watner

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How We Violate the Principle of Non-Aggression Daily - Without Even Realizing It!

By Dr. Mary J. Ruwart

If we decided we wanted a new neighborhood park, how would we go about getting one? We could call together other individuals who want the same thing and could raise enough money to own and operate the park through donations, by selling stock in a corporation set up for that purpose, or through other voluntary means. If those who did not participate in the fundraising effort decide later to use the park, we might require them to pay an entry fee. Obviously, we would be relating voluntarily and non-aggressively with our neighbors. If George didn't want to be involved either as a contributor or a park visitor, we would honor his choice.

Of course, another way we could proceed would be to vote for a tax to purchase and maintain the park. If a large enough gang of our neighbors voted for it, George's hard-earned dollars would be used for a park he didn't want and wouldn't use. If he refused to pay what our gang dictated, law enforcement agents, acting on behalf of the winning voters, would extract the tax, at gunpoint, if necessary. If he resisted too vehemently, George might even be killed in the struggle.

Wouldn't we be using a gang called "government" to steal from George? Wouldn't we be the first ones to turn guns on a neighbor who hadn't defrauded or stolen from us? Wouldn't George eventually retaliate by getting government to turn its guns on us for projects that he prefers but we want nothing to do with? Wouldn't we alternate as victims and aggressors, as minorities and majorities? Wouldn't we just be taking turns directing the law enforcement agents toward each other?

Through taxation, pacifists are *forced at gunpoint* to pay for killing machines; vegetarians are *forced at gunpoint* to subsidize grazing land for cattle; non-smokers are *forced at gunpoint* to support both the production of tobacco and the research to counter its impact on health. These minorities are the victims, not the initiators of aggression. Their only crime is not agreeing with the priorities of the majority. Taxation appears to be more than theft; it is intolerance for the preferences and even the moral viewpoints of our neighbors. Through

taxation we forcibly impose our will on others in an attempt to control their choices.

As individuals, we may not support taxation and other forms of aggression-through-government. However, the composite of our separate views, as reflected in our laws, indicates that as a nation, as a society, as a collective consciousness, we believe that aggression serves us. As we'll see in the next few chapters, just the opposite is true. Aggression creates poverty and strife in our city, state, and nation just as surely as it does in our neighborhood.

How could it be otherwise? Aggression could hardly produce peace and plenty simply because we use it as a gang instead of as individuals. Using the same means brings us the same ends. It's plain as the nose on our face - and just as difficult to see! Only by looking at what is reflected back to us can we observe it.

Indeed, taxation and other forms of aggression-through-government are so taken for granted in our culture that one of our most popular sayings is that "nothing is certain except death and taxes." Yet slavery was once as universal. Taxation is thought to be indispensable to civilization today, just as slavery once was. Advocates of taxation claim that since most people pay assigned taxes before the guns show up, they have implicitly agreed to it as the price of living in "society." Most slaves obeyed their masters before he got out the whip, yet we would hardly argue that this constituted agreement to their servitude. Today, we have an enlightened perspective on slavery, just as one day we will have an enlightened perspective on taxes and other forms of aggression we now think of as "the only way."

Just as our ancestors rationalized slavery, we've created the illusion that taxation is legitimate. Like the volunteers who continued to shock the victim at the insistence of the scientist, we feel our actions are justified, perhaps even noble. We believe that we can create a world of peace and plenty if we are given a free hand to force those selfish others to do things our way. We feel taxation is indispensable for certain necessities (e.g., defense, clean air and water, helping the poor, etc.). Instead, as the following chapters illustrate, aggression *in any form* only hurts others - and ourselves. *We reap as we have sown.*

(Source: Dr. Mary J. Ruwart, HEALING OUR WORLD, Kalamazoo: SunStar Press, 1992, pp. 12-14. Permission from the author in email of January 11, 2011.)

There is nothing really mysterious about the market, since every single transaction benefits both parties. Spontaneous actions of individuals aim at nothing other than the improvement of their own state of satisfaction.

Murray Rothbard and Ludwig von Mises quoted by Brian Dougherty, RADICALS FOR CAPITALISM (2007), pp. 638 and 659.

Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

No. 1 - "Inflation: Who Is Responsible For It?"

Everyone says he is against inflation. ...

Defining inflation properly is critical to our understanding of it. The typical American thinks inflation is "rising prices." But the classical, dictionary definition is "an increase in the quantity of money." In this discussion, *changing the definition changes the responsibility!* If you believe that "inflation" is "rising prices," and then asked, "Who raises prices?" you'll probably say that "Business raises prices, so business must be the culprit." But if you define "inflation" as "an increase in the quantity of money," and then ask, "Who increases the money supply?" you are left with only one answer: GOVERNMENT! Until we understand who does it, how can we ever stop it?

- Lawrence W. Reed, THE FREEMAN, November 1979, p. 651.

No. 2 - "People Are Imperfect and Government Employees Are People"

Governments, composed top to bottom of imperfect people wielding power, are very imperfect. There are of course, a million examples, big and small, of how government can damage the actual nature and character of the citizenry and only because there was just a commercial on TV telling me to gamble will I mention the famous case of the state lotteries. Give government the right to reap revenues from the public desire to gamble, and you'll soon have government doing something your humble local bookie never had the temerity to try: convince the people that gambling is a moral good. They promote it insistently on local television, undermining any remaining reserve among our citizens not to play the numbers, not to develop what can become an addiction. Our state government daily promotes what for 2,000 years was understood to be a vice. No bookie ever committed a crime that big.

- Peggy Noonan, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, October 9-10, 2010, p. A15.

No. 3 - "You Cannot Create Wealth By Printing Money"

We study history but we do not learn from it, and therefore we try political approaches that have failed and failed again. A good example here is the way the central bank is trying to use monetary depreciation to give the economy a jolt. This has been tried from the ancient to the modern world, and the tactic fails every time. You cannot create wealth by printing money. The attempt leads to economic disaster. This seems like something everyone should understand, and yet our leaders keep trying it again and again.

- Rev. Robert Sirico, ACTON NOTES, Nov./Dec. 2010, p. 2, "President's Message."

No. 4 - "The Five Precepts or The Six Commandments"

"According to Buddhism the minimum code of ethics regulating the life of its adherents is the *pancasila*, the

Five Precepts: abstinence from killing [harming living beings], stealing [taking what is not given], sexual misconduct [concerning sense-pleasures], false speech, and intoxicants [unmindful states due to alcoholic drinks or drugs]. If one practices these virtues one can have the satisfaction of leading a righteous life to a great extent. Refraining from doing to others what one does not like others to do unto oneself is the basic principle underlying these virtues."¹

"A full moral road map for society, no matter the faith, or the secular beliefs, of its individual members" is found in the Judeo-Christian commandments:

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness.

Honor your father and mother.

Also, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.²

¹Lily de Silva, "One Foot in the World," Section 1: A Layman's Happiness (1986 and 1994) and Peter Harvey, AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM (1990), p. 199.

²Greg Easterbrook, "The 60% Solution," THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, February 4, 2005, p. W 13.

No. 5 - Doing Business with Integrity

Never bounce a check. If you knowingly write a bad check you are a crook; if you are unaware you didn't have the money, you are a lousy businessman.

Don't ever say: All's fair in business. It isn't. If you don't have integrity, you don't have anything.

Don't lie. If you tell somebody the check is in the mail, put it there yourself.

When you can't do, call. Let people know if and when you can't do what you told them you would do.

Handle the bad stuff as soon as possible. It won't get any better by waiting.

Pay something. Pay a little on every bill, even the big ones, to let people know you are at least trying and haven't forgotten them.

Don't do anything to make people wave the "crook flag" at you. Be up front with people and be ready to show them the proof of what you have done.

Eat a little crow when you are wrong. Apologize for your error and don't let it happen again.

Be humble when you are right. Remember you are not perfect.

Put yourself in the other guy's shoes. How would you like to be treated if you were in his spot?

Don't make long term monetary commitments on the basis of how business is right now. Consider worst-case scenarios when making business decisions.

Be honorable. Keep in mind that you might end up on the front page of the paper or on YouTube.

Be dependable. Be there for your customers, employees, and your family.

