The Voluntaryist

Vol. 2, No. 4, Whole #10 "If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself." October 1984

THE NOISELESS REVOLUTION

By Carl Watner

November 18, 1883, is a day that should go down in voluntaryist history. It marks what is possible for people to achieve when they are left to themselves to solve their own problems. It shows what is possible when social change depends only on proprietary justice and respect for individual rights. It was on that day that the standard time zone plan was put into effect over nearly all of North America. What is so voluntaryist about this achievement is that the whole program was accomplished without the benefit of legislation; no compulsion was threatened or used. Some individuals and communities, as well as the federal government and a small number of local railroads refused to use the new time, but no one was threatened with jail or penalty. The idea of reducing the multiplicity of local times in use throughout the continent was largely generated out of the railroads' desire to simplify their operating schedules. The standard time plan was a voluntary arrangement implemented by their General Time Convention. Adoption of standard time was unique in that it was carried out by private initiative and it surely demonstrates the relationship of the general habits and usages of the population, public opinion and the real world. The purpose of this article is to describe the history and background of this event, because it proves that free, unmolested individuals are quite capable of both recognizing social problems and implementing creative solutions, without the need for any government whatsoever, A number of other related issues will be examined, such as the acceptance of Greenwich Mean Time in England (there also a railroad motivated usage), and the use of the Greenwich meridian as an international geographical reference point. Even these subsidiary points reinforce the voluntaryist contention that the existence of government is not necessary to the smooth functioning of a voluntary society.

Prior to the early 1880's, mean sun time, or what was referred to as local time, was commonly used by most people throughout North America. Before the coming of the railroads, the distances travelled were not usually large enough or traversed fast enough to make any significant difference with respect to time between different parts of the continent. Due to the earth's shape and rotation and its place in the solar system, when the sun is directly overhead in one place (thus being noon according to a local sun dial), it is not noon in places some distance to the east or west. The time varies approximately one minute for every thirteen miles, or one second for every 1,140 feet of longitude. So for example, in a city of the size of New York, noon time based on the sun might vary several minutes from the eastern-most part to the western-most part of the city. What this geographical fact presents is the question of how to determine noon, or any exact time over a significant portion of the earth's surface.

The use of a multiplicity of local times presented no real problems until the growth of the railroad industry during the middle of the 19th Century. Smaller communities had traditionally used the time of their larger neighboring cities and in the large cities, local time was usually designated by sun time at city hall or some other designated point. The larger railroads used the time standard of their home terminals. For instance, the Pennsylvania Railroad in the East used Philadelphia, which was five minutes slower than New York time and five minutes faster than Baltimore time. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad used Baltimore time for trains out of Baltimore, Columbus time for trains in Ohio and Vincennes time for trains running west of Cincinnati. Most of the railroads running west and south of Chicago, used Chicago time and those running west from St. Louis used St. Louis time. In short, the railroads had a problem coordinating their schedules and travellers had a problem in knowing the actual arrival or departure time of trains, since there were literally hundreds of communities using different local times. Railroad industry records indicate that there were probably at least 100 different local times in use by the railroads prior to the adoption of standard time.

In larger cities, it was not uncommon to see three or four clocks in the railroad station, all reading different times. For example, at Buffalo, New York, there were clocks set to New York City time (for the New York Central Railroad), Columbus time (for the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroads), and to local Buffalo time. In Pittsburgh six clocks were seen in the terminal building. Since accurate time was a commodity that people willingly paid for, in the larger cities, like New York, the Western Union Telegraph Company provided a subscription service to commercial customers; sending them a time signal every day at noon. Time balls were not an uncommon sight. These were large balls (sometimes 3 or 4 feet in diameter) mounted on spires at the top of prominent

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buildings in the larger cities. At noon every day, the time ball would fall, signalling to the populace the exact arrival of noontime. Competition between time standards and in the provision of time was left to the free market, as can be seen in the case of Kansas City. There, the leading jewelers (who sold timepieces) all had their own standards of time, and no two standards agreed. Sometimes the variation in jewelers time was as much as 20 minutes. Every jeweler took his own reading, thereby hoping to prove the accuracy of his own merchandise. Each jeweler had his own customers who set their watches according to their jeweler's time and swore by it. According to one account, "the people of Kansas City never did have accurate information on the arrival and departure of trains, except such as was gained by going to the edge of the hill and looking down at the railway station." The babel of clocks in Kansas City was eventually solved by the adoption of the time ball system.

