
The Voluntaryist

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

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"My Yea Is Yea, My Nay Is Nay": Voluntaryism, Integrity and the Question of the Oath

By Carl Watner

In his column, "The Solitary Leaker," about Edward Snowden, David Brooks pointed out that Snowden betrayed all "honesty and integrity, He made explicit and implicit oaths to respect the secrecy of the information with which he was entrusted. He betrayed his oaths." [1] Others have pointed out that perhaps Snowden solicited his top-secret job with the express purpose of exposing NSA secrets. Whether this was so, or whether Snowden took the job, and then discovered the perfidious extent of government surveillance, we will assume he broke whatever oaths he had sworn.

The taking of oaths is an immemorial tradition in the western world, generally connected to the relationship between the individual citizen and his government. Two people might take marriage vows, but one partner cannot imprison the other partner if the marriage promise is broken. A man does not swear an oath to Ford Motor Company when he accepts employment (though he may sign a confidentiality agreement), but when he deals with the State, he must generally swear to the truth of the facts under discussion. Most oaths are subject to the penalty of perjury, by which the government reserves the right to prosecute a person who willfully lies. Thus, it is easy to conclude that oaths are a way of forcing the truth from the recalcitrant citizen; a way of exercising government control over the citizen. Though oaths were intended to bring about truthful testimony, they were also designed to root out dissidents. Under the English Act of 1609, justices of the peace were authorized to administer a combined oath of allegiance and supremacy to any English man or woman whom they suspected of being disloyal to the king. Refusal to take the oath subjected the recusant to the punishment of *praemunire*, which meant being put out of the king's protection, forfeiture of one's property to the crown, and imprisonment for life or at royal pleasure. [2]

Both Baptists and Quakers suffered at the hands of the crown. In August 1664, George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends, was imprisoned for refusing to take the oath of allegiance and supremacy. When questioned by the judge of the Lancaster Assizes, he explained, "my yea or nay was more binding to me than an oath was to many others." Fox stood upon Christ's

admonition "Swear not at all" (5 Matthews 33-37), and referred to the Epistle of James (Chapter 5, Verse 12) which taught all believers to abjure oaths and "let [their] yea be yea; and [their] nay, nay." A few years before in 1662, Francis Bampfield, a Baptist minister, was ejected from his church and imprisoned for nearly 9 years. He was later imprisoned again for his persistent refusal to swear the oath of allegiance and he eventually died in Newgate prison in 1683. In 1675, William Penn and twelve other Quakers published A TREATISE ON OATHS CONTAINING SEVERAL WEIGHTY REASONS WHY PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS REFUSE TO SWEAR. They pointed out that an oath will not deter a liar from lying, and the truthful person needs no inducement or threat to tell the truth. "God has taught us to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as plainly and readily without an oath as with an oath. . . . We regard the taking of an oath as contrary to the teaching of Christ, and as setting up a double standard of truthfulness, whereas truthfulness and sincerity should be practiced in all the dealings of life." [3]

The whole concept of treason is directly related to the oath of allegiance and obedience to the laws of state. In her study of TREASON IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, Margaret Boveri pointed out that the military loyalty oath had deep implications for members of the German army during World War I. Even before the flight of the Kaiser at the end of the war, some members of the General Staff were questioning what their oaths really meant. Were they bound by oath till the day the Kaiser died, or were they released from their promises of loyalty when he abdicated the throne? By the time the Weimar Republic morphed into the Third Reich, "the habit of unquestioning loyalty to the state was so deeply ingrained [in the psyche of the German citizens] that nothing seemed able to shake it. . . . Which particular government happened to be in power was of secondary importance." [4]

However, after Hitler came to power in 1934, he had all members of the German military take an oath which stated: "I swear by God this holy oath, that I shall give my unconditional obedience to the Fuhrer of the German people and Reich, Adolf Hitler, and that I shall be prepared to sacrifice my life as a brave soldier in keeping this oath." [5] Civilian employees of the German state were also required to swear allegiance.

