
The Voluntaryist

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Meeting the State Head-On

By Anonymous

[Author’s Note: This article was sparked by recently reading two older voluntaryist essays by Carl Watner: “Highway Tax vs. Poll Tax: Some Thoreau Tax Trivia” (Issue 71), and “Charles Lane: Voluntaryist”, the Introduction to A VOLUNTARY POLITICAL GOVERNMENT: LETTERS FROM CHARLES LANE.]

In Henry David Thoreau’s famous essay “Civil Disobedience” (which was originally titled “Resistance to Civil Government”), he wrote that he had paid no poll-tax for six years. [1] The poll-tax or head-tax, as it was sometimes called, has been part of human history since the times of the ancient Egyptians and Romans. It was basically a capitation tax levied in a fixed amount on each “taxable” person. In colonial America this often meant that the male “head of household pa[id] the tax on himself, his wife, his children sixteen years of age and older, indentured servants, and slaves.” (Rabushka, 15) The poll-tax was epitomized in Jewish law which collected one-half shekel from every man regardless of his wealth: “the rich shall not pay more and the poor shall not pay less.” (Exodus 30:11-16)

In the Massachusetts of Thoreau’s day, the poll-tax amounted to \$ 1.50 per year. [2] The basis for its assessment was found in the State Constitution of 1780 “which provided that ‘the public charges of government’ should be assessed ‘on polls and estates in the manner that has hitherto been practiced’.” (Broderick, 613) As recounted in TAXATION IN COLONIAL AMERICA, Alvin Rabushka observed that the poll tax was collected in nearly all the North American colonies, and in many cases refusal to pay resulted in distraint of one’s property. [3] Although it was a standard source of revenue for both colonial and state governments, “low taxes, noncompliance, and arrears were a chronic fact of fiscal life.” (Rabushka, 868) In fact, Rabushka asserted that in Massachusetts at the time of Paul Revere’s ride on April 18, 1775, “the residents of Massachusetts had created for themselves a fiscal paradise.” (779)

So why did Thoreau and his friends, Bronson Alcott and Charles Lane, object to paying the poll-tax even though it was such a minimal amount? “It [wa]s for no particular item in the tax-bill” that Thoreau and friends “refuse[d] to pay it. (206) Much like voluntaryists today, they “simply wish[ed] to refuse allegiance to the State, to withdraw and stand aloof from it” (206) The Massachusetts Revised Statutes of 1836 stated that the

poll-tax was to be assessed upon “each taxable person in the town, where he shall be an inhabitant the first day of May in each year.” (Broderick, 614) As Rabushka put it, “To reside was to pay.” (166) It had nothing to do with citizenship. (Lane had been born in England and resided there until 1842.) It had everything to do with simply being a person living in a particular place. Did they, by their very existence, owe taxes to the town government where they lived? According to the town of Concord and the State of Massachusetts, there was no legal way to avoid the tax, short of leaving the state permanently. Yet, they did not want to leave their homes or lose their property, but neither did they want to support the institution of government.

(continued on page 3)

The Right to Ignore the State

As a corollary to the proposition that all institutions must be subordinated to the law of equal freedom, we cannot choose but admit the right of the citizen to adopt a condition of voluntary outlawry. If every man has freedom to do all that he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man, then he is free to drop connection with the state - to relinquish its protection and to refuse paying toward its support. It is self-evident that in so behaving he in no way trenches upon the liberty of others, for his position is a passive one, and while passive he cannot become an aggressor. It is equally self-evident that he cannot be compelled to continue one of a political corporation without a breach of the moral law, seeing that citizenship involves payment of taxes; and the taking away of a man's property against his will is an infringement of his rights. Government being simply an agent employed in common by a number of individuals to secure to them certain advantages, the very nature of the connection implies that it is for each to say whether he will employ such an agent or not. If anyone of them determines to ignore this mutual-safety confederation, nothing can be said except that he loses all claim to its good offices and exposes himself to the danger of maltreatment - a thing he is quite at liberty to do if he likes. He cannot be coerced into political combination without a breach of the law of equal freedom; he can withdraw from it without committing any such breach, and he has therefore a right so to withdraw.