The railroads were cognizant of these problems. As one newspaper of the era put it, "The confusion of time standards was the source of unceasing annoyance and trouble." Not only did various time standards pose a problem for travellers, who often might miss trains because of using a standard differing from the railroad standard, but the multiplicity also presented a safety problem because of the risk of crews misinterpreting which time standard was to be used and of dispatchers ordering trains out on the same track at the wrong time. In May 1872, an association of railroad superintendents met in St. Louis to discuss summer train schedules. This meeting led to the formation of a permanent organization successively known as the Time-Table Convention, the General Time Convention, the American Railway Association, and finally the Association of American Railroads. However, the Time Convention had been preceded by a convention of railroad personnel in New York in October 1869. There they had listened to the presentation of Charles Ferdinand Dowd of Saratoga Springs, New York, who proposed a plan of standard time zones based on a meridian passing through Washington, D.C.

Dowd, who was principal of a girl's seminary in upstate New York, had himself experienced and perceived the problem faced by the railroads of the country. In an effort to come up with a solution to the problem of so many confusing time standards, he proposed 4 hourly time zones for the continent (Washington time for the Atlantic states, one hour slower for the Mississippi Valley states, 2 hours slower for the Rocky Mountain states, and 3 hours slower for the Pacific states). Sparked by the appointment of a committee of railway superintendents who were to review his plan, Dowd authored two studies in 1870, published under the titles of "System of National Time for Railroads" and "National Railroad Time". Although his plans were treated favorably, the railroads were slow to act. The first formal meeting of the Time-Table Convention took place on October 1, 1872, in Louisville, Kentucky. The following year, Dowd embarked on a program of obtaining written promises from railroad executives, which provided for the introduction of his standard time plan as soon as a majority of the executives of the country had agreed. The financial panic of 1873 disrupted interest in his plan, so that it was not until the early 1880's that the railroads were in a position to renew their efforts on behalf of time standardization. However, through the remainder of the 1870's, the issue did not entirely drop out of sight. Sanford Fleming, a Canadian railroad engineer, became interested in time reform and published several international articles on "uniform or terrestial time", as he called it. In 1878, he presented his plan for a 24 hour terrestial day to the Canadian Institute. Fleming's plan was based on a meridian 180 degrees from Greenwich. Various papers advocating such ideas as decimalization of daily time and the dual use of standard and local times were delivered before various cultural and scientific groups. Such groups as the American Metrological Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Society of Civil Engineers all supported the call for a new timekeeping system.

In 1881, the General Time Convention met again and appointed William Frederick Allen as a committee of one to investigate Dowd's and Fleming's suggested time zone plans. Allen came from a prominent railroad family and had been for many years the secretary of the General Time Convention and also managing editor of the OFFICIAL GUIDE OF THE RAILWAYS. Allen's favorable report was finally presented on April 18, 1883, to the meeting of the Southern Railway Time Convention meeting in New York City. Allen's plan differed from Dowd's in that instead of basing the time zones on the meridian passing through Washington, Allen chose to base his zones on the 75th and 90th meridians. By spacing the zones 15 degrees of longitude apart, he provided even hour differences between them. As Allen realized, it was an added advantage to his plan to use zones based on a reference point to the Greenwich meridian, because similar plans had already been proposed by scientists and scientific societies for time systems which were designed to include the whole world. He referred to this as "a gratifying but not a convincing argument in its favor from a railway standpoint." Nevertheless Allen was not intimidated by scientific authority or the existence of government boundaries, for he wrote that:

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> From a railway standpoint we have nothing to do with State lines or national boundaries, but must confine ourselves purely to the needs and be governed by the limitations of railway operations. We are not scientists dealing with abstractions, but practical businessmen seeking to achieve a practical result.

