
The Voluntaryist

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

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The Wisdom of Bob LeFevre

By Carl Watner

At the outset, I must admit some personal bias. My intellectual acquaintance with Bob LeFevre goes back at least as far as January 1972, when I first ordered a copy of his book, *THIS BREAD IS MINE*. I first met Bob at the Long Beach, California, Future of Freedom Conference in October 1983. Thereafter, until his death, Bob was a key part of my life. He helped publish the first book of voluntaryist essays to which I contributed. Titled *NEITHER BULLETS NOR BALLOTS*, it came out in December 1983. In October 1984, Bob approached me about writing his biography, which was eventually published in 1988 under the title *ROBERT LEFEVRE - TRUTH IS NOT A HALFWAY PLACE*. In March 1985, Bob and I both attended a week-long session of Freedom School given by Kevin Cullinane. Bob was present at my wedding in Campobello, South Carolina, on May 3, 1986. He died a few days later while driving home to California with his wife, Loy.

I knew Bob well during the last three years of his seventy-five-year life span. What kind of person was he? What were his intellectual roots? What was the nature of Bob LeFevre? What wisdom did he share with us in this book you are about to read?

Bob was always the gentlemen. Karl Hess remembered him for his "majestic civility," always respectful of those who differed with him. As he put it in the "Foreword" to my LeFevre biography, "[I] was always mindful of Bob's great patience, the truly caring nature of his advice, and finally, the clear rightness of his principles." For one who only knew Bob in his later years, it was surprising for me to learn that he had such a checkered professional life. It ran the gamut from being a supporter of the "I AM" movement in the last half of the 1930s, a radio announcer, an army captain during World War II, a self-employed entrepreneur, a would-be politician, a newspaper editorial writer, and finally founder and primary instructor at Freedom School.

This book, *THE NATURE OF MAN AND HIS GOVERNMENT*, was a product of these last two phases of his life. The idea for the book originated with Jim Gipson of Caxton Press, who suggested to Bob that he prepare a step-by-step explanation of the doctrine of liberty as taught at Freedom School. All but Chapter 6, "National Defense," were first written as editorials and appeared in the Colorado Springs, Colorado, *GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH* between January 5, and January 15, 1958. They were then collected and published as a small book in 1959, with an original Introduction contributed by Bob's

friend, Rose Wilder Lane.

The most significant influence on Bob during his formative years was his mother, Ethel. Better known as Bonnie, she came from Quaker stock, and had always taught him to question the rightness or wrongness of his conduct. She instilled in him the idea that "truth" - whatever it was and wherever it led him - was the most important thing in life. She also taught him not to be afraid of being different, to tell the truth, to work like hell, and to smile. She showed him how to search out the truth, and then to act on it according to the best dictates of his conscience.

Bob was active in Republican politics during the early 1950s, but he finally proved to himself that "politics was not the answer." In November 1954, he began work as an editorial writer for Harry Hoiles, publisher of the *GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH* in Colorado Springs. It was here that he began to formulate a complete freedom philosophy. Harry's father, R.C. Hoiles, was founder of the Freedom Newspapers, which were once described "as the greatest money-making device ever put together in support of human liberty and human dignity."

Both Hoiles, father and son, wanted someone who could write consistently on the subject of human freedom. Until he resigned on January 15, 1965, Bob worked with both of them, hammering out the libertarian philosophy of the Freedom Newspapers. Nearly all of his editorial output centered around various aspects of human liberty and the free market. Bob had previously read Rose Wilder Lane's *DISCOVERY OF FREEDOM*, and had met Leonard Read and Baldy Harper of the free-market-oriented Foundation for Economic Education. Baldy Harper, who had taught economics at Cornell University, was the first person Bob ever knew who questioned the basic assumption that human beings require a political government. However, it was the Hoiles' insistence on building an integrated philosophy of freedom that made Bob realize "limited government" was an oxymoron and that it was redundant to speak of "unlimited government."