- Herbert Spencer, SOCIAL STATICS (1851), Chapter XIX, Sec. 1.

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Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

No. 1 "The Scamp as Ideal"

In short, my faith in human dignity consists in the belief that man is the greatest scamp on earth. Human dignity must be associated with the idea of a scamp and not with that of an obedient, disciplined and regimented soldier. The scamp is probably the most glorious type of human being, as the soldier is the lowest type, according to this conception. It seems in my last book, MY COUNTRY AND MY PEOPLE, the net impression of readers was that I was trying to glorify the "old rogue." It is my hope that the net impression of the present one will be that I am doing my best to glorify the scamp or vagabond. I hope I shall succeed. For things are not so simple as they sometimes seem. In this present age of threats to democracy and individual liberty, probably only the scamp and the spirit of the scamp alone will save us from becoming lost as serially numbered units in the masses of disciplined, obedient, regimented and uniformed coolies. The scamp will be the last and most formidable enemy of dictatorships. He will be the champion of human dignity and individual freedom, and will be the last to be conquered. All modern civilization depends entirely upon him.

- Lin Yutang, THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING (1937), p. 12.

No. 2 "Society and Character"

What is a moral and religious people? People who govern themselves privately. People who love and live the four natural virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, and courage, and the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity. These are people who can judge what actions are fitting, who give to everyone his due, who can face fear, uncertainty, and danger with endurance and strength, and who can restrain their own appetites. These are people who believe in an eternal standard of justice, who live in hope for the future, and who love and care for their neighbors as themselves.

- Franklin Sanders, THE MONEYCHANGER (April 2014), p. 4.

No. 3 "Repudiating Politics and Violence"

[P]ower is not only morally illegitimate but also morally self-defeating; ... men cannot be changed for the better by external coercive or power means; ... the only way genuine improvement can be brought about is by each person bringing about the kind of change that is legitimate, that is not *ultra vires*, namely, change within him or herself. However radical, eccentric or revolutionary one's views, provided one retains some allegiance to violence, however small or conditional, one is still political, and therefore viable in the existing society. In short, you can reasonably expect to be heard. But to admit no violence whatever as legitimate is to repudiate all politics, all power, and thus expose to the light of day the unwanted truth that the responsibility for ending the evils in the body politic rests inescapably on each one of us, who can only contribute to moral progress by mending his own life. Those who make this truth clear are apt to experience difficulty in getting their voices heard anywhere.

Yet the true way to live is also the most rewarding here on this earth, the only earth we know. But to apply one's energies to the multiplicity of creative activities open to a human being for their own sake, requires as well a knowledge of what Blake called the 'Minute Particulars' a share in the vision that can see 'a world in a Grain of Sand and a Heaven in a Wild Flower'. This is a gift, but it is not necessarily a natural one; it can with strenuous effort and much patience be acquired. We cannot all be born Thoreaus or Blakes, but their values are not esoteric ones. In so far as they lead to life - and to a life bearing within it the joy of endless renewal without robbing anyone else of a like joy - they are values which are desirable for their own sake and attainable by all alike.

- R. V. Sampson, THE DISCOVERY OF PEACE (1973), p. 200.

No. 4 "The One Essential Condition Is That They Be Voluntary"

To be a libertarian is not to lack virtue or compassion. It is to recognize that benevolence is a quality of individuals, not governments. The loudness with which people demand higher taxes on others is not a measure of their benevolence. The only plausible gauge of personal benevolence is our willingness voluntarily to give money to others. I believe a libertarian society would stimulate individual moral growth and, with it, true compassion for the less fortunate.

