
The Voluntaryist

Whole Number 182 “If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.” 3rd Quarter 2019

VOLUNTARYISM: Some Personal Reminiscences

By Wendy McElroy

1982 seems like a century ago, but some memories are fresh. One summer afternoon, Carl Watner, George H. Smith, and I created a movement. Or, more accurately, we revived and redefined a movement under a name we knew from reading 19th century British libertarian history. George explained that opponents of state-funded, compulsory education called themselves 'voluntaryists' - a term popularized by Auberon Herbert, a disciple of Herbert Spencer. We never imagined that Voluntaryism would become such a vigorous presence within the modern-day freedom community, however.

The meeting occurred during one of Carl's visits to the apartment in Hollywood, California, that George and I shared. It lasted a few hours, with Carl and I sitting on the couch that pulled out to form Carl's bed at night, while George spent much of the time pacing in front of us. Afterward, we dropped by a nearby coffee shop for dinner, where conversation continued unabated. Many radical movements have probably sprung from similarly humble beginnings, but it didn't feel humble to me. I remember my fingertips were tingling - literally tingling - during part of the discussion; George had a restless energy, and Carl was smiling far more than usual. Voluntaryism felt electric then; it feels electric now.

But I am ahead of myself already.

What is Voluntaryism? The political philosophy was and is based on the non-aggression principle. That description is inadequate, however, because it does not distinguish Voluntaryism from mainstream libertarianism. The distinction: Voluntaryism identifies electoral politics as a form of aggression and advocates the use of non-political strategies instead. It returns to the spirit of 19th century American libertarianism, which was both profoundly anti-political and passionate about practical paths to freedom. (More on this shortly.)

The timing for an anti- and non-political movement was perfect. The Libertarian Party had been founded in 1971 and, following the 1980 federal elections, it became the third largest party in the U.S. Especially in New York and California, it spread rapidly. Formerly “hard core” anarchists started to join the LP - Murray Rothbard among them. They began to argue that voting, campaigning for politicians, and even holding office were the best ways to achieve a

stateless society. Suddenly, anti-statists argued passionately for the state ... as long as libertarians held the reins of power. The non-political anarchists were soon called silly dreamers, whose ideas of removing the state from our lives were impractical.

There was backlash against the LP, of course. Unfortunately, much of it was either ineffective or counterproductive. Samuel E. Konkin III (SEK3) - the originator of agorism - was loudly consistent in his attacks, but he and his associates could be strident and could sound unreasonable. For example, they descended on supper clubs and heckled libertarians who were running for political office. Robert LeFevre was a far better communicator, but his philosophy included a pacifism that many, if not most, people found to be unpalatable.

Carl, George, and I realized that a comprehensive, integrated rebuttal was necessary to counter what might become a turning point in the movement; that is, a turn toward electoral politics. More than a simple anti-state manifesto was required. Our advocacy of Voluntaryism had to present a clear and positive vision of how freedom would emerge from peaceful interactions. We needed to address modern issues through that filter, while, at the same time, presenting the history of how everything from hard money to customary law originated from people voluntarily interacting, not from governmental bureaucracy. We had to demonstrate how the state could be abandoned, and show how history was replete with examples of voluntary institutions that offered the services usually provided by the state.

The statement of purpose for Voluntaryism reads, “*The Voluntaryists are libertarians who have organized to promote non-political strategies to achieve a free society. We reject electoral politics, in theory and in practice, as incompatible with libertarian goals. Governments must cloak their actions in an aura of moral legitimacy in order to sustain their power, and political methods invariably strengthen that legitimacy. Voluntaryists seek instead to delegitimize the state through education, and we advocate withdrawal of the cooperation and tacit consent on which state power ultimately depends.*”

If I were to change the statement today, I would insert a sentence to emphasize the need for alternative paths to freedom.