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Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

No. 1 "The Casualties of War Go on Long After the Cessation of Hostilities"

Why did the animosity between the Hatfield and the McCoys turn to bloodshed? "All answers lead back to the Civil War. Not in the commonplace sense that the war pitted one people against another: Almost all Hatfields and most McCoys supported the Confederacy. It was the war, though, that sanctified theft and murder, especially the guerrillas and other 'irregulars.' The lawlessness of war gave Devil Anse Hatfield license to take what was not his and to kill those who stood in the way. 'The Feud' reminds us, among other sad realities of the human condition, that the casualties of war go on long after the cessation of hostilities."

- From a book review by Barton Swaim in THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, June 7, 2013, p. A13.

No. 2 "The First Axiom of Choice Theory"

The only person whose behavior we can control is our own. In practice, if we are willing to suffer the alternative - almost always severe punishment or death - no one can make us do anything we don't want to do. When we are threatened with punishment, whatever we do we rarely do well.

- William Glasser, M.D., CHOICE THEORY (1998), p. 332.

No. 3 Books Received

IN DEFENSE OF CHAOS: THE CHAOLGY OF POLITICS, ECONOMICS, AND HUMAN ACTION by L. K. Samuels. Chaos theory is applied in various branches of science to demonstrate "that apparently random phenomena have an underlying order." The author's thesis is that chaology and complexity science provide scientific evidence that voluntary action works far better than action prompted by coercion and threats of violence. In other words, the seemingly unplanned chaos of the spontaneous order is actually the result of millions and millions of mutually beneficial exchanges. Published by Cobden Press

(2013). Available at www.fr33minds.com. ISBN 978-1-935942-05-4.

No. 4 "My Dream"

It is my dream that someday a young man or woman will come to work for me and, when payday comes and he has earned \$ 500, I will be allowed to write a check for exactly \$ 500 and place it in his hand - value for value, with no deductions, our relationship governed only by the free contract between us and the mutual respect that such an agreement requires. Our eyes will meet and each of us will see that sense of oneself as a free person that is the foundation of pride, rational and moral choice, of responsibility, and also of joy.

- Bill Anderson, HOW THE GOVERNMENT GOT ITS HAND ON YOUR PAYCHECK (1995), p. 28.

No. 5 "De Tocqueville on the Taste of Liberty"

That which, in all times, has so strongly attached the hearts of certain men to liberty is its intrinsic attractions, the charm that it possesses in and of itself, independent of its benefits. It is the pleasure of being able to speak, act, breathe without constraint, He who seeks in liberty anything other than itself is made for servitude.

Certain people pursue liberty obstinately in the face of all sorts of perils and misfortunes. It is not the material goods that it offers them that these people then love in it; they consider it itself as a good so precious and so necessary that no other good could console them for its loss and that they find, in tasting it, consolation for everything that occurs. Other peoples tire of it in the midst of their prosperity; they allow it to be snatched from their hands without resistance, for fear of jeopardizing by such effort the very well-being they owe to it. What do they lack with regard to being free? What, indeed? The taste itself for being free. Do not ask me to analyze this sublime taste, it is necessary to experience it. It enters of its own accord into the great hearts that God has prepared to receive it; it fills them, it inflames them.

- Alexis De Tocqueville (1805-1859) in his THE ANCIENT REGIME AND THE REVOLUTION (1856) as quoted in Paul Rahe, SOFT DESPOTISM, DEMOCRACY'S DRIFT (2009), pp. 279-80. 

The Federal Reserve Board of Governors and their Open Market Committee is what I call the monetary Politburo of the WesternWorld. This is nothing but socialism: monetary central planning.

- David Stockman, "Austerity Is Not Discretionary," CONVERSATIONS WITH CASEY (July 18, 2012).