Individualism, as I understand it, is not opposed to community. I am in favour of clubs, associations and co-operative ventures of every conceivable kind. There should be as many and as varied a set of associations as people want. The one essential

(continued on page 5)

Meeting the State Head-On

(Continued from Page 1)

Thus the “inhabitants” of Massachusetts’ towns had to meet the poll tax head-on, much as people today are faced with confronting local, state, and federal income taxes. [4] Governments, then and now, take one’s very existence as evidence that one owes a tax. In “Resistance to Civil Government,” Thoreau wrote, “If there were one who lived wholly without the use of money, the State itself would hesitate to demand it of him.” (200) However, this is not true today, even if it were in Thoreau’s time (which is doubtful). If there were such a person in today’s United States, the IRS or a state revenue department would still want to know 1) why that person hadn’t filed a tax return; 2) if that person had any taxable income; and 3) how that person lived without incurring a tax liability. It is just as nearly impossible to hide from the IRS as it would have been to hide from the town-constable in Thoreau’s day. (It might even be more difficult today with the advent of government identifiers, computers, and government-issued birth certificates.)

The only highwayman I ever met was the state itself - When I have refused to pay the tax which is demanded for that protection which I did not want, itself has robbed me - When I have asserted the freedom it declared, it has imprisoned me.

- Henry David Thoreau, JOURNAL: Vol. 2, 1842-1848. Edited by Robert Sattelmeyer. (Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 262.

Thoreau’s refusal to pay the poll tax would be much like refusing to file or pay federal and state income taxes today. It pits the individual against the State. The IRS assumes that your very existence means that you owe taxes, or at least an explanation as to why you don’t. The IRS places the burden of proof on the individual taxpayer to show why no return is due and/or to prove why no tax is owed. In principle, the government assumes that everyone owes, and that it may take as much or as little as the President, members of Congress and the IRS agree on. In effect, what you think you ‘own’ is actually government property that the government lets you ‘rent.’ See what happens to you and your property if you don’t pay your ‘rent’ (i.e., taxes). Much like monarchs of old, the government grants people the privilege of keeping only as much as the government allows. Taxation is not theft, from the government’s perspective, because it is only taking what already belongs to it. The whole premise behind government taxation is essentially the idea that you and your property belong to the State; that the government ‘owns’ everything in the geographic area over which it exerts control.

People are enslaved if their bodies are owned by others; but they are also slaves if others control their property or the results of their labor. If the State may take one dollar out of what a man owns, then it may take up to his last dollar. Once admit the right of the State to tax, then the State becomes the owner of all property. As in most situations in life, it is best to resist at the beginning, and thus it behooves us to stand tall and firm against the State and resist head-on by refusing to file or pay taxes.

Endnotes

[1] See page 203 of Thoreau. Numbers within parentheses in the text are page numbers of a particular article or book referred to below.

[2] \$1.50 would be 7.5% of a \$ 20 gold piece, which contains slightly less than an ounce of pure gold. We can extrapolate that into today’s prices by taking 7.5% of gold at \$ 1300 an ounce and arrive at approximately \$97, which would have been collected once a year.

[3] Walter Harding (37) was the first to note that the town-tax collectors of Massachusetts were empowered to levy upon the goods and property of the person, and if these were insufficient to satisfy the tax, then the collector was authorized to “take the body of such person and commit him to prison, there to remain until he shall pay the tax and the charges of commitment and imprisonment, or shall be discharged by order of law.”

[4] The problem of avoiding sales tax, which is nearly ubiquitous today, is not discussed in this article.

References

John C. Broderick, “Thoreau, Alcott, and the Poll Tax,” 53 STUDIES IN PHILOLOGY (1956), pp. 612-626.

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Alvin Rabushka, TAXATION IN COLONIAL AMERICA, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Henry Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government,” in Elizabeth P. Peabody (ed.) AESTHETIC PAPERS, New York: G. P. Putnam, 1849, Article X, pp. 189-211.