Both Harry and R.C. had a significant impact on Bob's thinking. They exposed him to the idea of abandoning reliance on limited government, and replacing it with competing defense agencies and other private service-providers to carry out the many functions of government. As they saw it, individuals needed food, shelter, clothing, protection, etc., but providing these necessities did not require a monopolistic government. In the late 1940s or early 1950s, Frank Chodorov pointed out to R.C.,

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Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

No. 1 "The Problem with Government Education"

While there may be a thousand—or ten thousand—particular explanations for the deterioration of education in the United States, there is one basic reason which underlies most, if not all, of them. Virtually every public problem associated with education today is traceable to forced schooling and the extensive and increasing use of force in support of schooling.

For example, why has the quality of textbooks declined? Because as force became a dominant factor, the emphasis shifted from quality to quantity. Because schooling tended to replace education, since education is always qualitative while schooling is quantitative. Because you can force people to attend school, but you cannot force them to learn in any meaningful sense. Because quality of education and equality of schooling are incompatible with one another. Because textbooks are provided free of charge and their selection is largely dictated by political considerations. Because if forced schooling is even to appear to succeed, what is taught, and the books used to teach it, must be geared toward the lowest common denominator of students. Because each step downward in the desperate effort to reach this lowest common denominator has ramifying effects which extend upward to affect the following years of schooling, the quality of teachers, the quality of administrators and so on. Because ultimately, even the writers of textbooks will be deficient in that level of understanding which is necessary to produce quality textbooks, even if there were any significant market for them.

It would be possible to trace out many of the other effects of forced schooling in a similar fashion, but there is not space to do so here. Perhaps, it is unnecessary to do so, however instructive the attempt might be. Perhaps, the reason can be sufficiently summed up this way. The state, i. e., government, is incompetent to serve as schoolmaster. Allow me to cast my net wider, however, so as to make the point more expeditiously. Government

is incompetent as a provider of economic goods and services. This incompetence has been exposed in theory, demonstrated in practice, been tried on vast scales and found unworkable, and can be illustrated with mountains of evidence. The incompetence of government as a provider of goods and services is directly attributable to its use of force. Force is inefficient in the production of goods and counterproductive in the distribution of goods. Hence, the incompetence of the state as a provider of goods and services.

- Clarence Carson in "Missing Chapters from American History," THE FREEMAN, August 1981, pp. 489-498 at pp. 490-491.

No. 2 "Try this on Your Friends and Enemies"

The State jealously guards its power and right to use deadly force to punish the violation of every one of its laws, from murder to jaywalking. People will get upset with you if you press them on this point, but try it. Pick the most petty infraction imaginable, ignore it, and eventually you will have a warrant issued for your arrest. If you fail to get into the arresting officer's car 'co-operatively,' see where you wind up. Resist your arrest and you will be subdued. Try hard enough and you will be tasered or shot. What did you do wrong originally - jaywalk? No, you failed to be a good and obedient 'citizen.'

- Paraphrased from Harold Thomas

No. 3 "A Better Idea"

[T]he use of force to battle an idea tends to generate it rather than to kill it. I doubt if an idea has ever been killed by means of force. The enemy of the free market is an idea - the belief that controls can serve the freedom of man. ...

Any law or regulation will be nullified whenever enough persons judge it to be unwise and improper, and not until then. Not every person needs to become convinced that it is unwise. Not even 51 per cent of them need to become convinced. All that is necessary is for a few thought leaders in all walks of life to become convinced because they are the ones to whom many others turn for guidance and advice. It is this understanding among the thought leaders that we now lack and that we must have for success in regaining freedom ...

- F. A. Harper, "Gaining the Free Market," Vol. II, ESSAYS ON LIBERTY (1954), pp. 116-117.