- Paraphrased from Terry Greenhut, TRANSMISSION DIGEST, June 2011, pp. 50-52.

No. 6 - Free Riders or Robbers?

If there is truly a demand for government (and all the things that it provides - security, schools, roads, postal service, a standardized money system, infrastructure) must people be forced to support it rather than voluntarily pay for what they want? Who or what forces people to support shoe factories, farmers, grocery stores, the Audubon Society or the March of Dimes campaign? If you say that there will be free riders, that people won't contribute – you might be right! Some people may be too lazy, dumb, greedy, or simply too obstinate to want to help out. But should they be forced to co-operate, even if they somehow benefit? Are there not other ways to influence their behavior – such as ostracism or refusing to insure them? Is unleashing violence and threatening them with jail the only way? Furthermore, if you choose some people to forcibly collect money, might they not be too lazy, dumb, greedy, or simply power hungry themselves? Might they not act as sinners, rather than saints when in positions of power? Are we better off having some not contribute to privately provided (public) services rather than risk the results of giving some the power to 'legally' steal from others?

Which would you rather see: a bunch of free riders or a State-sanctioned system of stealing?

- By Carl Watner ☐

Freedom to Choose Your Own Money

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precious metals he found so long as he did not counterfeit or imitate the coin of the United States government. Congress, at the time, did not believe it had the power to prohibit him from weighing and assaying his pieces of gold, marking upon them their weight and fineness, and exchanging them for whatever other people were willing to give for them. In Rutherfordton, North Carolina members of the Bechtler family coined over \$ 2 million of gold between 1831 and 1840; in Denver, Colorado the Clark & Gruber mint produced over \$ 500,000 of gold coins between 1859 and 1863, and in California immediately after the 1849 Gold Rush there were numerous private issues of coin and ingots. During this time, the common law right of the private coiner to issue gold coins was fully recognized by both the public which used them and the government that tolerated them.

When exchanges take place they are either voluntary or coerced. No voluntary exchange takes place unless both parties expect to better themselves. When people are forced to trade, it is obvious that their best interests (as they define them) are not being served. Coerced exchanges only benefit one party at the expense of the other. This, in fact, is just what happens when people are forced to use Federal Reserve notes in their daily transactions. But because they are so accustomed to this

form of government intervention in their lives, very few people recognize the government's threat of violence or the economic disutility arising from the use of force. Political controls and struggles over money and credit have continually disrupted our society from its very inception and have made economic calculation increasingly difficult. As Gustav Stolper pointed out in his 1942 book, *This Age of Fable*, "A 'free' capitalism with government responsibility for money and credit has lost its innocence. From that point on it is no longer a matter of principle but one of expediency how far one wishes or permits governmental interference to go. Money control is the supreme and most comprehensive of all governmental controls short of expropriation."

Now all this has been offered by way of showing why we should not have a governmental system of money. But why argue that the Federal Reserve System *should not be abolished*? Because if a voluntary monetary system is to be achieved it must be brought about in a peaceful, voluntary way. If most people are wedded to a money produced and operated by a quasi-government institution with powers to enforce coercive legal tender laws and a government monopoly over the production of money, then to "demolish, destroy, or put an end" to that system against their wishes would only result in the erection of another similar system in its place. A voluntary money system cannot be forced upon people. It must come about naturally, over time, as the result of millions of freely-made individual choices and exchanges.

The Federal Reserve System will only be replaced permanently if people come to understand the morality and practicality of a voluntary system. When a sufficient number of them recognize its merits, then instead of abolishing the Federal Reserve System, they will simply abandon it in favor of using better money. At that point, laws supporting the Federal Reserve would be rendered ineffective by people's refusal to obey them. In such a situation, it would become nearly impossible for the government to prosecute, convict, and imprison all those who refuse to handle Federal Reserve notes.