The three of us had different strengths with which to approach the challenge of founding a movement. We were a good blend. This was evident from the first

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The Voluntaryist

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Subscription Information

Published quarterly by The Voluntaryists, P.O. Box 275, Gramling, SC 29348. A six-issue subscription is \$25. For overseas postage, please add \$5. Single back issues are \$5. Gold, silver, and bitcoin readily accepted. Please check the number on your mailing label to see when you should renew. Carl Watner grants permission to reprint his own articles without special request. THE VOLUNTARYIST is online at www.voluntaryist.com.

Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

No. 1 "Books Received"

In *THE CASE AGAINST EDUCATION: WHY THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IS A WASTE OF TIME AND MONEY* (2017), Bryan Caplan, libertarian and tenured professor at George Mason University, argues that "the key to successful education reform is not more schooling ... but less." Like John Gatto, Caplan argues that governments have taken over the educational system "not to enhance students' talents but to certify their intelligence, work ethic, and conformity – in other words, to signal the qualities of a good employee," and as Gatto would add, to make students obedient citizens subservient to the state. Princeton University Press, ISBN 978-0-691-17465-5. press.princeton.edu.

In *AMERICAN DEFAULT* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018, ISBN 978-0-691-16188-4), author Sebastian Edwards focuses on "The Untold Story of FDR, the Supreme Court, and the Battle over Gold."

Kenneth R. Ferguson in his book, *CONFISCATION* (Austin: 2018, ISBN 9781981674053) pulls no punches, using his sub-title, to describe "Gold As Contraband, 1933-1975." Ferguson writes that he "found no good evidence as to the origin of Roosevelt's ideas concerning confiscation of gold. What is undeniable is that aside from Stalinist Russia, no other major country had adopted such a policy in the 20th century." [p. 44]

No. 2 "I Will Not Comply"

Voluntaryists who are interested in monetary history will find that the following article and two books mentioned above contribute to their understanding of the "alleged" powers of Congress: "To coin money, [and] regulate the value thereof," (U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section VIII, 5).

In his article, "The Gold Clause Cases and Constitutional Necessity," [64 *FLORIDA LAW REVIEW* 1243 (2012)], Gerard N. Magliocca observed that FDR had actually "drafted a Fireside Chat announcing that he would not comply" with any decision of the Supreme Court which would have

struck down the Joint Resolution of Congress and invalidated his gold policies. Like Jefferson, "who made the Louisiana Purchase in spite of serious concerns about its legality," and like Lincoln, who unilaterally suspended the writ of habeas corpus at the beginning of the Civil War, FDR reasoned that he would be saving the country from an economic catastrophe. He believed that the "laws of necessity, of self-preservation" of the government and the country were of a "higher obligation" than honoring the constitutional requirements against ex-post facto laws and the impairment of contracts. [Magliocca, pp. 1244-1245] One senator (Burton Wheeler of Montana) "argued that if the Court decision was adverse, Congress could" submit a constitutional amendment to the states "giving the government the right to alter contracts retroactively." [Edwards, p. 160]

No. 3 "Computers, Cars, and Control"

In the *FRONTIERSMAN* of June 2018, Sam Aurelius Milam III observes that "The kinds of cars that are now being developed represent a huge increase in the government's powers of surveillance and control." Self-driving cars connected to the internet and controlled by computer code will allow the police and governmental authorities to know the car's location, identity of its occupants, and even what is being said or being done in the car. "Every car" will "be a surveillance drone." Suppose "you're wanted by the cops. They make an entry into a database. You get into a car, it recognizes you, locks the doors, and drives you to the police station."

Self-driving cars are a graphic example of "the double edge of computers. The unique technology of the computer enables it to be used not only to improve the quality of life and our standard of living, but as a very effective tool that can be used by the government to oppress and terrorize us into submission." Government ownership (socialism) of the roads, laws that require the production of a government birth certificate to obtain a government license to drive vehicles on 'its' roads, and the collection of tax money all dovetail and work together to maintain government's control over and conquest of our lives.