No. 4 "The Law(s) of Violence"

The first law of violence is continuity. Once a man has begun to use violence he will never stop using it. [94] The second law of violence is reciprocity. Violence creates violence, begets and procreates violence. [95] The third

law of violence is sameness. Every violence is identical with every other violence. [97] Condoning violence means condoning every kind of violence. [98] Once we consent to use violence ourselves, we have to consent to our adversary's using it, too. [99] Violence begets violence. This is the fourth law of violence. Violence is par excellence the method of falsehood. [100] The fifth law of violence is this: The man who uses violence always tries to justify both it and himself. [103] Finally, violence never attains the objectives it announces as justifying its use. [113]

- Jacques Ellul, *VIOLENCE* (1969), pp. 84-113.

No. 5 “My Freedom Depends On Yours”

Freedom is destroyed between two persons to whatever extent either one uses violence or the threat of violence to impose his will or viewpoint upon the other. Regardless of who is the aggressor and who is the victim—or whether the violence is legal or illegal—freedom is still infringed.


If you have rendered me helpless by throwing me to the ground and sitting on top of me, everyone understands clearly that my freedom has been severely curtailed. But what is not generally understood is that your freedom is also curtailed as long as you must spend your time and effort to hold me down. You thereby restrict your own progress and improvement just as you do mine.

Freedom is a reciprocal relationship based on voluntary agreements and actions. This applies in all human relationships, even though they are seldom as clear and dramatic as person to person violence. The only real possibility for complete freedom for yourself as an individual is for you to refrain from initiating violence or the threat of violence against anyone else. This is the vital first step toward a condition of mutual no molestation—a step that any one of us can take as soon as he is ready.

- Dean Russell in *THE FREEMAN*, Nov. 1978, p.660.

No. 6 “Can Something Be Both Voluntary and Coercive At the Same Time?”

Everyone recognizes that an act cannot be both “rape” and “lovemaking” simultaneously. Rape requires force, because the victim is unwilling; lovemaking does not. Because no action can be both voluntary and coercive at the same time, states cannot appeal to the principle of “voluntarism” when defending the violence of the State. States cannot say that we “agree” to be taxed, and then say that taxation must be coercive. If we agree to taxation, the coercion is unnecessary – if we do not agree to taxation, then we are coerced against our will.

- Stefan Molyneux, *PRACTICAL ANARCHY*, Raleigh: Lulu Enterprises, no date, p. 73, Part 2, Introduction: The Six Questions. 

Voluntaryism and THE ART OF BEING FREE

By Carl Watner

Before beginning this book review, I must reveal my own bias. My personal friendship and intellectual acquaintance with Wendy McElroy goes back three decades, and was rooted in the creation of *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, whose first issue was published in October 1982. George Smith, Wendy McElroy, and I were co-founders of the newsletter, and it is the guise under which nearly all of my own writing and advocacy have appeared for the last thirty years.

What should one expect from a book of essays written by Wendy McElroy? Although she only uses the word ‘voluntaryism’ once in the entire book (p. 221 as I recall), the chapters in this book revolve around her “deep conviction that there is something sacrosanct about the individual.” (vii) The idea that everyone must “live with self-respect according to [his or] her own values” (ix) forms the underlying theme for all its contents. That, in fact, is what voluntaryism is all about: respecting the self-ownership that each person brings into the world with his or her birth.

In Section I, “The Theoretical Footing of Freedom,” Wendy offers four essays dealing with natural law, natural rights, the differences between state and society, and an explanation of why social engineering is inherently coercive and ultimately unable to plan for all the vicissitudes of life. A legislative or bureaucratic plan either has a reasonable and persuasive basis, or it does not. The fact that at least some people have to be coerced into following the government plan is proof enough to show that government arguments are not sufficiently reasonable to convince them. True, such recalcitrant people may themselves be ignorant, greedy, or simply stubborn, but is that any reason to “force” them to obey the law, so long as they themselves are not coercing others? Paraphrasing Wendy (35), the main practical benefit of a decision-making system based on individual choice, as opposed to one based on central government dictates, is that individuals may quickly adjust to localized, changing circumstances. Government bureaucrats, far from the field of action, not only do not know what is going on, but when they find out, the chain of command is unable to change course very quickly. Neither individual owners nor government personnel know the future, and for that very reason it is far safer to let individual owners fend for themselves rather than to be directed by a central planning bureau. If the government plan goes wrong, the whole country suffers. Under individual planning, it is unlikely that all owners will make the same unwise decision(s) at the same time. Disasters are far less tumultuous when planning is not centralized and monopolized by the government.