Not only is it inconsistent to force men to be free, but people who have been forced to be free do not understand why they should accept personal responsibility for their own lives. Button-pushing (as in pushing the button to abolish the Federal Reserve System) would probably result in chaos because most people would still be looking to government to produce the money they use. To abolish is to resort to compulsion, and the free man does not force others to be free. The free man controls himself. He decides what he shall use for money. He recognizes the right of others to choose how they will live. This includes their freedom to choose what they will use for money. ☐

My Winding Road to Voluntarism

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As far back as I can remember, I hated school and any form of discipline. Apparently I suffered from what is now diagnosed as ODD – oppositional defiance disorder. I played hooky often. Two schools asked me to leave before I matriculated. Mom had to tutor me to get me through every math class. I'm sure the idea of home schooling never occurred to mom, but she would have been a good teacher, and I might have become a good student much earlier in life if she had. It wasn't until my sophomore year in college that I discovered a few subjects I liked and began attaining A's and B's instead of C's and D's. I switched my major from Forestry to English and took all of my electives in economics and finance. Unfortunately, the economics department at Miami University (Ohio) was and still is Keynesian, which isn't really economics. Today I believe Austrian-school economics (AE) is the only brand that makes sense.

After graduating in 1960, I joined the Ohio National Guard in order to avoid being drafted into the Army for two years. I immediately spent six months on active “duty” attached to the U.S. Army. It never occurred to me that I could resist the draft, which today I consider to be the only moral way to approach military service. I spent my Army time doing everything in my power to avoid work (“duty?”). After basic training, I spent every weekday afternoon and evening in the PX drinking beer, and the weekend leaves in bars in Washington, D.C. It would be virtually impossible for a person to be less productive of value than I was those six months.

I spent the rest of the 1960's working for Dad as a proprietary stock trader, eventually becoming responsible for all trading and customer order executions. Sometime during the late 60's I came across and accepted the Foundation for Economic Education's (FEE's) offer of a free subscription to THE FREEMAN magazine. That wonderful journal introduced me to the principles of liberty through articles by Leonard Read, Ludwig von Mises, Hans Sennholz, James Payne and other great libertarian voices.

In January 1971, I “dropped out” of the securities business to “do my own thing,” a not-uncommon practice for that era of Vietnam-induced national angst. I traveled to Australia and New Zealand with a vague notion of immigrating, but found both countries too far down the road to socialism for my taste. I eventually purchased and operated a one-hundred year old cider mill and apple processing business and moved from suburban Cleveland to rural northeastern Ohio.

1971 was a watershed year for me in many ways. One of the company benefits I had when I worked for Dad's firm was free, professional income-tax-return preparation by the firm's CPA. In '71 for the first time I had to prepare and file a return on my own. My only income that year was one paycheck for half of January,

and a large capital gain from the sale of my shares in the brokerage firm. I also lost some money that year trading stocks for my personal account both in the US and Australia while I was there, so I took the cost of the trip as a business expense on my federal tax return. I soon got a call from the IRS informing me that I was to be audited regarding my business expenses, and to get my records together!

The audit, which was only supposed to address my business (trading) income and expenses, turned out to be a full “field audit” of every item on my return, and of all of my financial records including every check written and every deposit made with an explanation of what each one represented if it wasn't self evident. When it was over I felt stripped of my dignity, privacy and freedom. The agent disallowed my trip expenses saying they weren't sufficiently related to my trading, and informed me that I owed an additional two-hundred and fifty dollars in taxes. I could appeal, of course, but I quickly calculated that an appeal, to an IRS administrator first, and then to U.S. Tax Court, would cost me several-times more than the additional tax. (I felt I would need to hire a lawyer to argue my case.) My own reading of the IRS code told me my travel expenses were a legitimate deduction. I believed the agent, knowing it would be much cheaper to pay the \$250 than appeal, arbitrarily disallowed my deduction in order to cover the IRS' expenses for the hours he spent auditing my return. So I paid, but I am delighted to say that was the last federal, state, or local income tax I ever paid.

"Diluting the money supply with paper [and credit] is the moral equivalent of diluting the milk supply with water."

- Henry Hazlitt, THE FREEMAN, January 1977, p. 44.