As autonomous cars become more proficient, Milam predicts that "Old style [non-self-driving] cars will" eventually become "prohibited. All cars will be required to have the new features." Just as government laws have mandated seat belts and air bags, the excuse for denying old style cars the use of the road will be the same: public safety. While there might be some grain of truth in this justification, the greater truth is that it serves to enhance government's ability to control our lives and our property.

As to the reality of this claim, there was an article in the June 14, 2018 *WALL STREET JOURNAL* (page B1) titled "Car Tracking Hits the Road in China." A voluntary program of installing radio-

frequency identification chips “for vehicle tracking” is to begin July 1, as new cars are registered. The program is to become mandatory at the start of 2019. Some 30 million new vehicles are sold annually in China. A researcher at Human Rights Watch referred to this as “another tool in the toolbox for mass surveillance.”

For further insight into these issues see “The Precursor of National Identification Cards in the U.S.: Driver's Licenses and Vehicle Registration in Historical Perspective,” (Whole 119 THE VOLUNTARYIST, 4th Quarter 2003) and “The Double Edge of Computers,” (Whole Number 87 THE VOLUNTARYIST, August 1987). V

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issue of THE VOLUNTARYIST which was published in October 1982. The feature article was “The Ethics of Voting” (Part 1 of an eventual three-part article) by George. It reflected his more theoretical bent and confrontational style. My contribution was the editorial “Neither Ballots Nor Bullets,” which was heavily influenced in both content and style by my research into the 19th century American individualist anarchists. Carl was more sophisticated about nonviolent resistance, having put it into impressive practice within his own life. Carl’s contribution was a book review of Gene Sharp’s remarkable three-volume work, THE POLITICS OF NON-VIOLENT ACTION. This and many other of Sharp’s books were to play an essential role in defining the non-electoral strategies embraced by Voluntaryism.

The libertarian response to Voluntaryism was immediate and divided. Many libertarians were intrigued or enthusiastic, especially because THE VOLUNTARYIST stressed hands-on activism. For example, Issue 5 (April 1983) featured an interview I conducted with Paul Jacob, who had been indicted on September 23, 1982 for failure to register for the draft. He chose to avoid prosecution by “going on the run.” THE VOLUNTARYIST was young, fearless, and filled with ideals. Some prominent figures in the movement, including the charismatic Robert LeFevre, were generous in their support. LeFevre’s article “How to Become a Teacher” appeared in issue 3.

Some responses were not so pleasant. Libertarian ‘politicos’ snickered about the name, claiming the movement was doomed because no one would be able to pronounce the word “Voluntaryism.” Other responses were more bizarre. For example, Murray Rothbard’s response to George’s anti-electoral stand, which seemed to particularly rankle him.

In March 1983, the LIBERTARIAN FORUM ran an article by Murray entitled “The New Menace of Gandhism,” in which he lambasted libertarianism’s recent “non-violence fad.” He explicitly stated his motive for doing so. The “fad” had been “picking off some of the best and most radical Libertarian Party

activists, ones which the Party could ill afford to lose if it were to retain its thrust and its principles.” In other words, Voluntaryism was making an impact. And, to his credit, Murray correctly identified the principle of non-violence and the practice of electoral politics as antagonistic forces that could not coexist. He knew an enemy when he saw one.

Murray’s article stated, “The time has come to rip the veil of sanctity that has been carefully wrapped around Gandhi by his numerous disciples, that ... greatly inspired the new Voluntaryist movement.” Murray was a good friend of mine. But I must confess, to this day, I do not understand his criticism that Voluntaryism was based on Gandhi. None of us understood it. It was true that a quote from Gandhi headed the newsletter: “If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.” Gandhi was an influence on the Voluntaryists, but so were many other people, such as Benjamin Tucker, Lysander Spooner, Robert LeFevre, and even Murray himself. As I remember, Carl was most influenced by Gandhian philosophy, and I came in second. Why George was singled out for attack when he was the least Gandhian of the Voluntaryists is also something of a mystery. I expect that George’s arguments were proving too persuasive.