Section II of *THE ART OF BEING FREE* is a group of chapters on “the issues,” and includes discussions of the Industrial Revolution, unions, public education, the drug war,

passports, the constitutionality of the federal post office, contempt of court, and war. As you may imagine she conveys her individualist outlook on all these subjects and shows why voluntary interaction always trumps forced behavior. Many of these topics have been discussed in the pages of THE VOLUNTARYIST, but one of the most interesting has not. What should be the responsibility of parents to support their under-age children? In “The Return of Debtors’ Prison” Wendy discusses what the American legal system has settled on: “civil imprisonment for nonpayment of child support.” Tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of deadbeat parents are incarcerated each year on charges of civil contempt because they have not made court-ordered payments. The fact that they do not have income or assets to make these payments is often irrelevant.

Section III is titled “Principles Work Through People,” in which she introduces “some of the historical friends from whom [she has] drawn insight” and inspiration. (129) Her first subject, Etienne de La Boetie (1530-1563) was often mentioned in the early days of THE VOLUNTARYIST. It was he who first identified the voluntaryist insight: that every tyranny is grounded upon general popular acceptance. In short, the bulk of the people themselves, for whatever reason, must acquiesce in their own subjection. All oppression demands the cooperation and compliance of its victims. Oppression cannot operate without the sanction of its victims, and if their consent is withdrawn, State power must disintegrate. As Wendy concludes her essay, she points out that La Boetie in effect told people “Refuse both violence [trying to fight the tyrant militarily and] submission. Simply say ‘No’.”

Other essays in this section deal with the French enlightenment thinker, Voltaire (1694-1778), the transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), the abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879), and Raymond Cyrus Hoiles (1878-1970) founder of Freedom Newspapers chain and defender of the Japanese-Americans during their internment in World War II. Here one finds the never-before-told story of how Hoiles stood up for the constitutional rights of the Japanese living in Orange County, California. It is in these three later articles, that we begin to find the thread that helps bind this book together. Many know the story of Thoreau's one night stay in Concord jail. Wendy labels Thoreau's protest as “an act of conscience.” (155) “The individual and his conscience is the final judge of right and wrong.” (157) Although Wendy mentions Thoreau’s opposition to slavery, she does not mention his friendship with Charles Lane and Bronson Alcott, both of whom set a precedent for Thoreau and who were arrested for non-payment of their poll taxes in 1843. All three were abolitionists and undoubtedly would have agreed with the sentiments of William Lloyd Garrison which Wendy quotes:

I believe in the spirit of peace, and in sole and absolute reliance on truth and the application

of it to the hearts and consciences of the people. I do not believe that the weapons of liberty ever have been, or ever can be, the weapons of despotism. I know that those of despotism are the sword, the revolver, the cannon, the bomb-shell; and, therefore, the weapons to which tyrants cling, and upon which they depend, are not the weapons for me, as a friend of liberty. (177)

It takes great strength of character to speak only the best of others.

- Peter Ragnar

The final section of THE ART OF BEING FREE ties the book together by showing how to “get from here to there.” Wendy suggests that we focus upon things in our own backyard: “concentrate on grassroots movements in which ... individuals make an incredible difference.” (200) This can be in such areas as homeschooling, the father’s rights movement, protecting one's privacy through encryption, barter groups, and the use of alternative currencies. In discussing Hannah Arendt’s EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM, Wendy points out that for many Germans under the Nazi regime, “the law assumed the role that conscience plays in other people. It told them what is right or wrong, and they obeyed,” not realizing that in reality they were causing harm and death to innocent people. (211) The American military police and soldiers who rounded up the peaceful Japanese in America during World War II were doing the same thing: accepting what the government told them to; not questioning what was right or wrong - in other words, just following orders. As she points out, in contrast, a century earlier, Thoreau held that “every human being has a fundamental obligation to discover for himself what is just and then to act according to his conscience, even if it contradicts the majority or the law. It is precisely his moral conscience that makes a man fully human ...” (212) Reminiscent of La Boetie, Wendy writes: “The words most feared by those in authority are ‘I won’t,’” and “No.” (218) Suppose those Germans and Americans had simply refused to do what they were ordered to do. They probably would have been jailed, but then suppose those who were told to jail them said, “No,” too. What a chain of consequences that would entail!