In formulating his plan, Allen used certain guidelines: first, "that nothing should be proposed for which there was not at least a closely approximate present example"; second, "that, as far as possible, all changes from one standard to another should be made at points where changes were then (being) made"; and third that "the difference being the substitution of a variation of an even hour for one of odd minutes."

Allen's plan differed from previous plans in that they had assumed adoption of meridians an even hour apart, whereas Allen was able to apply his knowledge of railroad operations, geography, economics, large cities and the general habits of the people to the idea of simplifying time zones. Although Dowd might rightfully have been referred to as the father of our current time zone plan, Allen was the man responsible for coming up with a practical, rather than a theoretical plan, and then implementing it. As an interesting aside, neither man received any government pay for his work. Dowd was unsuccessful in obtaining compensation from the railroads for first having suggested the idea of standard time zones. Eventually his only recognition was to receive free annual passes over the great railways. Ironically, he died in 1904, after being run over by a train. Allen received no special compensation from the railroads for his services (other than in his role as secretary to the time convention meetings). A six piece sterling tea service was presented to him in 1886 by the Southern Railway Time Convention, in recognition of his services. In addition, the old Union Station in Washington displayed a bronze tablet honoring his role in the adoption of standard time.

Although the tradition or recollection of unsuccessful efforts to standardize time plagued the railroad industry during the 1870's, Allen, within the space of six months, managed to convince all the leading roads of the country of the merits of his plan. After making his presentation in April 1883, he sent circulars to every railroad in the country. These included an explanation of his plan, maps showing the geographical area encompassed by each time zone, and a proxy to be signed and returned to him signifying the railroad's acceptance or rejection of the plan. The sensible practicality of his plan so convinced the railroads running from Boston to Montreal (except the Boston and Lowell Railroad) that they inaugurated the use of Eastern standard time on October 7, 1883. By early October, Allen had proxies from many railroads accepting his proposal. All that was left was to determine when the plan would be inaugurated.

This was done at a meeting of the General Time Convention which took place on October 11, 1883, in Chicago. Allen presented a report in favor of the adoption of standard time, backed by affirmative votes representing 78,000 miles of road. The best available figures indicate that railroads representing fewer than 7,000 miles of track objected. Objections of railroads in several major metropolises had to be overcome. For example, in Boston, a promise had to be obtained from the Cambridge Observatory to observe the proposed standard time, before the railroads of that city would consent to it. In New York, similarly, it was the unanimous wish of the railway lines that the time ball on the Western Union building should be dropped on the time of the new standard on the day when it went into effect upon their roads. Allen had to solicit the cooperation of the superintendent of the Western Union office, as well as the cooperation of the city authorities. On October 19th, he interviewed Mayor Edson of New York, who promised to influence the Board of Aldermen. At least one public lecture was delivered at Columbia University and the city authorities agreed to support the proposed changeover to standard time. Other cities, such as Baltimore and Philadelphia, followed suit. In Washington, it was decided by Attorney-General Brewster that the change would require Congress, not then in session, to pass an act. Brewster ordered no government department to adopt railroad time when it became effective on November 18, 1883. In fact, Congress did not legalize the use of standard time in Washington, D.C. until March 13, 1884, and for the entire nation until World War I. According to what is perhaps an apocryphal story, Brewster went to the Washington train depot late on the afternoon that standard time began in order to take a train to Philadelphia. He was greatly surprised to find that the train had left some eight minutes before he arrived, due to the difference betwen local Washington time and the new Eastern standard time.