The Problem with Trading

By Dave Scotese

The problem with trading is theft. If you find an object that is common, which can be easily replaced with something else if you lose the one you found, like a rock, for example, or a stick, it isn't worth much. However, if you put some work into it, perhaps sharpening the end of the stick to a point, or breaking the rock to create a sharp cutting edge, then it becomes a bit more valuable. As you put more work into making your found object into something useful, you will develop a feeling of ownership. If it is destroyed or taken from you, you will feel sad at the loss even though you can easily find another such object and work on it to make it as useful as the previous one.

This object, then, is something that I will call your "property" because you put your work into it to make it useful to you. If it is also useful to me, perhaps as something to dangle from a string around my neck to make myself attractive, or from my earlobe, or perhaps as a tool to cut parts of plants that I like to eat, then I might offer you something I consider as my own "property" in trade. You may refuse to give me the one you have, but offer to make another one for me, to trade for the thing I have. If and when we both feel that we are getting more out of our proposed trade than we are giving up, we will make the trade.

Multiply this by six or seven billion and you have the economy of today's Earth. However, there are some important deviations from this pattern.

One such important deviation is the introduction of coercion. If we have agreed to meet at a certain place and trade our property with each other (say I'll give you a sharp stick, and you'll give me a sharp rock), it might happen that someone else wants your rock. They may approach us where we meet and threaten to injure one or both of us if we don't hand over the rock. At this point, it doesn't matter whether you have my stick, or I have my stick, the fact is that this third party is committing theft. If you disagree with this use of the word theft, substitute in some other word to characterize what the third party is doing. I will use the word theft.

There are a number of alterations to this scenario which do not affect the nature of the thief's act. First, let us agree that what you're bringing is not a rock but some money. When a thief steals, it is still theft no matter what he steals, as long as there is a natural presumption that it is owned by someone else.

Next, let us agree that the thief can make all manner of promises about how he will use the proceeds of the theft without changing the nature of his act. Keeping one's promises does not affect the nature of one's previous criminal act. While it can be a way to mitigate its negative effects, a crime has nevertheless been committed and the criminal is guilty of it. When the promises are made as a part of the crime, they serve to make the crime more insidious.

Let us now agree that the thief can represent a group of people who have decided that your money will help them accomplish some kind of goal, whether or not it's a goal with which you agree. Whether or not this is theft still depends on your ability to control what happens. If the representative explains that your unwillingness to contribute will cause them to take part of your pay from your employer, or to lock you in a cage, and you pay the money in order to avoid these things, it is still theft.

Finally, let's assume that the group represented has been legitimately elected by a sufficiently large number of people. Through this mechanism of election, what has been theft up to this point is transformed for some people from theft into something more honorable. For such people, when enough voters agree that some part of what you earn shouldn't be yours any more, they justify taking it by electing people who will put it in writing and call it law. For those people, a majority of voters can override our right to barter rocks for sticks (see <http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc420.html>) or to exchange money for goods and services of others.

Whether you call this new election-backed behavior "taxation" or "theft", the results are the same, and it is the results of a behavior that give it its meaning. Let's examine the results and determine whether or not a significant difference is introduced by the election process.

You will no longer have direct control over who gets the money. It certainly won't come to me in trade for my sharp stick. Most of the other people and companies that might provide you with goods and services for that money won't see any of it. The few that do will not favor you with the goods and services they offer in return for it. These things all remain true regardless of the election process.

When a thief takes your money, you may appeal to the authorities to make an attempt to recover your loss. The chances of success for this strategy are usually pretty low because the authorities have no vested interest in or contractual obligation to seek the return of your property. However, if the thief has set up some kind of mechanism through which you can register your preference as to how your stolen money should be spent, you will have a small amount of control, though the choices may have little to do with the purchases you would have made had you retained control of your earnings. The same situation exists with taxation except that the election process allows your preferences to be registered if you participate, though the choices still have little to do with the purchases you would have made had you retained control of your earnings.