Perhaps Wendy planned it this way, but the two best chapters of her book are those at the end. The next to last chapter is the very intriguing story of “Boycott: A Non-violent Revolt.” In a chapter that should be reprinted in THE VOLUNTARYIST, Wendy lays out the history of the boycott, from its initial attempt to ostracize Captain Boycott, overseer for an absentee landlord in Ireland in 1880, to its expansion via secondary boycotts, blacklists, peer pressure groups, and in a wide variety of economic boycotts ranging from withdrawal of bank deposits to non-

consumption and/or non-importation of certain products. In short, Wendy concludes that the boycott is a “nonviolent, non-political” strategy with the potential for bringing about true social change without involving the government.

In her “Conclusion,” Wendy sums up THE ART OF BEING FREE by focusing again on the important message that Henry David Thoreau sends us in his essay “On the Duty of Civil Disobedience.” Thoreau asked himself a question that has appeared in THE VOLUNTARYIST numerous times: where do you draw the line and refuse to cooperate with the State? Here is how Wendy answers that question:

There is no duty to confront the state except when it seeks to make you an active accomplice in the oppression of others. Those who stand up against the injustice of others are to be applauded. But they should not do so at the expense of their primary duty: to live deeply and honestly. This duty involves pushing back or walking away (when possible) from the areas of life in which the state commands jurisdiction. (245-246)

Some may disagree with Wendy and say this is impossible, and in some cases, it may be because State agents refuse to leave you alone. Bob LeFevre was fond of saying, “the free man will find a way to be free.”

"Focus on doing the right thing, on being a good human being. The results will take care of themselves."
- Andrew Cherngs (Chairman, Panda Express fast-food chain) in READER'S DIGEST, November 2007, p. 62.

Implicit in Bob's observation was the fact that there is a difference between physical liberty and spiritual freedom. Even a person whom the State has imprisoned may remain free in spirit if he or she refuses to submit. The difference between a prisoner and a slave is this: the former refuses to submit and is placed in an iron cage; the slave is allowed his liberty because his or her spirit is in illusory chains of his or her own making. This difference is exemplified in the story of the Stoic who was captured and tortured in order to make him renounce his beliefs. He told his captors that they could do whatever they wished with his body, but that they could not injure his philosophy. “That was in his mind and their authority, in its physical ... aspect, did not extend to that.” (see Issue 17 of THE VOLUNTARYIST, page 4) “Know the truth and the truth shall make you free,” or as THE PEOPLE’S NEW TESTAMENT puts it, “The way to know the truth is to obey the truth.” (John 8:32) Live life in accordance with your conscience, and the world is bound to be a better place. That's the message of THE ART OF BEING FREE. [THE ART OF BEING FREE was published 2012 by Laissez Faire Books, 800 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD. See www.LaissezFaireBooks.com. All numbers in parentheses within this review refer to page numbers in the paperback edition.]

The Wisdom of Bob LeFevre

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“[T]here was no such thing as voluntary taxation.” R. C., who had been a proponent of voluntary funding of government, then concluded that he was “against all taxes.” What he came to favor was free-enterprise associations or voluntary defense companies that would sell protection of life and property, much like an insurance company. As Bob asked, is there a way to “devise a tool for our protection which will be paid for only by those who want it, and in whatever amounts the payers deem best?”

