
The Voluntaryist

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

June 1995

An Open Letter to Harry Browne From John Pugsley

Harry, Please, Don't Run for President

An Argument In Defense of the Invisible Hand

Dear Harry:

Your decision to seek the Libertarian Party's nomination for president in the next election has electrified libertarians. It is, without doubt, the most exciting news that has hit the Party since its formation in 1971.

Many of us were stunned. Your writings over 30 years have consistently argued the futility of political action and maintained that people waste their freedom working to affect the government. However, on reviewing your writings along with your explanation for the change, I'm satisfied that you haven't reversed course. You just believe that the public's perception of government has changed. Today, tens of millions of Americans—perhaps the majority—can see for themselves that government doesn't work. Where in the past you felt political action was futile, you now are convinced that the time is here to wage the battle for individual liberty through the ballot-box. With heightened public recognition that government is the problem, you sense that the right candidate could be a lightning rod, collecting the disparate energies of a disenchanted populace and focusing them on disbanding the state.

As a long-time friend who has been one of your greatest admirers, I can testify that your considerable skills as a speaker, coupled with your brilliant mind and rapt wit, make you the most powerful candidate the Libertarian Party has ever put forward. The emotional appeal of a person of your intelligence, wisdom and knowledge in the position of president makes the thought of joining your crusade compelling. Win or lose, such a campaign would bring the free-market argument to hundreds of thousands of disenchanted individuals, spreading the truth that big government is their enemy and the sole source of America's social decay. And yes, it would be an extreme longshot, but with luck, the Libertarians might actually win. If you became president, it would appear that you'd be positioned to strike a potentially-mortal blow to the state. And even if you didn't win, reaching voters with the truth might exert tremendous pressure on politicians in the other parties, leading them to change the direction of government.

I hear that support is pouring in from libertarians who have never before deigned to touch a ballot. Many of my close friends and colleagues, including such in-

dependent thinkers as Doug Casey, Mark Skousen, Bill Bradford, Rick Rule and Bob Prechter, have told me that they are joining your campaign. The calls are coming in thick and fast entreating me to join the new libertarian army at the political barricades.

As I said, this is emotionally compelling. However, I ask you and all of our libertarian friends to re-examine the premises on which political action is founded before succumbing to its visceral appeal. Your charisma and persuasive power will attract the best and brightest minds of the libertarian world onto the political battlefield. If you are wrong, the potential injury to the cause of freedom could take a century to heal.

The goal of all individuals of good will today and for most of history is and has been *freedom*. The brightest minds of every generation in recorded history have searched for the path to that goal. The discovery of how to achieve freedom has been and is mankind's most important quest. You and I are painfully aware of how completely mankind has failed. Nowhere on earth does man live in freedom.

Why has our species failed to achieve this, its most important goal?

I think you would probably agree that it has failed because those searching for freedom have incorrectly assumed that freedom could only exist if we first designed the *perfect form of government*. Even those enlightened men whom we call our "founding fathers" started from the premise that a society can only function if individuals subordinate at least some of their personal freedom to a *political authority*. Outside of you, me and a relative handful of libertarians around the world, this false belief that men cannot live in harmony without government is nearly universal.

Libertarians and anarchists have long recognized the wolf in grandmother's nightgown, and now conservatives and even many who consider themselves liberals at last are becoming aware that each time grandmother kisses them, they wind up with a nasty bite. As the victims of government multiply, the search intensifies for a way to contain it. The central issue facing all freedom-seeking individuals, conservatives, libertarians and anarchists alike, is, how can the cancerous growth of the state be stopped? What can individuals do to effectively reverse the trend toward omnipotent government and ultimately achieve either a stateless society, or at least the maximum degree of individual freedom?

There are two fundamentally different strategies from which to choose. The most popular strategy is to use the political process to take control of the state apparatus. Those who choose this strategy believe that through education, political campaigning and the voting booth, political power can be wrested from special

continued on page 2

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Harry, Please, Don't Run for President

continued from page 1

interests, spendthrift politicians can be excised from government, and the state can be subdued. The Libertarian Party was founded to pursue such an agenda. The other strategy, that of using individual action, is far less popular. Those who seek freedom through a strategy of individual action refuse to condone political action even as a means to an end. They reject all political action. They do not register. They do not vote. They do not campaign for or against candidates. They do not contribute to political parties or political action committees. They do not write letters to congressmen or presidents. This nonpolitical road is one some libertarians and all pure anarchists have followed.