The railroads encountered other opposition during their campaign to win public acceptance of the change. Some conspiracy theorists saw it as the machinations of the pocket watch and clock manufacturers to ensure steady sales. In Bagnor, Maine, the mayor vetoed a city ordinance that provided for the use of Eastern standard time. He declared it unconstitutional, "being an attempt to change the immutable laws of God Almighty." In Columbus, Ohio, and Fort Wayne, Indiana, there was delay in accepting the new standard because of their supposed deleterious effect on the working population. The general criticism was that "the Railroad Convention has taken charge of the time business and the people may as well set about adjusting their affairs in accordance with its decree." People "must eat, sleep, and work as well as travel by railroad time. ... People will have to marry by railroad time, and die by railroad time." In Detroit, the

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people refused to accept either Central or Eastern standard time, since they were on the borderline of a zone. (They kept local time in effect until 1900, when the City Council decreed that Central time should be used; and even then there was considerable agitation against the change.) "The civil population nevertheless adopted 'Railroad Time' almost spontaneously, as had happened in Britain thirty years before: 85 per cent of U.S. towns over ten thousand inhabitants had done so by October, 1884."

As a result of this public campaigning and the prior approval of over 90% of the railroads, the General Time Convention voted to adopt Allen's plan, at their meeting of October 11, 1883, and directed a notice that all railway clocks governing train operation be set to the new standard at exactly 12 o'clock noon, Sunday, November 18, 1883. This was "the day of two noons", since in the eastern part of each time zone there was a noon based upon sun time. Then all timekeeping instruments were set back from one to thirty minutes to the new standard time, so that there was another noon when standard time in the community reached 12 o'clock again. This was the noiseless revolution that took place; namely, that millions of people, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Arctic to the Gulf of Mexico, were voluntarily moving the hands of their clocks and watches to railroad standard time. Near unanimity existed because the utility of the new time plan appealed directly to the good common sense of all. Therefore, it met with general public approval.

However, there is no real unanimity of legal opinion to be found among the court cases dealing with questions of legal time. The two earliest of them, a Georgia case from 1889, and a Nebraska case from 1890, both favored the use of local mean or solar time as opposed to the presumption in favor of using railroad standard time. Interestingly enough, most of the early time cases dealt with local or state governmental affairs and not contractual matters between private parties. In the Georgia case it was decided that a jury verdict given in the court of a local judge who ran his court by railroad time could not be sustained because it was actually given on a Sunday (rather than late Saturday before midnight, according to railroad time).

Partly to alleviate the possibility of confusing railroad and local time, and as part of the war effort to conserve energy, fuel, electricity, and to allow working people to take advantage of the evening sun (to work in their war-gardens), an act of Congress legalizing railroad standard time was signed by President Wilson on March 19, 1918. This bill also enacted daylight saving time, which was to go in effect on March 31, 1918. The daylight saving time movement had originated in England, where William Willett first campaigned for it as early as 1907. Germany and Austria were the first to adopt it as a wartime measure (April 30, 1916) and England soon followed with its Summer Time Act of May 17, 1916. As Willett expressed himself, "for nearly half the year the sun shines upon the land for several hours each day while we are asleep." His original plan was to advance the clocks 20 minutes on each of the four Sundays of April, and then to retard them the same amount on the four Sundays in September, every year.

In England, legal time had not been defined until well after most of the population had accepted Greenwich mean time. If anything, the experience both in the United States and Great Britain proves that the voluntary efforts of the people and commercial enterprises were far in the vanguard of establishing social customs and that their respective governments were laggards when it came to even formalizing those usages. The Definition of Time Bill was not passed by Parliament until August 2, 1880. It established a presumption in favor of Greenwich mean time, unless another local time standard was specifically mentioned.

As early as 1840, London time had been suggested as the standard of time for all of England. During that decade the great English railways, such as the Great Western, ordered that London time be kept at all their stations. Many other railroads followed suit during the next few years. On September 22, 1847, the Railway Clearing House, which was an organizaton of railroads begun in 1842 with the aim of coordinating various aspects of railroad operation, recommended that each of its members adopt Greenwich time. By 1855, 98% of all the public clocks in Great Britain were set to Greenwich mean time, but there was still nothing in the statute book to define what was the time for legal purposes. In fact, it was the railways, and not the government or the Post Office in England, which eventually brought about uniform time. In 1858, in the Court of the Exchequer Division, it was held that the opening of court was to be governed by local mean time and not Greenwich time.