Throughout the 70's I neglected to file returns. For several of those years I probably didn't owe any tax because the apple crops in northeastern Ohio failed, and my cider-mill business lost money. In 1981—after ten years without a word from the IRS—an agent came by our house to see me. Fortunately, no one was at home, for I do not know how I would have reacted. The agent left his card with instructions that I call him. To say the incident scared the hell out of my wife understates the effect it had on her. It made me both scared and angry. When I called, the agent asked why I hadn't filed any tax return since 1976. Why he didn't ask about 1972, '73, '74, and '75, I'll never know. Anyway, I told him I doubted I owed the IRS any money, but I would start to prepare those returns and get them to him within a couple of weeks. He allowed that would be acceptable.

I prepared five identical returns for 1976 through 1980, with no information other than my name and address. Across the face of each return in magic marker I wrote, “I CANNOT PROVIDE THE INFORMATION

REQUESTED HEREIN UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY ASSURES ME THAT IN SO DOING ALL OF MY RIGHTS AS A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES SHALL REMAIN INVIOLETE.” With that simple quid pro quo I became what the IRS at the time called an “illegal tax protester,” even though according to the First Amendment there can be nothing illegal about protesting taxes.

I had committed no crime. As a matter of fact those were the most honest tax returns I ever filed, probably more honest than any of the hundreds of millions of returns that other Americans filed during those five years. As Will Rogers said, the income tax has made liars of more Americans than golf. Americans cheat on their taxes to the extent they think they can get away with it, or at least a comprehensive IRS study showed that to be the case. I got sober in 1982, which likely saved me from going to prison on some tax-related charge. Before sobriety my attitude toward the IRS and its agents was belligerent, to say the least.

Doug Casey is on record saying that he is not in favor of any particular monetary standard – gold, silver, or otherwise – because that means that the fate of the currency is in the hands of a few politicians and bureaucrats.

In sobriety I began studying the Gospels. The wisdom of Jesus revealed in the Gospels plus AA’s famous Twelve-Step program persuaded me of the utter futility of anger, resentment, and retaliation. The Gospels also revealed that Jesus often hung out with tax collectors, calling some (Levi/Matthew) away from their tax-collecting duties, and redeeming at least one “chief” tax collector (Zacchaeus) from his sinful occupation. On the advice of Jesus (“love your enemies, pray for your persecutors”), I began praying for the IRS agents who were vigorously pursuing me. I diligently endeavored to love them and eventually forgive them. In due course I found to my surprise I had no enemies and no one persecuted me. That remains true to this day.

One of the things about the behavior of Jesus as reported in the Gospels that stood out to me was that he pointed to tax collectors as exemplars of sinfulness, yet he numbered many tax collectors among his disciples. This suggests to me that reformed tax collectors may play an important role in the tax abolition movement. Several IRS agents have already come out against the income tax and their former employer, to the cheers of those the IRS now refers to as “tax deniers,” since Congress, belatedly realizing the First Amendment assures that protesting taxes is legal, ordered the Service to do away with the “illegal tax protester” designation.

In the early 1980’s when I first started studying Jesus’ teaching on taxes and tax collectors, I was struck by the fact that every so-called “Interpreter’s Bible” I consulted (and I think I consulted all of them) claimed Jesus

endorsed the concept of taxation and/or the legitimacy of government rule when he said, “Give Caesar what is Caesar’s, but give God what is God’s.” This conflicted with my libertarian beliefs that taxation was theft in violation of God’s command, “Thou shall not steal.” It seemed to me that the State usurps God’s authority as Lawgiver, and the story of how Israel came to have a king bears this out. (See the first book of Samuel, Chapter eight.) It was inconceivable to me that Jesus would condone what his Father forbade or condemned. One dissenting voice among the many statist interpretations of the Gospels was that of Leo Tolstoy. Tolstoy taught himself Greek, translated the Gospels from early manuscripts, and produced his own consolidated version of the Gospels because he didn’t trust the Russian-Orthodox Church’s translation. According to Tolstoy, Jesus told Peter that he and his disciples were not obligated to pay taxes. Tolstoy was indubitably an anarchist. After witnessing a public execution in Paris, he wrote to a friend, “The truth is that the State is a conspiracy designed not only to exploit, but above all to corrupt its citizens. ... Henceforth, I shall never serve any government anywhere.” Amen, brother Leo.