¶

If progressive taxes are so great, “why not progressive pricing of everything? If you earn twice as much as your neighbor, you pay twice as much for bread, shoes, housing, etc.” The only problem is that sellers have no right to know how much you earn. When the government “sells” you its services, its agents will put you in jail if you refuse to tell them.

- Suggested by Rick Maybury, WHAT WOULD THOMAS JEFFERSON THINK OF THIS? (1994), p. 24.

Individual Conscience: The Moral Challenge

By James Armstrong

To suggest that there is absolute individual freedom in the United States is transparently untrue. What of compulsory education, taxation, military conscription, and laws that dictate whom a man will serve and sell to? What about a President who was not elected by a majority of the people, a costly, tragic war that has never been declared, our country's contribution to the international anarchy that makes each nation a law unto itself, and the possibilities of a push-button holocaust that could destroy us all without our individual knowledge or consent? And at a more subtle level of public policy, what about a man like Representative Mendel Rivers, functioning behind closed doors, exercising unbelievable influence over defense budgets, national priorities, and the militarization of a nation - without my consent, without your consent?

There is no way for any man to be totally free. The individual's life is always conditioned by time, place, and circumstance. He can never extract himself from his cultural and political context. But, granting the "givens" of his existence, what recourse has he to challenge the establishments of his world; to protest, to dissent, to declare his independence as his forefathers did? Well, he can throw the tea into Boston Harbor; he can try to take Bunker Hill. Or, if he doesn't feel impelled to go that far, he can follow the example of certain Quaker judges in colonial Pennsylvania (or, more recently, Charles Lindbergh in his government's "defense" program) and simply withdraw from structured public responsibility rather than engage in procedures and policies his conscience rebels against. He can refuse to fire his gun, as Private Bernhardt at My Lai did; or resist the draft; or face court-martial proceedings because of his opposition to the Vietnam war, as Captain Howard Levy did; or burn himself to death like a Buddhist monk; or, far this side of such a melodramatic gesture, he can simply insist on doing his own thing in his own way.

The free man will not look to the state to "give" him his freedom. He will claim it, affirm it, make his decisions on the basis of it, and willingly accept the consequences. The man who functions on the basis of only those rights and liberties guaranteed by the state (whether he lives in Hanoi, Moscow, Peking, Saigon, or Kalamazoo) is not free. He has permitted the state to define the limits of his self-hood.

The free and responsible man will support and refine man-made laws wherever possible, but he will not permit his conscience to be limited by statute or its application. If he is a religious man, he will appeal to transcendent authority and join St. Peter in saying, "We must obey God rather than man." He will "seek first" God's kingdom, insisting that every other loyalty is a

lesser loyalty. Or, lacking the authority of revelation, he may join Thoreau.

I am not an anarchist. I would, however, appeal to the Hegelian dialectic. If the thesis is the will of the state and the antithesis is the conscience of the individual, then I must come down firmly on the side of individual conscience. Only if individual liberties are stressed will the emerging synthesis reinforce the structures of freedom. The state has everything going for it - the military, the courts, unprecedented fiscal and political power, the entire sprawling apparatus of government. In this kind of world, the individual must be encouraged to be true to himself; this is the highest possible patriotism.

[From Erwin Knoll and Judith McFadden (eds.), *WAR CRIMES AND THE AMERICAN CONSCIENCE* (1970), pp. 151-154.] ▣

Taxation Is Theft: A Constructive Explanation

By Spencer and Emalie MacCallum

How do we best explain the voluntaryist position and bring people to understand that taxation is theft? The philosopher Spencer Heath once remarked, when this question arose, that people cannot recognize atrocity until they can entertain in their minds an alternative. He gave the example of slavery in the ancient world. Virtually no writers of antiquity, although they may have urged that people treat their slaves and other livestock kindly, ever proposed the abolition of slavery. Slavery was accepted as the basic economy upon which society was established; it was not something that it made any sense to question. It was not until technology had developed to the point that people could entertain in their minds alternatives to slavery, that they could recognize slavery as atrocity.