In the past you have rigorously argued that individual action was the only rational strategy primarily because voting is futile—one vote doesn't matter. However, you now feel that masses of voters will choose a candidate who promises to bring down government, so that individual votes will matter. I'm not clear why if one vote doesn't matter in one election, it does in another. If it's because now there is a chance of winning when before there wasn't, then that would presume that votes only matter if there's a chance of winning.

But you also argue that even if you don't win, a large voter turnout for a Libertarian candidate will send a message to the Democrat or Republican who does win in 1996. But again, I'm not clear as to why this wasn't true in past elections. If influence on the winner is a reason to participate in politics, this should have been just as legitimate a reason for voting in the past, too.

You've talked with people all over the country and they universally distrust government. The polls themselves continually signal the public's disenchantment with the state. If asked, even many liberal Democrats will say that government is doing a bad job. But, have the majority of people become anti-government? There is some evidence to support the idea that a great number have become fed up with big government. Perot's appeal in the last election stemmed partly from his government bashing. But part of it also came from his Japan bashing, and courting workers and business owners with protectionist arguments. We shouldn't forget that in spite of all, the election was won by the "Big

Government" party.

It would be dangerous to assume that just because someone says he thinks government is too big, that he is ready to eliminate those areas of government in which he is a beneficiary. If history is any guide, the next election will be won by the candidate who promises to bring big government under control, *without cutting off the flow of government benefits*. Assuming there is a majority of voters who could be won over to a candidate that promises to bring down big government and repeal the income tax, what will happen to the attitude of these voters when the consequences of repealing the income tax and downsizing government become obvious? How many senior citizens will vote for repealing the income tax if they believe that the effect will be to curtail social security or Medicare? How many corporate executives will back away when they realize that their regulatory shield will be removed and they'll face open competition? How many managers of subsidized export industries will defect when they realize the foreign loans that pay for their products will be axed? How many public school employees will vote libertarian when they learn that education will be privatized? How many union members will vote Libertarian when they learn that minimum wages and other pro-labor laws they have worked years to get passed will all be trashed?

Yes, 7 out of 10 people will say they want less government—but I fear their desire will last only as long as it doesn't interrupt their own turn at the trough. The point is that the number of people who want smaller government is no indicator of how many will be willing to sacrifice immediate gratification to secure their longer-term well being. ...

Your arguments for political action basically revolve around a belief that political action really can ultimately result in freedom. But I ask you to reconsider each of the arguments against political action, one by one. Some, I grant you, are weak, as I will point out. But others require your response.

1. *One vote doesn't matter.* The front-line argument against voting, and the reason that most people don't vote, is simply the belief that one vote doesn't matter.

This is one of the weaker arguments against voting, since we all know that this is not quite true. It's more correct to say that one vote probably won't matter. But it could. Elections have been won or lost on small margins. Since voting could swing an election, the low probability of casting a useful vote should not be considered a valid reason for abstaining from political action ... providing that political victory could eventually lead to a free society. I think you properly qualified this argument when you said in HOW I FOUND FREEDOM IN AN UNFREE WORLD, "...the individual's efforts become almost irrelevant to the outcome." The operative word was "almost."

2. *Libertarians can't hope to win.* The futility-of-one-vote argument above is harmonic with the argument that the Libertarians can't hope to win. Because of the power of the two major parties, the great sums of campaign money they command and the bias of the media, the odds against free market advocates are overwhelm-

ing. Furthermore, even if free-market advocates gain media coverage, the majority of individual voters will probably prefer to vote themselves benefits in the short-term because they fool themselves into believing that somehow they will personally be able to avoid paying the price in the long-term. Again, I think this is one of the weaker arguments against political action. There is no law of nature that says a Libertarian candidate couldn't win. Victory is not impossible, just unlikely. The low probability of winning an election is not an insurmountable reason for abstaining from political action ... providing, that is, that political victory could eventually lead to a free society.

3. *Natural rights.* The central anarchist argument against political action, and the first one, it seems to me, that is impossible to refute, is that of "natural rights." As stated in THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE all men are created equal and are *endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*. If each person has a natural right to his body and property, then another individual cannot have a right to aggress against him. In a political democracy or republic, voters appoint a candidate to be their agent and implicitly sanction him to aggress against others in the community. It is equivalent to saying that you have the right to give A permission to aggress against B. The anarchist argues that no individual, including you, has the right to give anyone else permission to aggress. According to the natural rights hypothesis, voting is an immoral act. ...

The would-be-voter, in a fall-back defense of voting, argues that he is not voting for just anyone, he is voting for Harry Browne. You're ready to swear that you'll never, never use the gun of political power against anyone, but are seeking that gun only in an attempt to destroy it once you hold it in your hands. If the other candidate wins, he may aggress, but you will not.