Additionally, taxation is worse than thievery because the authorities themselves are in on the take. They will use the private thief as an excuse to provide everyone with more (mostly ineffective) protection. They will use any resistance to being robbed through taxation as an excuse to provide everyone with "more

security" through enforcement of tax laws and "closing loopholes", as if being robbed through taxation is a benefit. So again, we see no significant difference even for those who vote, and none at all for those who do not, except that for both kinds of people, the election process co-opts the authorities and thus makes taxation worse than thievery.

Perhaps the best expression of the results of our discussion is that taxation and theft are different mostly because of their semantics, but an examination of their results makes them largely equivalent. However, taxation is even worse on several counts. The amount taken through taxation is much greater. The authorities, rather than working to rectify it, encourage it. Those who benefit the most from taxation make the crime more insidious by burying it in promises to spend the proceeds helping to make things better. So if taxation is not to be called theft, let us agree that it is something worse - maybe something like slavery!

[This article was prepared for the essay contest "How Do You Explain To People that Taxation is Theft?". Dave Scotese is the webmaster for voluntaryist.com and a freelance computer contractor.]

An Excerpt on The State of the Nation

By James Mill

[Editor's Note: This article first appeared in THE LONDON REVIEW, April 1835. It has been recently posted in Liberty Fund's Online Library of Liberty. See David M. Hart, ed., THE POLITICAL WRITINGS OF JAMES MILL (2013).]

To understand this unhappy position of a portion of our fellow-citizens, we must call to mind the division which philosophers have made of men placed in society. They are divided into two classes, *Ceux qui pillent*, -et *Ceux qui sont pillés* [those who pillage, and those who are pillaged]; and we must consider with some care what this division, the correctness of which has not been disputed, implies.

The first class, *Ceux qui pillent* [those who pillage], are the small number. They are the ruling Few. The second class, *Ceux qui sont pillés* [those who are pillaged], are the great number. They are the subject Many.

It is obvious that, to enable the Few to carry on their appropriate work, a complicated system of devices was required, otherwise they would not succeed; the Many, who are the stronger party, would not submit to the operation. The system they have contrived is a curious compound of force and fraud: - force in sufficient quantity to put down partial risings of the people, and, by the punishments inflicted, to strike terror into the rest; fraud, to make them believe that the results of the process were all for their good.

First, the Many were frightened with the danger of invasion and ravage, by foreign enemies; that so they might believe a large military force in the hands of the Few to be necessary for their protection; while it was

ready to be employed in their coercion, and to silence their complaints of anything by which they might find themselves aggrieved.

Next, the use of all the circumstances calculated to dazzle the eyes, and work upon the imaginations of men, was artfully adopted by the class of whom we speak. They dwelt in great and splendid houses; they covered themselves with robes of a peculiar kind; they made themselves be called by names, all importing respect, which other men were not permitted to use; they were constantly followed and surrounded by numbers of people, whose interest they made it to treat them with a submission and a reverence approaching adoration; even their followers, and the horses on which they rode, were adorned with trappings which were gazed upon with admiration by all those who considered them as things placed beyond their reach.

And this was not all, nor nearly so. There were not only dangers from human foes; there were invisible powers from whom good or evil might proceed to an inconceivable amount. If the opinion could be generated, that there were men who had an influence over the occurrence of this good or evil, so as to bring on the good, or avert the evil, it is obvious that an advantage was gained of prodigious importance; an instrument was found, the power of which over the wills and actions of men was irresistible.

Ceux qui pillent have in all ages understood well the importance of this instrument to the successful prosecution of their trade. Hence the Union of Church and State; and the huge applauses with which so useful a contrivance has been attended. Hence the complicated tissue of priestly formalities, artfully contrived to impose upon the senses and imaginations of men-the peculiar garb-the peculiar names-the peculiar gait and countenance of the performers-the enormous temples devoted to their ceremonies-the enormous revenues subservient to the temporal power and pleasures of the men who pretended to stand between their fellow-creatures and the evils to which they were perpetually exposed, by the will of Him whom they called their perfectly good and wise and benevolent God.