Bob’s editorial writing, as well as his teaching at Freedom School, propelled him towards the conclusion that there was nothing that government could do that the private sector could not do more efficiently. Free enterprise, which rested on the consent of the customer, was certainly more moral than government- provided services. As he wrote in an April 7, 1961 editorial: “We are convinced that when it comes to things people want, the market place can do the job less expensively and better than government can do it. And this includes the job of protecting life and property, providing roads, schools, hospitals, cemeteries, airfields, and scores of other things which governments presently provide.” Some called Bob an anarchist for rejecting government, but he disagreed. He preferred the labels “voluntaryist” or “autarchist” to differentiate himself from those anarchists who rejected private property.

It was in this milieu and under the influence of the Hoiles that Bob wrote these editorials on the nature of man and his government. Essentially Bob saw government as a tool created by men to help protect themselves from invasion and aggression by others. However, this tool which had been intended “as a safeguard for human freedom and dignity” was ill-designed from the start because it depended on the use of violence. Shouldn’t peaceful individuals be left alone to protect themselves as they saw fit? Wasn’t government acting in an aggressive manner when it forced people to patronize its services? As Bob observed, government “is an instrument of force and coercion.” Even if it were to be voluntarily funded, as R.C. had once advocated, its violent and compulsory nature still remained. Those who preferred to have another protection agency serve them were prevented from doing so, and those who preferred no protection, or to provide their own, were not allowed to withdraw their patronage.

The essence of Bob’s philosophy was taken from Rose Wilder Lane’s dictum: “Freedom is self-control.” Harking back to the attraction of the “I Am” movement, Bob understood that human energy can only be controlled by the individual. This means that each of us has the decision-making power over his own life. We decide whether we vote or not, whether we respect other people’s property or steal, whether we lie or tell the truth, whether

we forgive or seek forceful restitution, whether we deal with our fellow man violently or peacefully.

Bob shared a common viewpoint with the Stoics of ancient Athens and Rome. Like them, he viewed human freedom as the absolute dominion of the individual over his own will. This meant that man, by his very nature, was free, and that there was only one long-term way of improving society. If individual men would conduct themselves morally, then society, a mere gathering of men, would be virtuous. In short, Bob saw that if one took care of the means, the end would take care of itself. Bob's idea behind teaching the fundamentals of liberty was not to change anybody. He had neither the authority nor the ability to do so. His aim was to inspire each person to achieve freedom in the right way; the rest was up to the individual.


Bob was a truth-seeker, a man of wisdom. Part of his greatness was his ability to stand alone intellectually, another was his consistency. He insisted on thinking ideas through to their conclusions. If there was a choice between being popular and holding to the truth, he always chose the truth. He knew that truth is not a half-way place. Cyrano de Bergeac's maxim, "Be admirable in all things," could have been Bob's own personal motto. Bob thought that we shouldn't spend much time on destroying evil ideas, but rather devote ourselves to nourishing good ideas and putting them into practice. His task was to understand, to comprehend, and to make allowances for the failures of others. Only to himself did he insist on total self-control and complete self-discipline. Bob was a man who admirably achieved those goals in his own life, and it is that spirit of reasonableness, honesty, and truth-seeking that shall always epitomize Bob for me.

As you read this book, keep Bob's perspective in mind. As he put it, "wisdom is possible only when the individual has learned to control himself." Whether you have long been exposed to libertarian thinking or are newly introduced to voluntarism, this will help you understand Bob's quest for consistency and his conclusion that political government is inherently an invasive institution.

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From Vagueness to Voluntarism: How I Got From There to Here

By Alex R. Knight III

The first time I remember even seeing the word "libertarian," was in 1994, when I was twenty-five. Years prior to that, like most kids, I had no real philosophical or political leanings. Government was just something that happened to be there, like the landscape, or the weather. As I grew into my teens, however, I began to develop a kind of vague sense that something was wrong – perhaps even horribly so – with the way society was structured. I think the catalysts for this awakening process were things that many young people experience on the path to adulthood: I had my first few brushes with the police – mainly for underage drinking. The paychecks I earned at the several jobs I had over those years had numerous taxes taken out of them. Laws restricting ownership of guns seemed increasingly wrong. The police and the military had them, yet the government wanted to curtail others from doing so. I began, again, like many young people, to distrust and resent authority in all forms.