You and your voters know the office carries with it, by law, by Constitution and by tradition, the power to aggress. Each voter admits he knows the authority exists and delegates it to the individual for whom he votes. The voter implicitly agrees that whoever wins the election is entitled to those powers—the power to regulate, power to tax, the power to imprison and the power to kill. If you are elected, you'll be required to swear an oath to carry out the duties of the presidency and uphold the laws, *as specified in the Constitution*. You and the voter don't set the contract, but your participation is your agreement to abide by its rules. You condone the existence and authority of the office by the very act of entering the race and entering the voting booth so you must therefore be responsible for acts of aggression performed by whoever wins the election. Where on the ballot is there a box that you can check saying you do not agree that the person elected should be given the powers of the office? Where on the ballot can you withhold the authorization for some or all of the powers that are attached to the office? Where on the ballot is there a box to check denying personal responsibility for the acts of any of the candidates once they are in

office? *If an appointed agent acts within the boundaries of the office to which he is appointed every individual participating in appointing an agent to that office is responsible for the acts of any agent appointed to that office.* The voter is not absolved of his responsibility simply because his candidate didn't win. In truth, what is missing from any ballot, and which should be printed on it, is the entire Constitution and body of laws setting down in detail the duty and powers of the office being voted on, as well as the place to check the person you want to fill the office. It would then become crystal clear that every voter endorses *the office* and is thereby responsible for all acts carried out in its name.

In response to the moral argument, your campaign manager, Michael Cloud, asked me: "If Libertarian politics were an act of self-defense, would you consider it morally acceptable?"

In order to understand the implications of this position, burrow down to the basic principle on which the question rests. Political action, as explained above, is a synonym for aggression, and the term "Libertarian politics," becomes, by definition, an oxymoron. Substitute "aggression" for "politics" and he's really asking, "If aggression were an act of self-defense, would it be *moral*? Well, something can't simultaneously be moral and not moral. The proper question is, "am I justified in aggressing against B in order to defend myself from aggression by A?" While aggression in the name of self-defense is widely accepted, I'm not certain Michael or you would be comfortable absolving yourself of guilt in this way. If you are threatened by a lion, are you justified in throwing me to the lion in order to save yourself? What if the lion is about to attack our group? Can individuals in the group *vote* to throw me to the lion and claim that it's an act of self-defense? If the mugger tells you he's stealing your money to defend himself against his neighbor, or hunger, or illness, does that make his aggression morally acceptable? ...

By definition, any attack on the life, property or freedom of an innocent third party is aggression. It does not become right or moral simply because it is carried out while acting in self-defense. Voting does not become moral simply because the voter declares that he is acting in self-defense.

In summary, according to my reading of morality, the voter can't deny responsibility for the acts of elected officials, nor can he deny being an aggressor because he appointed them in self-defense. Just as much as those who voted for Hitler share in the guilt of his atrocities, voters in the allied nations share the responsibility for the deaths of the innocent civilians who died in the bombing of Dresden. Those who voted in the Clinton/Bush election have permanently stained their hands with the blood of the families who died in Waco. Those who vote in the next presidential election will share responsibility for the theft, coercion and destruction the next administration will wreak on all Americans as well as on innocent people around the world who fall victim to American intervention. ... Since a voter appoints an agent and empowers that agent to aggress against others, the act of voting is immoral. It is wrong.

Unfortunately, for the majority, including the majority of libertarians, the moral argument is often brushed aside. Just as the preacher's sermon fails to make all in his congregation honest, moral suasion consistently fails to deter some libertarians from endorsing coercion as a defense against coercion. It's far too easy to believe that the end justifies the means—in just this one case, of course. Political action to end political action is like drinking for temperance, gluttons against obesity, stealing to end theft, waging war to end wars.

4. *It doesn't work.* In spite of the moral arguments, your supporters may still argue that although it may be immoral to vote, if a minor violation of principle might result in a free world, it would be rational to vote. If it was possible to elect you to the presidency you would dramatically reduce the power of the state and the ends achieved would justify the means. Even though it violates morality, even though political action may be wrong on some erudite, ideological, hoity toity level, why don't we just give it a try? What do we have to lose? Maybe this time the country is ready to abandon government and all it needs is the right voice to lead it. Let's give it one more try.

The cry to give politics one more try reminds me of P. J. O'Rourke's book, *GIVE WAR A CHANCE!* Those who are swayed toward political action have forgotten that we have given it a try. It has been tried for thousands of years in thousands of nations, in tens of thousands of elections and through hundreds of thousands of political parties and candidates. Even if political action only had one chance in 100,000 of resulting in a free nation, statistical probability alone would suggest that there would be at least one free nation today. Mankind has reached the brink of self-extinction giving politics a try.