The same now applies to taxation. Only when people can entertain in their minds alternatives to taxation will they be able to recognize it as theft. Hence it behooves us, rather than bashing taxation to no avail, to study and promulgate the alternative, free-market ways of financing public services -- to show the alternatives that are now emerging. This will be a constructive approach, which all people can appreciate and, moreover, will be unlikely to antagonize folks in places of power. ▣

Taxation of earnings from labor is on par with forced labor. ... Seizing the results of someone's labor is equivalent to seizing hours from him and directing him to carry on various activities. ... This process ... makes them a part-owner of you; it gives them a property right in you.

- Robert Nozick, *ANARCHY, STATE, AND UTOPIA* (1974), pp. 169 and 172.

States and Their Authority

By H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr.

Do states possess any authority not possessed by individuals? If states derive their authority directly from the foundation of moral law, they will in fact have no authority beyond that possessed by any particular individual or group of individuals. ...

To derive political authority, appeal has ... been made to the notion of an actual past originary agreement of all to the conventions of government in general or to a particular constitution. ...

The difficulty is that everyone has *not* in fact agreed. Not all ... [have] agreed to be bound by whatever the majority decides. Many may simply respond that the commonwealth may go its way peacefully, as they will go their way peacefully. Such dissenters may include both individuals who were there as the original compact was framed, as well as children born of the original consenters. ... [T]hose who are born since the covenant are not a party to it unless they, too, agree. Those who might challenge such dissenters with the maxim "Consent to the commonwealth or leave it" must be prepared for the dissenters' rejoinder, "Why shouldn't the commonwealth leave us alone? Why should we be the ones forced to leave?" ...


The dissenters can assert that they hold certain values dearer even than certain forms of personal safety, and that they will not agree to the authority of leviathan in general or in certain areas. ...

Some may find these conclusions perturbing. They indicate that the moral position of vice officers is considerably more dubious than the moral standing of whores and whore-mongers. On reflection, this should not be too surprising. ... [T]he morality of mutual respect is central to the intellectual standing of ethics itself. Insofar as whores and whore-mongers can show that those involved in prostitution are engaged in it freely, the lineage of authority for action can be clearly demonstrated. Prostitutes can explain what they are doing with their clients in terms of mutual agreements. Such surely cannot be shown for vice officers. ...

When these reflections are taken to a more general level, one is left with this conclusion: ... the general moral authority of governments ... is not as strong as the moral authority of multinational corporations such as IBM, Dow Chemical, or Exxon to fashion rules for their workers, or of unions for their members, presuming that the employees and union members have joined without coercion and in agreement to such fashioning of rules and regulations. Governments are morally suspect, for they traditionally use force to coerce those in their territory to accept their authority. It is very difficult to show that individuals have agreed to the authority of the commonwealth within which they reside, absent threats of coercion. ... What one would never tolerate from

multinationals or unions is accepted as a matter of course on the part of governments. There is no evidence, for example, that Dow Chemical drafts individuals to serve in its security services. ...

States are no more legitimate as rule makers than are ... other large organizations. In fact, as has been noted, their legitimacy is less secure. One might observe, since there is much greater danger to individuals and to the world at large from states claiming encompassing sovereignty than from corporations, unions, or similarly voluntarily constituted bodies, the idea of the sovereign state is one whose time should pass.

[From H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., *THE FOUNDATION OF BIO-ETHICS* (1986), pp. 136-143. It should be noted that while the author questions the sanctity of the nation-state here on earth, he embraces the idea of the intergalactic collection of taxes by some supra-national agency (pp. 131 and 135).] 

Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

(continued from page 2)

condition is that they be voluntary.

- Michael Prowse, *THE INDEPENDENT* (May 8, 1995) in David Boaz (ed.), *THE LIBERTARIAN READER* (1997), pp. 391-392.