Those who get themselves involved in the machinery of power politics, even for the purpose of destroying it, are bound to fail in their purpose. To destroy it, you have to stay out of it. If you want to cut down a tree, it is no use to climb into its branches. The desire to keep contact with something, even to destroy it, is a subtle and insidious illusion.

- Vinoba Bhave

My new awareness, however, had no cohesive threads running through it. My rapidly developing beliefs didn't fit into any form of traditional political paradigm. I wasn't "right-wing." I didn't think the police should have many of the powers that they had. I didn't think drugs should be illegal (after all, I was doing them). I didn't think the government should have soldiers marching all over the world. But I wasn't "left-wing" either: As stated, I liked guns, and thought people should be able to own them without asking permission from anyone. I thought people, regardless of how much money they had, should be able to keep that money without having the government confiscate it through taxation. I thought that public schools were run more like prisons and indoctrination centers than learning institutions, and that they should be privatized, and all associated property taxation ended. Indeed, if people were actually supposed to own their houses, how could they be taxed? I didn't identify with either Republicans or Democrats. I settled for considering myself politically independent. I had no idea what I would do when I became old enough to vote. When I did get there, I did nothing. Based on my beliefs, there seemed no method of voting consistent with

my principles.

But in 1994, I chanced upon an article written by one Sean Glennon in a free newspaper published in New Hampshire called SEACOAST TIMES. Glennon was a far leftist, but the piece was about drug legalization, so it held my interest. In it, Glennon made mention of the fact that the libertarian candidate for governor, Steve Winter, was in favor of ending the drug war. This intrigued me. So much, in fact, that I looked up the Libertarian Party of New Hampshire's toll-free number in the phone book (the Internet was still in its infancy), and left a message requesting an information package. A few days later, a large envelope showed up in the mail. By the time I was done reading all the material therein, I had come to what was for me at the time, a revelation. All those years, I had actually been a libertarian without knowing it.

Or, that's what I thought.

I contacted the LPNH again, and let them know I wanted to get involved in some way. I was kind of excited. I now had some people I could vote for at election time, and a vehicle to advance the philosophy I had always, for the most part, embraced: The Libertarian Party. I went on to become Communications Director, won more media coverage for the LPNH than had accrued in all the prior years of their existence, and was awarded Activist of the Year in 1998.

But there were still some unresolved problems.

Probably the most daunting one was how to reconcile libertarian philosophy with the existence of government. Because, of course, if one follows the non-aggression principle to its ultimate (and only logical) conclusion, no government – not even a miniscule one – can function without the implementation of coercive force. This seemed paradoxical to the notion of a political party attempting to get candidates elected in order to then legislate into existence greater freedom. I wrestled with this concept for some time. I talked with a lot of other liberty-minded people. I questioned, then questioned again, my core beliefs. There were a lot of great books on the subject that I now realize I should have been reading, but that didn't come until later. Things all came to a head for me in 2000 when, at the LPNH's annual convention, I publicly confronted the late, great Harry Browne on an issue which similarly challenged his candidacy for U.S. President, and the Libertarian Party's fundamental integrity. As a result of that somewhat discomfiting tableau, I resigned from any and all participation in politics, including voting altogether. I realized that I had become a true libertarian in the purest sense. I had become an anarchist. Or if you prefer, as many do, a voluntaryist – a believer in non-aggression and peaceful willing relationships amongst human beings instead of the imposed violence governments bring to bear against individuals. I now believe I am on the correct path in doing my part to bring about a truly free and prosperous society. I warmly invite one and all to join me. [V]

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the politicians, lest ye be put on the no-fly list. Honor thy congressman and thy senator, that their reign may be long upon the land which government thy god has taken from thee.

Thou shalt murder, by voting for those who engage in perpetual war-mongering. Thou shalt kill, when government commands it. And the killing shall be called, "national defense," "serving one's country," and "spreading democracy." No greater love hath a man than this, that a man will go halfway around the world to murder complete strangers, because we told him to.