Thus, the most obvious, and therefore most overlooked reason to eschew political action is that it simply doesn't work. All of political history can be summed up as a struggle to throw the bad guys out and put the good guys in. Just as Sisyphus was condemned to spend eternity in Hades rolling a rock up a hill, only to have it roll down again, so the human race seems to be sentenced to spend forever trying to put the good guys in

office *only to find out they turn bad once there.* I'm sorry to say, but when it comes to placing power in the hands of humans, there are no good guys. Which brings us to the next argument against political action.

5. *Human Nature.* It hasn't yet occurred to most freedom-seekers that the reason political action hasn't succeeded is not a matter of bad luck, bad timing or inarticulate candidates. The reason is that it can't work. How about just one more roll of the dice? No matter how many times you roll the dice, they will never come up thirteen. Let me explain exactly why political action must fail no matter how many times it is tried.

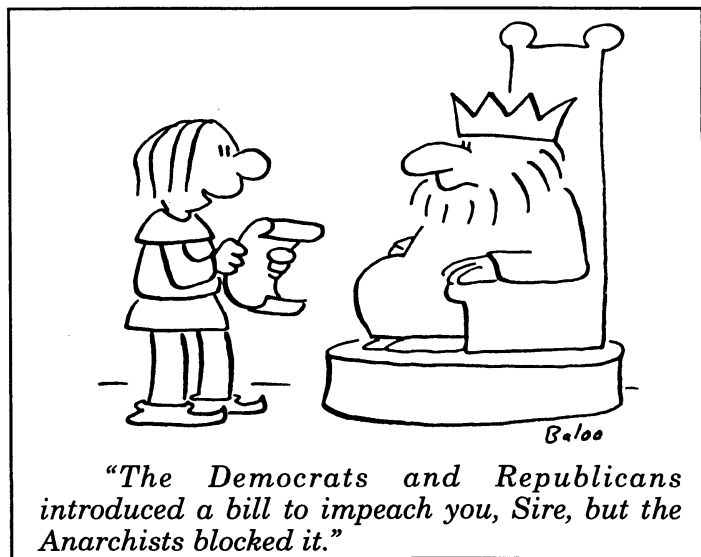
A principle is a fundamental truth derived from a natural law. As A.J. Galambos so clearly pointed out in his courses on volitional science, the proper means to reach any objective is to establish a set of first principles. Thus, scientists establish a set of principles that describe the basic mechanisms of physics and from this they design the devices to reach their objective. If an engineer wants to design an airplane, he first tries to understand the principles governing the nature of the materials involved. He then tries to design the plane according to those principles. If he violates one principle of physics, the plane will not fly.

Just as the principles of physics are determined by the nature of physical objects, the principles of human action are determined by the nature of man, a nature that has been created through thousands of generations by natural selection. As sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson argues [in his book, *ON HUMAN NATURE* (1978, pp. 50, 159)], "...mankind viewed over many generations shares a single human nature. ... Individual behavior, including seemingly altruistic acts bestowed on tribe and nation, are directed, sometimes very circuitously, toward the Darwinian advantage of the solitary human being and his closest relatives. The most elaborate forms of social organization, despite their outward appearance, serve ultimately as the vehicles of individual welfare." We are programmed to be selfish, although we may not always be conscious of the fact.

The species exists because genes that impelled the individual toward personal survival were replicated more frequently, surviving more often than genes that impelled the individual toward unsuccessful behavior. Man's genetic programming requires that his actions be self-centered. Those species whose individual members cared more about others than about themselves are extinct. Man isn't bad or good because of his individual selfishness; he exists because of it. And this leads to a curious mistake made by most people.

When you talk to the average person about the advantages of a stateless society, the quick retort is that such an idea is utopian; it would never work. Government is required to control man's selfish nature. But clearly, the truth is *precisely* the opposite.

Because of the selfish nature of man, it is utopian to give a human being authority over the lives and property of strangers and expect that person not to consider his or her own well-being first. Because he is genetically programmed to be self-interested, man can-



not be given authority over another without taking advantage. The idea is utopian that a government composed of human beings would consider the well-being of the population before those in power considered their own. Historians have completely rewritten history, making it appear that political leaders have acted in the interests of nations, rather than in their own, but you and I know that behind every law some politician or political supporter benefitted. For individuals elected to positions of authority, acts of altruism are almost nonexistent. Lord Acton's famous maxim, "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely," is merely an astute observation about the nature of man. We find the statement compelling because it so perfectly describes the history of state power. ...