The Greenwich meridian and Greenwich time play a prominent part in English metrological and geographical history. The royal observatory at Greenwich park was established in the late 1670's, and for several centuries navigators and explorers of all nations depended on the meridian and Greenwich mean time for geographical purposes. The important point to understand is that the location of Greenwich is not significant geographically; but only that some point had to be established as a base line reference for world cartography and navigational purposes. Greenwich was one of the earliest observatories in existence and had established its premier position through its pioneering work. There were other competitors for the prominent position occupied by the Greenwich meridian. The French government was most reluctant to accept it unless the British adopted the metric system. However, given the existence of the

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British Nautical Almanac (with all its calculations based on Greenwich) and the widespread usage of Greenwich, most geographers and seamen had a vested interested in retaining Greenwich as their standard. This viewpoint was expressed at several international conferences during the 1880's, especially those held in Rome in 1883 and that at Washington, D.C. in 1884. Its acceptance as a world wide reference involved the least amount of work and change to nautical charts, books, and records.

So closes our examination of the noiseless revolution. In one sense, the change from local mean time to standard time, both in Britain and on the North American continent, involved no revolutionary change. It was simply part of the spontaneous order; a voluntary affair of a great many people who had a vested interest in doing away with the confusion inherent in keeping local time. Any old curmudgeon who wanted to continue operating on his old time had the right to do so. He might miss his train or be late for the movies, but no one would throw him in jail for refusing to live by standard railroad time. The fact that the large number of people living around him operated on standard time would be the strongest inducement possible for him to change his habits. Public opinion has the power to change behavior and influence our activities in ways that legislation and government cannot touch. Peaceful, evolutionary change based on the voluntary principle is the voluntaryist way; not the resort to either bullets or ballots. Thus, this history of standard time proves that voluntary social movements can achieve important and long lasting improvements without resorting to governments or coercion.

As a strategy to achieve freedom, anarchists have often suggested the creation of voluntary societies. They wished to remove themselves from the source of injustice — the state — and to test whether their theories of human nature and human interaction were valid. Although this is not currently a popular strategy, libertarian history is rich with attempts to establish communities. The following article examines some of the problems which have and will confront a libertarian community.

ANARCHIST COMMUNITIES: AN ANALYSIS OF ANARCHO-ZIONISM

By Wendy McElroy

In a letter to Thomas Carlyle, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "We are a little wild here with numberless projects of social reform. Not a reading man but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket." Nineteenth Century America was the heyday of utopian communities which ran the gamut of economic, sexual and religious expression. A small minority of them were libertarian; by which I mean they emphasized individualism as a theory and as a method of organization. The vast majority of them, libertarian or not, failed. The purpose of this article is to speculate as to the causes of failure and to show what is necessary for a libertarian community to succeed.

TO OUR READERS

We are quite serious about getting THE VOLUNTARYIST back on schedule. We won't return to our regular typeset format until then. In the meantime, we need articles, anti-political cartoons, and letters to the editor.

Historically, there are three types of communities with fundamentally different goals. The first and most successful type is sectarian; that is, a religious community primarily aimed at saving the souls of its members. Monasteries and nunneries are early examples. Mormon, Mennonite and Quaker communities are contemporary ones. These communities emphasize that man, due to original sin or the lapse of Adam, is corrupt and needs to achieve purity by conforming his nature to certain rules commonly known as the word of God.