No. 5 "Doug Casey on Politics"

I don't think politically; politics is the problem, not the solution. I think that the ideal solution is for every individual to opt out of the current system. When they give a war, you don't come. When they give a tax, you don't pay. When they give an election, you don't vote. You even try not to use their currency and their banking system. The ideal thing is to let the system collapse under its own weight as opposed to starting a new political party and then continuing to act politically, which is to say to use force on other people.

- Doug Casey Interview with *THE DAILY BELL*, April 6, 2014.

No. 6 "Surety, Assurance, and the Spontaneous Order"

Voluntary institutions such as surety and assurance embody norms of reciprocity, trust, honesty, fellowship, and thrift without which no stable social order is possible. The evidence shows that when these norms are articulated and expressed through voluntary action, they are enhanced and strengthened to everyone's benefit. Attempts to mimic the invisible-hand process that has generated them will not only fail; they will actively undermine and destroy these norms. Theory and empirical research combine to suggest four things: first, that such norms and institutions are needed for the successful

functioning of any society; second, that the more complex the social order, the greater the need for them; third, that such institutions may appear spontaneously but cannot be deliberately created; finally, that much state action will undermine or destroy these norms and institutions, with potentially catastrophic effect.

- Albert Loan, 7 HUMAN STUDIES REVIEW (Winter 1991/92), "Conclusion" (paragraph 5).

No. 7 "The Education Tyranny"

One "object of this book is ... to expose the wicked tyranny" of compulsory education. "That there should be any compulsion" with regard to the education of children "is quite opposed to even the haziest notion of liberty. It is a big assumption to be cocksure as to what is best for another person's child, and it is quite possible that no education at all would be found infinitely better than a bad one, or an unsuitable one.

...

The compulsion is wrong because to each man his own opinion is the right one, and Who are you to interfere with him?

...

Few individuals seem to realise that the fact of a thing being good, even if it be a fact, is no reason for the State taking it up or making it compulsory. Good food, good clothes, and good wives are good, within limits, and so, I expect is an occasional change of air, but these are not State concerns; not yet, and no more should education be."

Is education the inalienable birthright of every citizen? No, otherwise "Why not bread and boots as well? Is it only the mind that has a birthright, and not a body? Why limit this to books?"

Is State education a free gift to the children of the State? "How free? The givers are not free not to give. Nor are the takers free not to take it. The State might supply the hungry with a free meal of beans every morning. But if the hungry were fined and imprisoned for not accepting it, and the [tax]payers were fined and imprisoned for not paying their quota towards it, and regardless of reasons on either side, how far would such a gift be free? Compulsory prison for those who did not like it, secured by compulsory robbery from those who did not wish to supply it, is an uncommon name for a free gift!"

Do those who object to State schools object to all education? "No. It is like objecting to municipal tramways. We do not necessarily object to tramways, but we object to [governments] providing them, So with schools. Without State education there might be more schools, more varied schools, and better kinds of schools, and without involving any pernicious principle."

- Paraphrasing and excerpts from Ernest Pomeroy, THE EDUCATION TYRANNY (London: 1909).

No. 8 "Ordered Anarchy: Natural Enclaves of Liberty"

Locke's anarchistic state of nature (or natural society) is ... *pre-political*, but not *pre-social*. This stands in contrast with the Hobbesian conception of natural freedom, which is synonymous with a "state of war," a condition of perpetual violence and conflict where life is "nasty, brutish, and short." Anarchy, according to Hobbes, is incompatible with even a minimal degree of social order. Social order is not spontaneous; it does not emerge from the voluntary interaction of individuals but requires the strong hand of an absolute sovereign. Hence the Hobbesian state of nature is not only pre-political, but pre-social as well.

Locke's state of nature is essentially peaceful and civilized. People can exercise their natural freedom in an anarchistic society without necessarily lapsing into a state of war, because they are able, through the use of reason, to discern the many benefits of social cooperation. ...