I did not escape unscathed, either. At one point, Murray stated, “Smith, McElroy and others deny vehemently either that they are mystics or that they are courting martyrdom. I remain unconvinced.” Again, the accusations were so bizarre that it was difficult even to respond. If I have a regret about Voluntaryism, however, it is this: Murray and I experienced a schism that never quite healed.

It has been a long journey since that first issue of THE VOLUNTARYIST. I will always be proud of being the newsletter’s first editor but, frankly, I don’t remember how it happened. At the planning session for the newsletter, the three of us agreed to a revolving editorship, and the first shift went to me. Perhaps it was chance; perhaps I had available time. Whatever happened, within a few years, the task of editorship fell entirely upon Carl, who has done yeoman’s work in keeping it active and continuous. From time to time, George and I have made “appearances” in THE VOLUNTARYIST, but we have not been involved in its production for many years. Carl is the one who deserves applause for keeping it alive these many years. The fact that there is a Voluntaryist movement today (2018) is evidence of the strength and truth of its ideas and principles. V

History demonstrates that gradual mismanagement and ultimate corruption of all fiat currencies is inevitable. The only unknown is in whose lifetime.

- Kenneth R. Ferguson, CONFISCATION (2018), p. 106.

Government: Its Inner Nature

By H. L. Mencken

All government, in its essence, is a conspiracy against the superior man: its one permanent object is to oppress him and cripple him. If it be aristocratic in organization, then it seeks to protect the man who is superior only in law against the man who is superior in fact; if it be democratic, then it seeks to protect the man who is inferior in every way against both. One of its primary functions is to regiment men by force, to make them as much alike as possible and as dependent upon one another as possible, to search out and combat originality among them. All it can see in an original idea is potential change, and hence an invasion of its prerogatives. The most dangerous man, to any government, is the man who is able to think things out for himself, without regard to the prevailing superstitions and taboos. Almost inevitably he comes to the conclusion that the government he lives under is dishonest, insane and intolerable, and so, if he is romantic, he tries to change it. And even if he is not romantic personally he is very apt to spread discontent among those who are.

Any time you listen to or read anything about government, remember it is all stolen money that is being dealt with. Nothing good can ever come from stolen money.

- Carl Watner

There is seldom, if ever, any evidence that the new government proposed would be any better than the old one. On the contrary, all the historical testimony runs the other way. Political revolutions do not often accomplish anything of genuine value; their one undoubted effect is simply to throw out one gang of thieves and put in another. After a revolution, of course, the successful revolutionists always try to convince doubters that they have achieved great things, and usually they hang any man who denies it. But that surely doesn't prove their case. In Russia, for many years, the plain people were taught that getting rid of the Czar would make them all rich and happy, but now that they have got rid of him they are poorer and unhappier than ever before. Even the American colonies gained little by their revolt in 1776. For twenty-five years after the Revolution they were in far worse condition as free states than they would have been as colonies. Their government was more expensive, more inefficient, more dishonest, and more tyrannical. It was only the gradual material progress of the country that saved them from starvation and collapse, and that material progress was due, not to the virtues of their new government, but to the lavishness of nature. Under the British hoof they would have got on just as well, and probably a great deal better.

The ideal government of all reflective men, from

Aristotle onward, is one which lets the individual alone - one which barely escapes being no government at all. This ideal, I believe, will be realized in the world twenty or thirty centuries after I have passed from these scenes and taken up my public duties in Hell.

[First printed in the SMART SET, December 1919, pp. 71-72.] V

Government: More of the Same

By H. L. Mencken

The average man, whatever his errors otherwise, at least sees clearly that government is something lying outside him and outside the generality of his fellow men - that it is a separate, independent and often hostile power, only partly under his control, and capable of doing him great harm. In his romantic moments, he may think of it as a benevolent father or even as a sort of jinn or god, but he never thinks of it as part of himself. In time of trouble he looks to it to perform miracles for his benefit; at other times he sees it as an enemy with which he must do constant battle. Is it a fact of no significance that robbing the government is everywhere regarded as a crime of less magnitude than robbing an individual, or even a corporation?