The second type of community, into which libertarian ones fall, is the reform community primarily aimed at expressing certain political or social principles for the benefit of its members, but sometimes with the added hope of impacting on the world. To these communities, man is not depraved but a victim of institutions or social principles which are corrupt; man needs to reform the institutions and rules which obstruct social harmony. This is an important difference because it changes the object of reform. Instead of trying to change the nature of man, they attempt to express it fully and cleanly. At least this was the ideal. It could be argued, of course, that the socialist reform communities believed that individualism ran counter to the nature of man and, so, tried to reform their members by liberating them from these tendencies. This liberation consisted of attacking the two perceived bastions of individualism, private property and the nuclear family. Here again, the goal was to return man to his natural state.

The third type of community is peripheral to this article; it is the economic cooperative in which people come together in hard times and which they abandon when better times arrive. Of course, any particular community might have elements of all three.

One of the most interesting questions about Nineteenth Century communities is why some succeeded while others failed? As I mentioned, religious communities were the most successful, but before examining them, it should be emphasized that these societies were organized to express an ideal quite different from libertarianism. They actively subordinated the individual to the collective. If there is (as I believe) an intimate connection between means and ends, between the strategy employed and the

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result achieved, then the success of these communities may not be adaptable to libertarian goals. If libertarians adopted the methodology of a Mormon community with its demand for conformity, they might create a stable society, but not a libertarian one. In other words, ends dictate means. With this caveat, it is instructive to examine the reasons for success and failure.

There are two general causes of failure -- external and internal pressures. This article focuses on the internal causes of failure -- the problem a community faces within its own structure and goals -- as opposed to external causes such as intrusion by the United States government or other more natural disasters.

Nevertheless, it is important to make a few quick points regarding external pressures. First, this is a far more serious threat today than it was in the Nineteenth Century. When the Mormons fled from Ohio to Utah to escape the hostility of their neighbors and of the United States government, they were able to do exactly that -- escape. Little by little, however, as the government increased its reach and its authority, the Mormon life style conformed to government pressure. The most notorious concession was the abandonment of polygamy (actually polygyny) as the will of God. Those who saw this as sacrificing religious principles to political expediency fled to remote parts of Arizona and New Mexico where they were hunted down by the federal government. As the Western states joined the Union, the Mormons had no place where they could both live in peace and practice their religion.

Libertarians today face the same problem to an exaggerated degree. The power and scope of Twentieth Century government is staggering. Until it is possible to construct a society in space, perhaps it will be impossible to achieve what many utopian planners considered a prerequisite for success -- namely, isolation. Isolation is necessary because those who set up a radically different society are always in the minority. If they were in the majority, they could simply stay and change the society around them. We live in a society that worships the state as a creator (of money, of jobs, of education, of civilized man). Anarchists who deny its authority are in a position similar to atheists who deny God. This is dangerous, for society may laugh at eccentrics, but it executes heretics.

Finally, the external pressure on a community tends to increase or decrease depending on whether the community wishes to convert the world -- is evangelical -- or simply exists to benefit its own members. If it focuses outward and seeks to destroy the status quo, it becomes a greater threat and the likelihood of intervention increases. Unfortunately, the more prosperous and successful a community becomes, the lure of plunder may also prompt invasion.

Returning now to the internal causes of failure, why did so many communities fail? The main reason is obvious. Many planners were impractical. Religious communities usually consisted largely of farmers and laborers, but reform communities often consisted of theorists and idealists who had difficulty translating their ideals into reality. For example, while the Hutterites commonly sent a group of families to farm an area to test its fertility before establishing a community, the Fourierists who established Sylvania sent out a landscape artist who chose a site with soil so poor it did not even return the seed that was sown. And then there was Cyrus Spragg who established a nudist colony in Michigan only to watch it break up with the advent of winter. But, assuming we are dealing with reasonable men who have reasonable goals, what problems will they encounter?

Perhaps the most difficult internal problem is maintaining the purity and commitment of members. There must be a strong sense of community and commitment which prompts the members to stay within the community through hard times. This problem has two aspects: preserving the commitment of the original members and screening newcomers to keep out disruptive members.