[Locke's] contention that social order can exist in an anarchistic state of nature had profound implications for political philosophy. It was, for example, a key element in the case for revolution against tyrannical governments. ...

In suggesting ... the possibility of ordered anarchy, Locke was arguing that a revolution ... will not necessarily produce chaos.

[A]ccording to ... Locke's theory of natural liberty, people can (and typically will) interact peacefully and harmoniously in the anarchistic state of nature. They will (to a considerable degree) respect the rights of others, even though there exists no government to compel obedience and inflict punishment. ... [N]atural liberty [was assigned] an important role in maintaining social order.

This ... had the effect of deemphasizing the social role of government. The culture and prosperity of a society were no longer attributed to the wise edicts of a virtuous prince; they were seen as the spontaneous, unplanned products of natural liberty ...

These anarchistic spheres of interaction - which are "governed" by moral and religious opinions, psychological bonds, aesthetic sensibilities, personal habits, institutional incentives, customs, economic self-interest, and the like - have far more influence on social behavior (especially in a free society) than does the fear of legal punishment. These voluntary institutional relationships are enclaves of natural liberty - anarchistic *societies* (or *states* of nature) that operate ... independently of ... political society.

- George H. Smith, THE SYSTEM OF LIBERTY (2013), pp. 148-151.

No. 9 “Malatesta on Doing Good by Force”

We are anarchists because we hold that no one owns the absolute truth, nor is anyone blessed with infallibility; because we think that the sort of social arrangement that should best answer everyone’s needs and sentiments, can only be the result - the always adjustable result - of the free play of all the interested parties; and because we believe that force renders brutish both the user and the target, whereas only through freedom and the responsibility that derives from it can men better themselves morally and intellectually to a point where they can no longer bear government.

Besides, if, as you seem to reckon, a day will come when we too could and would impose *our* ideas by force, what, precisely, are the ideas that are to be imposed? Mine, say, or the ideas of comrade A or comrade B!... I thought the essential point ... that made anarchists of us was this principle; *no imposition and no force other than force of argument and example*. If I am wrong here, I cannot see that there is very much else to anarchism.

- Excerpted from Davide Turcato (ed.), THE METHOD OF FREEDOM: AN ERRICO MALATESTA READER (2014), pp.193-194.

No. 10 “God Has Given Every Man His Work”

Keep about your work. Do not flinch because the lion roars. Do not stop to stone the devil's dogs. ... Keep about your work. Let your aim be steady as a star. Let the world brawl and bubble. You may be assaulted, wronged, insulted, slandered, wounded, and rejected. ... Abused by foes, forsaken by friends. But see to it with steadfast determination, with unfaltering zeal, that you pursue the great purpose of your life & the object of your being, until at last you can say, 'I have finished the work You gave me to do'.

- Attributed to Merritt Newby by Franklin Sanders in the Moneychanger Weekly Commentary, Dec. 20, 2013.

No. 11 “Two Authors on the Right to Offend”

A core teaching of the ancients is that personal dignity is obtained through habituation to virtue. And at least one basic teaching of true liberalism is that the essential right of free people is the right to offend, and an essential responsibility of free people is to learn how to cope with being offended.

- Bret Stephens, “To the Class of 2014,” THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, May 20, 2014, p. A11.

[I]f we do have a right to be free, to plan and live our own lives as we choose, limited only by the equal rights of others, then we have a right to associate, or to refuse to associate, for whatever reasons we choose, or for no reason at all. That is what freedom is all about. Others may condemn our reasons - that too is a right. But if freedom and personal sovereignty mean anything, they mean the right to make those kinds of

decisions for ourselves, even when they offend others.

- Roger Pilon in David Boaz (ed.), THE LIBERTARIAN READER (1998), p. 200.

No. 12 “If You Want to Change the World”

So, here [is one of the] lessons I learned from basic SEAL training that hopefully will be of value to you as you move forward in life.