After some serious Gospel study, I concluded that when Jesus said, “give Caesar what is Caesar’s but give God what is God’s,” he meant DO NOT give Caesar (representing the State of Rome and all other human governments) ANYTHING. Sacred Jewish Scripture, which Jesus consistently cited as his authority for what he said and did, states in at least five places, “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it,” or words to that effect, which obviously leaves nothing for poor old Caesar. Eventually I wrote a book entitled JESUS OF NAZARETH, ILLEGAL TAX PROTESTER, which I published on the Internet in 2003. It is the first comprehensive analysis of everything Jesus said and did relative to taxes and tax collectors as reported in the Gospels. (http://www.jesus-on-taxes.com/Page_7.html)

Throughout the 1980’s the IRS thrust and I parried. Eventually I was required to appear with my records at an IRS office before my favorite revenue agent and her supervisor. I brought a tape recorder and a witness, and when asked to produce my records, I asked to see the warrant required by the Fourth Amendment. I was dismissed, but soon thereafter I received a “summons” to Federal District Court in Akron, Ohio. I ignored the summons, and soon thereafter two armed Federal Marshals picked me up in my office and brought me before the judge. I had been scrambling to learn something of court procedures from a patriot group whose members were mostly tax resisters. The judge gave pause when I raised a question of the court’s jurisdiction, but when he questioned me on the subject it became obvious to him that I didn’t know what I was talking about. So he ordered me to produce my financial records and provide testimony as required by the IRS.

Back at the IRS before the same two agents, I again demanded to see a warrant before I would provide testimony or give them my records. Our meeting abruptly ended. A few days later one of the Federal Marshals came again to my office to get me. The judge gave me a choice of jail or co-operating with the IRS. Refusing the later, I was sent to jail for “civil contempt” until such time as I would provide the IRS with what it wanted (eternity???). Other than a few one-night stands for driving under the influence or public intoxication, that was my first jail experience. After 34 days and with a big Memorial Day weekend with my family in the offing, I told the judge I would cooperate and was released. A week later before the same IRS agents, a third time, I told them regretfully I had no financial records whatsoever. I informed them I didn’t keep records because I was afraid someday someone might subpoena them. After holding out for 34 days in jail, I think the agents expected my records would turn up a plethora of valuable assets. With taxes, interest, and penalties included, they thought I owed them about a quarter-million dollars. Their disappointment was palpable and worth every minute of my days in jail.

Unfortunately, I was forced by the threat of more jail time to answer all of their prying questions as they dug to uncover my hidden treasures. When the interrogation made it evident I had none, chagrin crossed their brows again. Although the meeting cost me nothing and yielded the IRS the same, being forced to answer their questions was the most mentally excruciating experience of my entire life.

Carl Watner’s writing made me realize voluntarism fit me like a glove. The influences that made me become a voluntarist were my undiagnosed oppositional defiance disorder, FEE, AA, AE (Austrian economics), my mother’s moral values, my non-payment of taxes and the pleasure of resisting them, and, last but not least, the principles Jesus preached and lived, especially nonviolence and love for all mankind, even to my would-be enemies. I am no longer defiant of human authority because I realize it is nothing but a hoax. Voluntarism is good. Love your enemies. It befuddles them!

[Footnote 1] It is in keeping with AA tradition to remain anonymous when speaking publicly about AA. It’s a humility thing. Coincidentally, AA is a truly voluntary institution. It has no rules nor regulations, no dues nor fees nor taxes, only voluntary contributions. The expenses of local AA “groups” and AA’s significant worldwide services designed to provide help to alcoholics everywhere are the collective obligation of its members. AA’s “Twelve Traditions,” which are the closest thing to rules, compel nothing. There are no AA authorities. Our leaders actually are our trusted servants whose only power is persuasion. Each of the multitude of local AA groups throughout the world operates autonomously. Withal, AA has proven effective at achieving its primary purpose, which is to enable its members to remain sober and help other

alcoholics achieve sobriety. No small task, which eluded the medical profession and mankind on any significant scale until AA came along in 1935. AA’s 76-years of experience may one day prove instructive to the formation of a stateless society. ▣

Paper money eventually reaches its intrinsic value – zero.