If, besides the power which the priestly class were thus enabled to exercise over the minds of adult men, they were also permitted to engross the business of education-that is, to create such habits of mind in the rising generation, as were subservient to their purposes, and to prevent the formation of all such habits as were opposed to them-the chains they had placed on the human mind would appear to have been complete: the prostration of the understanding and the will-the perpetual object of their wishes and endeavours down to the present hour-to have been secured forever.

The alliance of the men, who wielded the priestly power, was, in these circumstances, a matter of great importance to those who wielded the political power; and the confederacy of the two was of signal service to the general end of both-the maintenance of that old and

valuable relation—the relation between Those qui pillent, and Those qui sont pillés.

There was another instrument—not, indeed, of so great, but of no mean potency. We allude to the lawyers. Men speedily discovered how much they were exposed to injury from one another, even in the state of social union, and found how greatly they were dependent on the protection which was afforded them against such injuries. They greatly valued that protection, and respected greatly the men who were its more immediate instruments. These men naturally thought of serving themselves by the advantageous situation in which they were placed. They wished to make the dependence upon them of the other members of the community as great as possible. This was to be done mainly by rendering the mode in which they yielded that protection mysterious and obscure. Obscurity, especially in the less instructed states of the human mind, is a powerful cause of that kind of reverence which is mixed with fear. Nobody knows what may be in a thing which is obscurely seen. It is almost always swelled into something of vast dimensions and pregnant with good or evil according to the frame in which the imagination of the half-observer may be at the time. More than this: when law was obscure, nobody could obtain the benefit of it but by means of the lawyers, because by them alone was it understood. This created a state of profound dependence on the part of all the rest of the community. It proved, of course, to the lawyers, a fertile source both of riches and power. The alliance of the men of law with the men of the state and the men of the altar became thence a matter of importance to the trade of all; and the union of Law and State has not been less real, though less talked about, than the union of Church and State. It is unfortunate that it never obtained a name, and therefore is more frequently overlooked. ▣

What I Believe

By David Butler

I believe in the principle of equal freedom. Simply stated, it means that every human being has the same right to be free to live their lives as they choose as long as they let everyone else have the same right. It follows that every act of coercion is a violation of this principle. That is why I am a voluntaryist – one who believes that all human interactions should be voluntary.

Taking it a step further, I believe that if mankind organized their lives around this principle, they would maximize the general welfare. By this I mean that free people would engage in free enterprise and build free markets that operate to the benefit of all. This is the essence of libertarian economic theory.

I believe that people care most about themselves and the people close to them – family, friends, associates, etc. In this context, we all operate in what we perceive to be our self-interest. When we build free markets, we are in tune with this essential nature.

When we institutionalize the idea that the initiation of force is an acceptable way to organize, we give power to people who, just like every other person on the planet, will use the power in their own self-interest. The corruption that follows is not incidental and avoidable, it is systemic and inevitable.

I believe that free markets can provide every human need better than any alternative ever devised. This includes all critically important services such as food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, education, banking, transportation, roads, as well as defense, courts, and police. Free markets work better because, from an economic point of view, every interaction between free people is a win-win proposition. Every coercive interaction is a win-lose proposition. If we can maximize the number of voluntary interactions and minimize the number of coercive ones, we will all be better off.

I understand that this is not the world we have today. In today's world, mankind has organized into powerful states that have partitioned the globe and built massive military machines for protection. We have weapons of total destruction sitting on top of intercontinental ballistic missiles buried into silos across vast areas of the North American, European and Asian continents. Warfare is the norm, and for some nations, warfare is perpetual. Surveillance is ubiquitous, and markets are managed – not free. This is the world we were all born into. This is the world most of us accept as natural. The desire for change is weak.