What lies behind all this, I believe, is a deep sense of the fundamental antagonism between the government and the people it governs. It is apprehended, not as a committee of citizens chosen to carry on the communal business of the whole population, but as a separate and autonomous corporation, mainly devoted to exploiting the population for the benefit of its own members. Robbing it is thus an act almost devoid of infamy... . When a private citizen is robbed a worthy man is deprived of the fruits of his industry and thrift; when the government is robbed the worst that happens is that certain rogues and loafers have less money to play with than they had before. The notion that they have earned that money is never entertained; to most sensible men it would seem ludicrous. They are simply rascals who, by accidents of law, have a somewhat dubious right to a share in the earnings of their fellow men. When that share is diminished by private enterprise the business is, on the whole, far more laudable than not.

The totalitarian State is [the] only [kind of] ... State.

- Albert Jay Nock, A MATTER OF NO CURIOSITY (2010), p. 62.

The intelligent man, when he pays taxes, certainly does not believe that he is making a prudent and productive investment of his money; on the contrary, he feels that he is being mulcted in an excessive amount for services that, in the main, are downright inimical to him... . He sees in even the most essential

of them an agency for making it easier for the exploiters constituting the government to rob him. In these exploiters themselves he has no confidence whatever. He sees them as purely predatory and useless... . They constitute a power that stands over him constantly, ever alert for new chances to squeeze him. If they could do so safely, they would strip him to his hide. If they leave him anything at all, it is simply prudentially, as a farmer leaves a hen some of her eggs.

“The government is the most successful criminal gang in a geographic area.”
- New Hampshire man on the radio June 11, 2007

This gang is well-nigh immune to punishment... . Since the first days of the Republic, less than a dozen of its members have been impeached, and only a few obscure understrappers have been put into prison. The number of men sitting at Atlanta and Leavenworth for revolting against the extortions of the government is always ten times as great as the number of government officials condemned for oppressing the taxpayers to their own gain. Government, today, has grown too strong to be safe. There are no longer any citizens in the world; there are only subjects. They work day in and day out for their masters; they are bound to die for their masters at call. Out of this working and dying they tend to get less and less. On some bright tomorrow, a geological epoch or two hence, they will come to the end of their endurance, and then such newspapers as survive will have a first-page story well worth its black headlines.

[First printed in the AMERICAN MERCURY, February 1925, pp. 158-60.]



“Anarchist’s Progress”

By Ken Knudson

When I was 12 years old, I shot and killed a wild rabbit with a .22 rifle my parents gave me for my birthday. This so affected me that I resolved never to kill another animal again. Five years later, I carried that idea to what I considered its logical conclusion and became a vegetarian - something unheard of in the 'fifties in the small Wisconsin town I was raised in.

The following year, in 1959, I became liable for conscription. By law, at that time, every American male was required to register for the draft when he turned 18, even though Korea was behind us and Vietnam not yet a twinkle in Kennedy's eye. I refused to register (despite a felony penalty of up to 5 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine) and wrote a letter instead to the director of the Selective Service System telling him why. I also sent a copy of that letter to my local newspaper, the Door County ADVOCATE, who printed it, with the inevitable patriotic reaction from furious subscribers.

In that same year, I enrolled as a student at the

University of Wisconsin in Madison. The university, being a “Land-Grant College,” required all freshman and sophomore male students to follow a course of ROTC (the Reserve Officers' Training Corps). I refused to attend these classes, wanting nothing to do with an institution whose ultimate purpose is to kill people. The university's policy at the time was that if you failed a required course twice, you were automatically expelled. Fortunately, there was a committee established to consider exemptions from ROTC due to conscientious objections. Up until that time, the criteria used required (1) a refusal to participate in ALL wars, and (2) the belief in a supreme being guiding that principle. While, as a pacifist, I fulfilled the first requirement, as an atheist, I decidedly did not fulfill the second. Luckily for me, 3 of the 5 members of the exemption committee ignored precedent, bent the rules, and I became the first non-religious male student in the university's history up until then to be absolved from ROTC for conscientious reasons.