With the first aspect, religion seems to have an advantage over libertarianism. There are several reasons for this. Religion offers the allure of eternal life and entry to heaven which are hard acts to follow. If a community member believes he will go to hell for leaving, he is likely to stay. Another advantage religion has over libertarianism is that religion is a positive philosophy whereas libertarianism is a negative one; that is, libertarianism tells people what they must not do -- they must not initiate force -- but says little else. It doesn't proscribe a life style, a sexual preference or even table etiquette. All peaceful activities are open. Religion, on the other hand, usually provides a specific blueprint on life even down to what food may be eaten (kosher). The sharing of a life style, the sharing of a tradition are strong psychological ties. Perversely enough, another advantage some religions have is their history of persecution. Rallying in the face of a common injustice binds people together. Although libertarians are victims of government, they are not victims by virtue of being libertarians. They are punished as tax resisters, draft evaders or violators of some other victimless crime. But the persecution is not aimed at libertarians per se. It does not bind libertarians together in the same manner that Mormons or Jews are bound together by shared persecution and tradition.

Perhaps, technology will help libertarians overcome this obstacle of achieving cohesion through easier communication. Technology may well reduce the need for cohesion. As mentioned before, cohesion is necessary for members to

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walk away from the outside world and to stand by the community through hard times. To the extent technology increases the advantages while reducing the hard times, the need for cohesion may be minimized. Whether such a community would survive a crisis, such as a governmental attack, is debatable.

Another method of achieving unity is through strong leadership. This method has serious drawbacks. It makes the society unstable, for if the leader dies or leaves, the entire system is threatened. Nineteenth Century communities often dissolved at the loss of its founder. Also, Lord Acton's axiom "Power corrupts" applies to anarchists as surely as it applies to everyone else. Strong leadership carries the potential of evolving into imposed authority.

Despite their advantages, however, even religious communities developed methods to encourage a sense of belonging. What were these methods? They included: regular (sometime daily) meetings at which people confessed sins; a written code of behavior; common property and common dining rooms. By emphasizing common property communities tried to subordinate the individual to the collective. Common dining rooms were not for convenience; they were a matter of principle. There is no question that this helped to achieve unity. Unfortunately, these cohesive communities were usually libertarian horror stories.

For those interested in a libertarian solution to communities, Equitable Commerce by the Nineteenth Century libertarian Josiah Warren is a pivotal work. Warren was the pioneer in libertarian communities and Equitable Commerce outlines several things he considered necessary to a libertarian community. The first was a meeting place. Another was a private currency -- money with value independent of the outside world. Warren insisted that each individual be responsible for himself (as opposed to being a community responsibility) and that every institution be privately owned. In commenting on the Owenite community of New Harmony, Warren wrote: "It seemed that the difference of opinion, tastes and purposes increased just in proportion to the demand for conformity." Social harmony, he insisted, required radical individualism.

This is a complete departure from the usual approach. Community institutions and common property are the norm, especially with respect to eating or sleeping facilities. In contrast, Warren wanted eating facilities to be modeled after restaurants and sleeping facilities, if not entirely individual, to be modeled after boarding houses. In describing the libertarian community of Utopia, Warren wrote (1848): "Throughout the whole of our operations...everything has been conducted so nearly upon the individual basis that not one meeting for legislation has taken place. No Organization, no indefinite delegated power, no 'Constitutions,' no 'laws' or 'bye laws,' 'rules' or 'regulations' but such as each individual makes for himself and for his own business. No officers, no priests nor prophets have been resorted to...." Because of Warren's influence, Utopia and Modern Times closely resembled the libertarian ideal.

The second aspect of the purity problem is new members; that is, how to keep out unproductive or disruptive people. Reform societies without screening mechanisms got clogged by parasitical members who did not protest the outside world -- they simply could not fit into it. Horace Greeley watched one such community collapse under the weight of its crackpots and described these members as people who "finding themselves utterly out of place...in the world as it is, rashly concluded that they were exactly fitted for the world as it should be." In assuming the natural goodness of man, reform communities too often threw open their doors. As a result, there were eccentrics who made a living by going from community to community, sowing discord in their wake. Religious communities were not as susceptible to these men. Not believing in natural goodness, they often put potential members to severe tests.