But I believe that change is possible. There was a time when all mankind lived under monarchs of one sort or another. These monarchs organized a ruling class that managed the rest of the population as serfs. The serfs loved the kings and queens that literally owned them. I dare say that this type of organization started thousands of years ago with strong men taking power over early tribes. And yet, today, serfdom is history. Change did happen.

Today, governments are elected by the people, but owned by special interest groups. These governments have centralized so much power that change seems impossible. Wealth is flowing from the masses to the rich at an ever increasing rate. We are literally on a path back to serfdom.

But I believe that even now, change is possible. A move away from centralized superpowers to a more distributed model is possible. I believe that the closer power distribution gets to vesting all power in the individual, the better off we will be.

I believe that a world without any organization possessing the legal right to use force is possible. I believe that the generation that achieves this goal will be the generation that eliminates war and poverty – the two worst consequences of the current system. I believe that this is an end worth dreaming about. I believe that this is an end worth striving for.

[David Butler is a retired computer professional with a master's degree in mathematics from Oxford University. He has been a libertarian and voluntaryist since the 1970s.] **V**

“My Yea Is Yea, My Nay Is Nay”

(continued from page 1)

In 1993, “Luitgard Wundheiler remembered how her father, a judge in Marburg, Germany weighed the matter [of taking the oath].”

In 1936, her father had just received the letter sent to all German civil servants asking him to join the Nazi Party by signing a loyalty oath. He discussed it with his wife and then called the fourteen-year-old Wundheiler into his study. He gave her the letter to read and asked her if she thought he should sign. To her, his choice was clear: he should not sign it because to do so would be a lie and he never lied. Fifty-seven years later, Wundheiler still remembered the judicial clarity with which her father presented exactly what was at stake:

Before you say yes or no so clearly and so spontaneously, I also want you to know what the possible consequences are. I don't know what the consequences will be definitely, but there will be some consequences. Under the best of circumstances, I will lose my job. Under the worst of circumstances, you will never see me again in your whole life because they will do away with me. There are a number of possibilities in between. Maybe they will put me in a concentration camp and sometime later release me, but there will be some consequences, and I want you to know that.

As it happened, her father, who was stubbornly honest and passionately committed to justice, refused to join the Nazi Party. He was summarily dismissed from the judiciary but managed to land a job as a court messenger. For the remaining years of the Nazi rule, he and his family existed barely above the poverty level. [6]

Hitler was very astute in having the oath predicated upon his person rather than upon the German nation or constitution. As World War II progressed, some German army officers became bitterly anti-Nazi, but they would not violate their obligation to obey Hitler's orders, even if they thought them criminal or contrary to the international laws of war. Boveri relates the case of one German general in Italy who received orders which he considered wrong. “He made dispositions which were contrary, and then, with his hand still resting on the telephone, pulled his pistol from its holster and put a bullet through his brain.” [7] “The most curious example of oath interpretation by a professional soldier is the case of Paul Borchardt, a General Staff officer of

considerable distinction, In 1938 he was dismissed from the General Staff and forced to leave the Army and he eventually left Germany because he was half Jewish. When charged by American Intelligence with spying, in 1942, he professed to be an anti-Nazi. However, he remained a German patriot who did his duty when Germany was at war, and eventually received a prison sentence of twenty years when he refused to violate his oath and give the names of his prior military contacts in Germany.” [8] Near the end of World War II, those inside the German resistance movement decided to attempt to assassinate Hitler, rather than arrest him and put him on trial, because hundreds of thousands of Germans had sworn fealty to him. [9]

So what do these brief historical comments portend for voluntaryists? What lessons are to be learned?

First, stay as far away from government as you can, so you are not involved in situations where you need to take an oath or swear allegiance. Second, refuse to swear, affirm, or answer questions posed by government agents. The burden in any criminal case is on the prosecution to prove that you are guilty. You are not required to prove your innocence.