As I entered university, my political ideas were a vague mishmash of “progressive” views, many of them self-contradictory. I decided to put them on a more rational footing and so I set out to look for a system with fewer internal inconsistencies. What I knew for sure was that I was a pacifist, determined to avoid killing other human beings and dedicated to using non-violent means to achieve social change. With that principle in mind, it became obvious to me that I would have to also be an anarchist, since pacifism prohibited the use of armed force. And without police or an army, the state couldn't exist. Ergo, I must be an anarchist because I was a pacifist. The latter implied the former!

Political law is the antonym, not the synonym of order.

- Paraphrased from Stanley Diamond, “The Rule of Law Versus the Order of Custom,” 38 SOCIAL RESEARCH (1971), p. 68.

But what sort of anarchist was I? Clearly the bomb-throwing “propaganda by deed” variety was out of the question. I decided to do a little research at the Memorial Library and came upon a remarkable book: Benjamin Tucker's INSTEAD OF A BOOK (1893). This was a real eye-opener for me. Everything he had to say made sense to me and his “plumb-line” logic connected everything together into a system I felt comfortable adopting as my own. Tucker called his philosophy “Individualist Anarchism”; today one might refer to it as “Voluntaryism.” That was nearly sixty years ago and I still adhere to its basic tenets to this day.

As a student, graduate student, and eventually junior faculty member at the university, I was active in the anti-war movement. I was the head of the Student

Peace Center, which sponsored lectures by pacifist speakers, demonstrated every Hiroshima Day at the Capitol Square, organized the annual "Anti-Military Ball" (to counter the ROTC's "Military Ball"), and distributed pacifist literature at our booth in the Student Union.

When the Vietnam war raised its ugly head, we became even more active, spearheading the student rebellions on campus that led to demonstrations against Dow Chemical, an attempt to make a citizen's arrest for war crimes of the commanding general of nearby Truax Air Force Base, and other activities which were depicted in the Academy Award nominated documentary, "The War at Home." (That film opened by showing me being interviewed before the local IRS office to protest the use of taxes to finance the war.)

Tax resistance became an important means of opposition to the war for me. I was determined not to turn over any money to the vultures at the IRS to prosecute the government's immoral war. To that end, I had worked several part time jobs, earning an income in each one below the threshold whereby withholding tax would be deducted. But with a family to support, I found that method bothersome, so I devised a scheme whereby I could earn a decent income and not have anything withdrawn from my paycheck. I simply declared I had 12 (non-existent) child dependents on my W-4 withholding tax form, a number high enough to prevent the government from withholding any taxes. Then, when April 15th rolled around, I could thumb my nose at the IRS and tell them they weren't going to get any money for that war from me.

That worked for a few years, but in 1966 the attention derived from my annual protests caught up with me and it became apparent that I would either have to go to jail or leave the country. Since I had already experienced a few unpleasant incarcerations for minor offenses and didn't care for the idea of an extended one, I chose to leave the country.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, colonial "America was a vast, uncharted wilderness beyond the reach of most politicians and tax collectors." Everyone there realized "it was too big and too far away for" British laws to be enforced there. "In short, America was a huge underground economy."
- Rick Maybury, **WHAT WOULD THOMAS JEFFERSON THINK OF THIS?** (1994), p. 93.

I managed to land a job at CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research in Geneva, Switzerland), where I was employed as a physicist until my retirement in 2003. This was fortunate for me on two counts: first, I was only one of three Americans employed by them as a permanent staff member and, second, as an international organization,

employees of CERN are considered diplomats and therefore exempt from taxes - thus relieving my conscience in not having to contribute to paying for the many things I object to governments spending money on!