Thou shalt steal, by voting for your neighbors to be taxed, and thou shalt hate and persecute any who resist. Thou shalt covet thy neighbor's income, and his house, and everything that is thy neighbor's, and beg the lord thy government to take these things from thy neighbor, to give them unto thee. Verily we say unto you, it is greedy and selfish to keep what you have earned, but noble and virtuous to take what your neighbor has earned.

Thou shalt bear false witness, by calling thieves and robbers "public servants," by calling usurpers and tyrants "representatives," and by calling those who advocate liberty for all, "criminals and terrorists."

Blessed are the blindly obedient, for the politicians shall reward them.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after power, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the voters, for they shall legitimize tyranny and oppression.

Blessed are the bankers, for they shall embezzle the earth.

Blessed are the jackbooted thugs, for they shall get away with murder.

Blessed are the corrupt in heart, for they shall receive power.

Blessed are the war-mongers, for they shall imagine themselves to be gods.

Blessed are they who have persecuted the innocent, for the politicians' sakes, for they shall be promoted.

And cursed are the heathens and extremists, who speak out against our tyranny, who encourage you to question authority, and who instruct you to disobey immoral commands.

We, the politicians, say unto you, worship those who insult and exploit you, bow to those who extort and oppress you, and vote for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

Here ends our reading from the first book of politicians, from the gospel according to government.

[Reprinted by permission of the author. Originally presented June 2012, at Porcupine Freedom Festival (PorcFest), Lancaster, New Hampshire.] [V]

The idea of people being able to run their own lives, to a politician, is the most horrible thing he can imagine.

- Larken Rose in THE DAILY BELL, 1/29/2012.

The Gospel According to Government

By Larken Rose

We read now from the Gospel according to Government, first book of Politicians, Chapter 1, Verse 1.

In the beginning, there was chaos and mayhem, and people were as wild beasts. And there was great wailing, and gnashing of teeth throughout the land. Then it came to pass that politicians came down out of heaven, shining in glory, and spoke unto the people, saying, We are the Lord thy government, and we have decided to bless you with our presence, so that we may save you from your sins. Obey our commands, pay tribute unto us, and salvation shall be yours. For you are but stupid, violent animals, and only through our benevolent domination of you shall you be transformed into a civilized, happy and prosperous people.

And the people wondered at the words of the politicians, and were sorely afraid. But the politicians said unto them, Fear not. If you blindly obey the god called government, and mindlessly follow our every whim, then you shall be blessed. But those who would disobey our commands—the heathens and criminals who think for themselves—being evil in our sight, shall be cast into prison, and banished from the collectivist paradise we shall create for you. Cast aside your individual judgment, your free will, your conscience and your moral codes, and follow us, the high priests of government, without thought or question.

The foolish man builds his house upon consensus, cooperation, and voluntary interaction, but the wise man builds his house upon political promises, state coercion, and the lust for power over others. Free will, self-determination, and peaceful coexistence are the devil's work, and lead only to fire and brimstone, suffering and torment. But blind obedience, unthinking loyalty, and unwavering subservience are the path to salvation.

You have heard that it hath been said, love your neighbor, and do unto others as you would have done unto you. But we, the politicians, say unto you, pray for the incarceration or extermination of those who are not like you. But pray also for your neighbors to be taxed and regulated, petition for your friends to be controlled and enslaved, devote your heart and soul to the rituals of the cult of politics, so that we, the high priests of government, may dominate all of mankind for its own good. Only then shall you have everlasting peace.

We are the lord thy government, and here are our commandments. Thou shalt have no other gods before government. Thou shalt follow no moral codes and no value systems above the arbitrary whims of your masters. Thou shalt not take the name of government in vain, or speak against us, the high priests of state. For those who do so are sinners, criminals, and terrorists in our eyes, and shall be wiped from the face of the earth.

Remember election day, to keep it holy. Judge not

(continued on page 7)

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