Third, in my article “Am I an American Citizen and What Might It Mean?” I pointed out that people are born stateless and have citizenship imposed upon them by simply being born within the geographic area controlled by a particular government. Voluntaryists want nothing to do with any government, whether it be the one that controls the land where they are born, or otherwise. In that article, I asked whether a voluntaryist could sign an application for a U.S. passport that reads, I “declare under penalty of perjury that I am a citizen of the United States.” Not only is the voluntaryist not a citizen, but the voluntaryist objects, much like the Baptists and Quakers of old, to signing any government document, much less one that carries a penalty of perjury.

One subscriber took me to task because he argued that the declaration on the passport application was not morally binding because it was made under duress. Is this a valid argument or reason for signing a government document with which you do not agree? I think not. You cannot make a mental reservation when you take an oath or make an affirmation under penalty of perjury. One's integrity is compromised if one makes an outward sign of submission, and then maintains an inner resolution of defiance. If integrity is a matter of being whole, of being the same on the inside as on the outside, then one cannot claim duress as a reason for being dishonest. One simply says, “No, I will not do this,” and then takes the consequences, whether it be going to jail, or fleeing and hiding from government agents, or being executed for being a voluntaryist. [10] As I explained in the conclusion to “Voluntaryism and

Extreme Necessity,” a man only dies once so he must be careful and respectful of how he lives. How a man lives always trumps how long he lives. Or, as Gandhi wrote, “If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.”

Footnotes

[1] NEW YORK TIMES, June 11, 2013, p. A 21.

[2] Constance Braithwaite, CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO COMPULSIONS UNDER THE LAW, York, England: William Sessions Limited, 1995, pp. 19-20.

[3] from various Quaker tracts as quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 14-17.

[4] Margaret Boveri, TREASON IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1963 (first published 1961), p. 32.

[5] *ibid.*, p. 299. Also see entry for “Hitler Oath” in wikipedia.

[6] Eva Fogelman, COURAGE AND CONSCIENCE, New York: Doubleday Books, 1994, pp. 23-24. Also see Milton Mayer, THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE FREE (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 176-181, for information about a German who was required to take the oath of fidelity and who opposed it in conscience. This excerpt is reprinted as “The Day the World Was Lost,” in THE VOLUNTARYIST, Whole Number 31, April 1988.

[7] Boveri, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

[8] *ibid.*, p. 34. Also see “Paul Borchardt, the Abwehr and the W.J. Harding King Letters,” at www.fjexpeditions.com/frameset/borchardt.htm.

[9] *ibid.*, p. 80

[10] David Romtvedt, “Loyalties,” THE VOLUNTARYIST, Whole Number 62, June 1993. 

Roger Ver's Journey to Anarchism

(continued from page 8)

Assembly. I vowed that if I were elected I would not accept any salary, considering the money would necessarily have been taken from others by force in the form of taxation. I also promised to cut as many taxes and repeal as many laws as I could.

As part of the election process I was invited to participate in a debate at San Jose State University against the Republican and Democrat candidates. In the debate, I argued that taxation is theft, the war on drugs is immoral, and that the ATF are “a bunch of jack booted thugs and murderers” in memoriam to the people they slaughtered in Waco, Texas. Unbeknownst to me at the time there were several plain clothed ATF agents in the audience who became very upset with the things I was saying. They began looking into my background in the attempt to find dirt on me. I had already started a successful online business selling various computer components. In addition to computer parts, I, along with dozens of other resellers across the country, including Cabelas, were selling a product called a “Pest Control Report 2000.” It was basically a firecracker used by farmers to scare deer and birds away from their corn fields. While everyone else, including the manufacturer, were simply asked to stop

selling them I became the only person in the nation to be prosecuted.

The reasoning for the prosecution became crystal clear after a meeting with the US prosecuting attorney and the undercover ATF agents from the debate. In the meeting, my attorney told the prosecutor that selling store-bought firecrackers on Ebay isn’t a big deal and that we can pay a fine and do some community service to be done with everything. When the prosecutor agreed that that sounded reasonable one of the ATF agents pounded his hand on the table and shouted “...but you didn’t hear the things that he said!” This summed up very clearly that they were angry about the things that I had said, not the things that I had done.