While in Europe, I continued my activities against the war in Vietnam. I penetrated an American army base in Munich and distributed in the mailboxes of GI's a leaflet I composed, asking them to resist their deployment to Vietnam. I was arrested by the MPs and turned over to the German police, who charged me with "encouraging NATO troops to desert" - an offense I never committed since I didn't ask them to desert, but rather to stay within the army and sabotage and otherwise resist. But there apparently wasn't a statute on the books for that, so they charged me with the desertion offense instead. I was tried a few days later at a trial I couldn't understand and found guilty and sentenced to two years in jail - thankfully suspended after agreeing to never return to Germany again!

If a man asks for many laws it is only because he is sure that his neighbors needs them; privately he is an unphilosophical anarchist, and thinks laws in his own case superfluous.
- Attributed to William Durant.

I wrote articles and letters to a variety of anarchist publications in England ("Freedom" and "Anarchy" in particular) and became a foreign correspondent for the New York-based pacifist magazine, WIN. In 1971 the editor of "Anarchy" magazine, Bill Dwyer, asked me to write a full-issue article for them critiquing communist-anarchism and setting forth the individualist-anarchist alternative. This I did, but unfortunately the magazine folded just before it could publish my essay as its issue number 119. In 1983 the "Voluntaryist" published the chapter on "means" in its sixth issue. Subsequently, the whole essay was finally brought into print by Kevin Slaughter in 2017 in paperback form under the title "A Critique of Anarchist Communism."

I have done little in recent years as an activist for "the cause," although I continue to cling to my anarchist-pacifist beliefs as tenaciously as ever before. I've opted more toward the Max Stirner (1806-1856) line of egoism in my daily life than for the activism which seems hopeless to me now in a world where the state holds all the trump cards (no pun intended).

However, my most recent gambit has been my TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, which appears below. Unfortunately, in today's world, one needs a passport to travel across borders. Without one, I would not be able to visit my children in England or the United States. Therefore, every ten years I would renew my American passport as an expediency to facilitate travel. But a few years ago, I was so disgusted with

the United States that I considered finding another country whose passport I could use instead. Having a French wife for over twenty years and also having been a resident of France for even longer than that, I figured I could qualify for French citizenship, and I took the initial steps to that end. It took a couple years of bureaucratic red tape and jumping through ridiculous hoops (like tracking down my parents' original birth certificates from over a century ago), but I eventually succeeded in obtaining French nationality. But before finalizing the operation, I had to fill out a form for the French government declaring whether or not I wanted to renounce my American citizenship. I checked the box which said "yes," but when I looked into how I could legally do this, I was amazed to see that it wasn't at all easy. It would require at least two trips to the U.S. embassy in Paris and all kinds of bureaucratic forms and personal questions I was unwilling to answer. It also requires a \$2,350 renunciation fee - something I would never accept since I do everything I can to keep money out of the hands of those war mongers. So I drafted the following statement instead and carry it with me, along with my French passport, whenever I travel abroad.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Henry David Thoreau informed the world in his classic 1849 pamphlet "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," "Know all men by these presents, that I, Henry Thoreau, do not wish to be regarded as a member of any incorporated society which I have not joined." In particular, Thoreau noted that he had never "joined" the United States and, therefore, he did not feel compelled to obey its laws - which led to his imprisonment for refusing to pay taxes to finance the Mexican war, which he considered immoral.

I, too, have never joined the United States and, despite the accident of being born within what it supposes to be its sovereign borders, I do not consider myself to be a subject of that state. I, therefore, make the following declaration:

KNOW ALL MEN AND WOMEN BY THESE PRESENTS, THAT I, KENNETH ALBERT KNUDSON, DO NOT WISH TO BE REGARDED AS A SUBJECT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND, THEREFORE, FORMALLY RENOUNCE MY "CITIZENSHIP" IN THAT COUNTRY. ANY AND ALL "PRIVILEGES" (SUCH AS SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE BENEFITS) AND/OR "DUTIES" (SUCH AS TAXES AND MILITARY SERVICE) IMPLIED BY SUCH CITIZENSHIP, I EQUALLY REJECT.