A libertarian community could minimize the risk of disruptive members by having the founders own the land and sell it to new members only on the condition that they agree to abide by community rules. For example, they may have to assume liability for acts committed by guests. Also, since no members would be supported at common expense, libertarian society would not naturally attract parasites.

But what of the member who comes to fundamentally oppose the purpose of the community and tries to subvert it? What safeguards for freedom can be built into the system? Of course, such safeguards are speculative. In the broadest of terms, the two prerequisites would seem to be private property and technology. Nevertheless, it is true that all systems break down. Inevitably, you will have landowners who have not agreed to the laws of the community, but the basic point is to establish norms and cement them into the pattern of the society.

Another safeguard of freedom would be to establish institutions and procedures which maximize freedom. A free market court system would be necessary to arbitrate and adjudicate disputes. An interesting approach to speculating about institutions is to ask where the free market is vulnerable to government. Historically, where has government been able to easily assert itself? The three areas seem to be: defense, education, and welfare. Internal defense can be handled by a private police force. The solution to education is apparent: the free market. The solution to charity is not so obvious.

All communities have disasters and people who cannot care

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for themselves. If this need is not addressed by the free market, it can become a stepping stone to government. It would be wise, therefore, to establish a strong voluntary charity as an institutional safeguard of freedom. For example, Nineteenth Century individualist-anarchists had a system of labor insurance into which members paid against being fired or injured. Perhaps some form of insurance could be encouraged. The need for charity would remain as it always will, but its size and threat would be minimized.

Regarding procedures, the two most commonly cited libertarian social sanctions are ostracism and boycott. These sanctions proved effective in religious communities, but they may be less successful in a libertarian one. Libertarians shy away from ostracism and boycott because these sanctions smack of intolerance; this is an unfortunate attitude. Although libertarians must be tolerant in the legal sense -- anything peaceful -- there is no virtue in tolerating anything on a personal level. Toleration does not require the suspension of judgment or the abandonment of standards. If a man peacefully calls for taxation, it may be appropriate and even necessary to peacefully decline all association with him.

Many other questions confront a libertarian community. Historically, two important ones have been centralism versus decentralism and the issue of self-sufficiency. There is a tradition of decentralism in anarchist theory. Perhaps this is because anarchism focuses on the government and a diffuse state seems clearly preferable to a centralized one. It is not similarly clear that decentralism outside of politics offers any advantage. Centralization may be effective for some purposes and not for others.

Secondly, should a community be self-sufficient? Should the community attempt to farm, make shoes and fill all the needs of its members in order to be independent of the outside world? (This question assumes the community is not set up by survivalists who are convinced the world will destroy itself; it assumes a perceived choice.) Most communities have aimed at self-sufficiency, but it would be ironic if a libertarian society with theoretical underpinnings of economic diversity and freedom closed itself off from trade relations. Moreover, it could be a serious mistake to divert the community's most precious resource -- its members -- into work which might not suit their talents.

Utopian communities are often dismissed as impractical or idealistic. In their defense, I would like to state that the hunger for such a community is the hunger for freedom in our time, the hunger to "live" and not merely speak principles. As to the practicality of these communities, there may in fact be insuperable obstacles, but the same has been said of freedom or putting a man on the moon. If men have travelled through space, perhaps it is possible for them to make one corner of the world truly free.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

INLAND LIBERTARIAN SUPPER CLUB

Now being organized by voluntaryist supporter Dave Blackmon. For further information contact Box 405, Etiwanda, California 91739.

FUTURE OF FREEDOM CONFERENCE

October 19-21, 1984, Long Beach, California. The Voluntaryists will be there! For more information contact: Future of Freedom Conf. Box 26044, Santa Ana, CA 92799 or tel. 714-979-5737.

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