After being told by the US attorney that I would be sent to jail for seven or eight years if I took my case to trial I signed a plea agreement. At the sentencing the judge asked me if anyone threatened or coerced me in any way to sign the plea agreement. When I said “Yes, absolutely,” the judge’s eyes became very wide and he asked “what do you mean?” I explained that the US attorney told me that he would send me to jail for seven or eight years if I didn’t sign the plea agreement. The judge responded that that was not what he was asking about, so I replied that I must not understand what it means to be threatened or coerced. The judge then proceeded to lecture me extensively on politics. He carried on about why government is so important and how “taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society” and that government is wonderful in general. He summed up his lecture by telling me that, “I don’t want you to think that your political views have anything to do with why you are here today,” and then sentenced me to serve ten months in federal prison.

After my release from Lompoc Federal Penitentiary I had to deal with three years of lies, insults, threats, and general harassment by the US Federal probation department. I moved to Japan on the very day my probation finished.

Currently, I am working full time to make the world a better, less violent place by promoting the use of Bitcoin. Bitcoin totally strips away the State’s control over money. It takes away the vast majority of its power to tax, regulate, or control the economy in any way. If you care about liberty, the nonaggression principle, or economic freedom in general you should do everything you can to use Bitcoin as often as possible in your daily life.

[Roger Ver was born and raised in Silicon Valley and now resides in Tokyo. He is the CEO of MemoryDealers.com and directly employs thirty people in several countries around the world. Roger is also an investor in numerous Bitcoin startups. He spends his free time studying economics, moral philosophy, Bitcoin, and Brazilian Jujitsu. This article first appeared on the website www.dailyanarchist.com on November 12, 2012.] 

Roger Ver's Journey to Anarchism

By Roger Ver

My road to becoming a voluntaryist began in junior high when I found a copy of the book SOCIALISM by Ludwig von Mises. At the time I hadn't given politics much thought and was a typical statist who assumed that there wasn't any reason to limit the State's power if it was being used to help people, but I also had a vague idea that Americans were opposed to socialism.

When I initially started reading SOCIALISM I thought it would be a pro-socialist book, but that it would be a good idea for me to hear the other side of the argument. By the time I finished it, I had learned that it is an impossibility for the government to centrally plan an economy as efficiently as the free market. After this book, I was inspired to read other books on economics by Ludwig von Mises, Adam Smith, Fredric Bastiat, Leonard Read, Henry Hazlitt, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and just about anything else I could order from Laissez-Faire Books, since this was before the internet was wide-spread. I learned that prices transmit the information required to most effectively allocate resources and that government intervention in the economy is preventing the world from being as wealthy as it should be. The more I read, the more appalled I became at the economic ignorance displayed by

politicians and governments around the world. I became frustrated because anyone who spends the time to study economics can learn that nearly everything the government does makes the world a poorer place and that people, especially the poor, would be much better off if everyone were simply allowed to do anything that is peaceful.

At this point I had a firm grasp of the economic benefits brought to all by the free market, but it wasn't until I found Murray Rothbard's works that I started to think about the moral case for freedom. I devoured all of Rothbard's books and was persuaded by the logic of his arguments. I remember being almost afraid to read such powerful truths. In all my years of schooling, no one before Rothbard had ever pointed out that taxation is the moral equivalent of theft, and the military draft is the moral equivalent of kidnapping and slavery. It shattered my remaining hopes that the State could be morally justified. For the first time I saw them for the criminal band of thieves, slave masters, and murderers that they are. My life has never been the same since.

Up to this point everything I had learned seemed ideological and somewhat abstract, but I felt the need to point out these truths to others. To help spread the ideas of liberty at the age of twenty, in the year 2000, I became a Libertarian candidate for California State

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