Every morning in basic SEAL training, my instructors, who at the time were all Vietnam veterans, would show up in my barracks room and the first thing they would inspect was your bed. If you did it right, the corners would be square, the covers pulled tight, the pillow centered just under the headboard and the extra blanket folded neatly at the foot of the rack - that's Navy talk for bed. It was a simple task, mundane at best. But every morning we were required to make our bed to perfection. It seemed a little ridiculous at the time, particularly in light of the fact that we were aspiring to be real warriors, tough battle hardened SEALs, but the wisdom of this simple act has been proven to me many times over. If you make your bed every morning you will have accomplished the first task of the day. It will give you a small sense of pride and it will encourage you to do another task and another and another. By the end of the day, that one task completed will have turned into many tasks completed. Making your bed will also reinforce the fact that little things in life matter. If you can't do the little things right, you will never do the big things right. And if by chance you have a miserable day, you will come home to a bed that is made - that you made - and a made bed gives you encouragement that tomorrow will be better. If you want to change the world, start off by making your bed.

- Adm. William H. McRaven in his Commencement Address of May 17, 2014 to the Graduating Class of University of Texas at Austin.

Property Rights and Property Taxes

(continued from page 8)

It's very possible that over a lifetime, the total amount of property taxes extracted will exceed what was paid for the underlying property in the first place. And, just like the furniture example above, if you don't pay your property tax (AKA government rent) on the home you thought you owned, it will be confiscated. This is not as uncommon as some would believe. It was estimated that 10,000 people in Pennsylvania alone lose their homes annually because they aren't able to keep up with the property taxes.

Using the word “own” and “ownership” in these contexts is the sloppy use of the word.

[From Nick Giamb Bruno in Doug Casey's INTERNATIONAL MAN COMMUNIQUE, May 7, 2014. (<http://www.internationalman.com/articles/property-rights-and-property-taxes-and-countries-that-dont-have-them>)] ▣

Property Rights and Property Taxes

by Nick Giambruno

Do you really own something that you are forced to perpetually make payments on and which can be seized from you if you don't pay?

I would say that you don't.

You would possess such an item, but you wouldn't own it - an important distinction

A ridiculous perversion of the concept of ownership and property rights has infected most of the world like a virus: something that most people unquestioningly accept as a normal part of life - like it's a part of the eternal fabric of the cosmos.

I am talking about property taxes, of course.

You know, the annual tax you pay that is based not on whether any income was generated, but rather on the underlying value of real estate you supposedly "own." There is no way to pay off this obligation in one fell swoop; it stays with you for as long as you "own" the property.

In actuality, you don't own anything which you must pay property taxes on - you are merely renting it from the government.

Suppose you bought a sofa set and coffee table for your living room for \$5,000 cash, and then had the obligation to pay \$100 - or a percentage of the furniture's value - in tax each year for as long as you "owned" it. Then suppose that for whatever reason you're unable or unwilling to pay your furniture's

property tax. It won't take long for the government to swoop in and confiscate it to pay off your delinquent taxes. You get to "own" it as long as you pay the never-ending annual fee - stop paying and you'll find out who really owns it.

While many people would correctly find a furniture property tax absurd, they also illogically find it acceptable for the government to levy an insatiable tax on different assets - namely their homes, offices, and raw land.

But to me at least, the type of asset being taxed is not what makes it absurd, it's the concept of property taxes that is absurd.

"Where government exists, private property rights are negated."

- Leonard F. Liggio, THE LIBERTARIAN FORUM, January 1971, p. 4.

Respect for property rights and property taxes are mutually exclusive concepts. What's yours is yours, and you shouldn't need to pay the government for permission to keep it.

It's not uncommon for people in North America and Europe to pay tens of thousands of dollars per year in property taxes... just to live in their own homes. And this burden will almost certainly continue to rise. Property taxes are constantly being raised in most places, especially in places with poor fiscal health.

(continued on page 7)

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