Kenneth Knudson
Annecy-le-Vieux, France
February 29, 2016



I love my country, but I fear my oppressive government. They are not the same.
- un-named American patriot

Great part of that order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of Government. It has its origin in the principles of society and the natural constitution of man. It existed prior to Government, and would exist if the formality of Government was abolished.

The mutual dependence and reciprocal interest which man has upon man, and all the parts of a civilised community upon each other, create that great chain of connection which holds it together. The landholder, the farmer, the manufacturer, the merchant, the tradesman, and every occupation, prospers by the aid which each receives from the other, and from the whole. Common interest regulates their concerns, and forms their law; and the laws which common usage ordains, have a greater influence than the laws of Government. In fine, society performs for itself everything which is ascribed to Government.

- Thomas Paine, RIGHTS OF MAN (1792), Ch. 1, Bk. 2.

A CALL TO READERS AND WRITERS !

Many of you reading this newsletter would probably describe yourself as voluntaryists, i.e., people who believe that the initiation of force is wrong; that the institution of government relies on initiatory violence against peaceful people; and that taxation is stealing.

Has someone ever asked you "why are you the way you are"? Wouldn't it be great to have an explanation at the ready the next time family, friends, or co-workers asked? Is it nature or nurture or both? Were you born of parents that had a dislike of government? Did government agents step on your toes? Was it a teacher that presented you with tough questions that the rote answers of political science couldn't answer?

Is it possible that, with the way the world is going, one day voluntaryists will be an endangered species? Actually, we already are! It is entirely possible to imagine that one day in the dark future government propagandists will try to make out that voluntaryists never existed.

We have to prove them wrong! Our stories and histories must be told and preserved.

To this purpose, we have created a section on our voluntaryist.com website titled "How I Became a Voluntaryist." Already a number of autobiographies have been posted, but we would like more.

Please submit your articles in any format you wish (preferably in an email or as an email attachment). Essays will be screened for editorial purposes, and the most interesting of them will be published, as well, in our newsletter.

Commit your history to paper and the web. Please send your story now to editor@voluntaryist.com or snail to Box 275, Gramling, SC 29348.



The Natural Law of Economics

By C. V. Myers

[Editor's Note: These excerpts appeared as part of Chapter 2, "The Nature of Money," in THE COMING DEFLATION (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 12th printing, 1978), p. 18.]

Economics is the foundation of civilized existence. Therefore economics operates by natural law.

All natural laws are simple, and without exception immutable. They *never* change. You cannot consume more than you produce, unless you (a) take something away from someone else, or (b) unless you get him to lend it to you. But then you must pay it back. If you do not pay it back, you have either confiscated it, or you have *tricked* him into turning over to you - without compensation - that which was his. In any case, the excess of your consumption over your production has been at the expense of another man, who consequently had to consume less.

This brings us to examine the very foundation of society. At the root of any kind of social organization stands this dictum: *No man may be permitted to take by force what belongs to another man.* In other words, *Thou shalt not steal.*

Without this cornerstone of human conduct - without this prohibition - there could be no society whatsoever. Not even a tribe. Bandits would plunder the countryside, and then plunder one another. Ten -

not even two - people could not cooperate to build a shelter - because when it was finished, the stronger would take the shelter for himself and turn the weaker one out to perish in the storm.

So, underlying the structure of society is the recognition of private property - the inalienable right of a man to keep what is his even though he may not have the physical strength to defend this right.

As society developed, men willingly submitted to certain restraints in order to make life better for all. They agreed that any of their members violating this cardinal rule would be punished. Not too long ago the cattle owners of the West collectively hanged rustlers from the branches of trees for the violation of this law of private property.

Without this law, liberty and prosperity are impossible because every man would live in fear that the fruit of his effort would be taken from him. Also he would only exert effort to obtain essentials from day to day. To try to accumulate a *store of value* would be pointless.

From this, then, we may say: You cannot consume more than you produce at the expense of someone else; and if you do that - when you are discovered, you will be punished.

In other words, consumption in excess of production will always result in a penalty for someone. This is true for a person, true for a tribe, and true for a country. V

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