- Voltaire

How To Live Well

By James C, Patrick

[Editor's Note: This article was first published in the January 1980 FREEMAN.]

We hear and read so much about money that it is a good thing occasionally to put things back in perspective. In the final analysis, money is a means, not an end in itself. Money is a medium of exchange. What we really need and want are the things for which we can exchange money—the goods and services that we must obtain from other people.

In order to get those goods and services, we must produce some goods or services ourselves because ultimately, people exchange goods and services for goods and services.

To be sure, some people are not required to produce but are supported by the rest of us. For example, small children, some of the elderly and the helpless members of society live by our productivity. But somebody must produce, in order to support such people. We don’t eat or wear money; we eat food and wear clothing and those things must be produced.

Through the years people here and in certain other countries have been able to live better because of improving productivity. In 1770, we are told, a laborer had to work five days to buy a bushel of wheat, but his grandson could get a bushel for two and a half days’ wages in 1870. And in 1970, the typical American worker could purchase two or three bushels of wheat with one hour’s pay.

A few years ago the president of an insurance company at Rock Island, Illinois, made a telling point. He said that some people are “beginning to conclude that our present standards of living, production and accomplishment have been reached as a result of . . . Social Security, unemployment insurance, public housing, price controls, poverty and welfare programs, farm price supports, and aid programs to this and that . . . One is reminded of the rooster who noticed that every morning when he crowed the sun arose in the east. Before long he concluded that the sun arose because he crowed.”

No, it is not government programs that improve human well-being; nor is it money. Rather, it is human effort, intelligence, and productivity. What is needed is more of these elements if people are to live well. ▣

My Winding Road to Voluntaryism

By Ned Netterville

First, about my name. It's a pseudonym. I use it to remain anonymous whenever I publicly mention my participation in Alcoholics Anonymous, as I do here. As you shall see, Alcoholics Anonymous, a completely voluntary institution, has played a pivotal role in my life. [Footnote 1] Beginning in my teens, I embarked on a fruitless, 30-year quest to sample every alcoholic beverage the world has to offer. Fortunately, I was forced by the exigencies of the drinking life to surrender and join AA at the ripe age of forty-five after indulging in a considerable variety of booze, however only a small fraction of the world's total offerings. It is apparent to me in retrospect that alcohol dependency is incompatible with the degree of individual liberty afforded and the personal responsibility required by voluntaryism.

My first introduction to voluntaryism occurred in the early 1990's. I had written an article for Jacob (Bumper) Hornberger's FREEDOM DAILY, in which I asserted that the American colonies' Continental Army was an all-volunteer force that defeated the British - the superpower of the day - without recourse to taxation or conscription. Carl Watner wrote a courteous letter to the editor pointing out that several of the colonies had in fact employed taxation and conscription to provide men and equipment to Washington's revolutionary forces. Bumper forwarded Carl's letter to me. After checking out his contention, I wrote him acknowledging my error and

thanking him for his correction. Carl then graciously gave me a subscription to THE VOLUNTARYIST. I soon bought a copy of his book-length anthology of articles from earlier issues of THE VOLUNTARYIST entitled, I MUST SPEAK OUT. When I finished it, I chucked my pocket copy of the Constitution in the waste basket and became a voluntaryist. His book remains on my shelves as a valuable reference and an inspiration, which I need from time to time as I once needed to drink.

I was born in 1937, and grew up as one of five boys in a rather chauvinistic, somewhat insular, Irish-Catholic social network in the Cleveland, Ohio, area. My father was a street-smart, over-the-counter stock trader who took a year off high school after his father died to help with family finances. In the midst of the Great Depression (1933), he used his small savings, hocked my mom's engagement and wedding rings, borrowed money from several of his retail-brokerage clients, and purchased a junior partnership in a startup broker-dealer firm, which he eventually owned outright.

Growing prosperous from his successful stock-market business, Dad provided a better-than-middle-class living for his five boys, who all went to work for his firm after college. My mom, the loving center of our young lives, supplied the glue that held the family together to this day, although she has passed away. Her principled adherence to her Catholic moral values undoubtedly saved me from even more trouble than I managed to get into as a rebellious adolescent.

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