Political activists of all persuasions are uncomfortable when confronted with the corruptibility of anyone given political power. All candidates assure voters that they will never be corrupted by power. A few, such as yourself, Harry, have a reputation for adhering to principle. And perhaps, in this one case, you may be that exception among humans who will not be corrupted in the slightest, no matter how many temptations are paraded before you, no matter how many "means-to-an-end" choices you are faced with. Even if you are not corrupted once in office, can you find hundreds more incorruptibles to populate the legislative and judicial branches? Can you find thousands of incorruptible appointees to staff the executive agencies? Even assuming you are incorruptible, and I believe you probably are, you must see that your candidacy will lend respectability and attract resources to the Libertarian Party, making it a more potent tool for your successors, who may not be so pure. Hasn't history proven that once a political mechanism is given life, it becomes a magnet for the corruptible?

6. *All political action ultimately enhances state power.* I have described the pragmatic arguments against political action. I have described the moral arguments against condoning the political process. I have touched on the scientific evidence that indicates political action must fail because of the nature of man. Yet if you reject all of these arguments, there is still a compelling and overriding reason to abandon political action.

On a practical and immediate level, political action is not only futile, it is not only immoral, it is not only bound to fail scientifically, *it is always destructive*. I once published "Pugsley's First Law of Government." It was: "All government programs accomplish the opposite of what they are designed to achieve." In fact, the same is true of political action. The libertarian's involvement in politics always will achieve the opposite of the result intended. No matter who the candidate is, or what issues motivate him, political action will not reduce state power, it will enhance state power.

Consistently down through history, all efforts to put the "good guy" in power have resulted in more government not less—even when the person elected was overwhelmingly elected to reduce the size of government. Let us not forget the mood in the United States when

Ronald Reagan first ran for president. Here was a popular hero, a man of the people, who rode into Washington on a white horse. His campaign was simple and directly to the point: government was too big, it was taxing too much, it was spending too much, it was strangling the economy with regulations, and it was no longer a servant of the people. His mandate from the American people was clear: balance the federal budget and reduce the size of the federal government.

Yet what was the result? In 1980 federal spending totaled \$613 billion. In 1988, at the end of his tenure, it totaled \$1,109 billion. In 1980 federal tax revenue was \$553 billion. In 1988 it was \$972 billion. Total government debt went from \$877 billion to \$2,661 billion. Then, to prove the ultimate futility of electing a white knight, the electorate decided that the government wasn't doing enough, so it put a liberal democrat back in office. All of the rhetoric of the Reagan campaign is forgotten. All of the public anger over the bureaucracy is forgotten. Government is bigger than ever.

Political action will solve the problem? In some other universe, perhaps.

Harry, when you, who have earned respect and admiration in your own field, announce that you will seize the standard of liberty and lead us to freedom through the ballot box, you convince thousands of honest, desperate individuals that politics is respectable, that voting is the answer to change, and that political action can be a mechanism to dismantle the state. Your brand name, earned through providing positive products to the free market, gives a patina of respect to the very system of coercion and force that has enslaved the people. Your participation in the political process does not convince people that the process is wrong; it makes people believe that the right leader could be the answer to a perfect society.

Meanwhile, I fear that your support of political action plays right into the hands of the constituencies that nurture and feed on state power. Businesses that gain market share through regulations, laws and subsidies; trade unions that depend for survival on coercive labor laws; entitlement recipients who demand their subsidies; welfare recipients; government employees—all are absolutely dependent on the survival of the myth that "you must get out and vote." In the end there will always be more votes for subsidy than voters who will vote to avoid taxes. There will always be more people struggling to get up to the feeding trough than there will be people determined to keep them away. That is simply human nature. Encouraging individuals to vote strengthens the institution of voting. It violates the principle of human nature. It violates the principle of morality. It violates the principle of justice. Encouraging people to vote encourages them to abandon, to moderate their principles. And as Thomas Paine said in *THE RIGHTS OF MAN*: "Moderation in principle is always a vice."

Nor does history support your hypothesis that electoral politics might lead to a freer society. There is no case on record that I am aware of where electoral politics has reduced the size and scope of government in a

fundamental or lasting sense. However, fundamental shifts have come on heels of trauma. Wars, depressions or the outright failure of the state have, on occasions, led to fundamental changes. The destruction caused by governments through economic policies has caused their collapse and a necessary turn toward freer markets, as has been the case with the communist nations in recent years. But none of these changes can be traced to electoral politics. The best that can be claimed for political action are small retracements of government intrusion, such as happened under Margaret Thatcher in England or in recent years in New Zealand. But inevitably, the relief is brief and has never resulted in a continuing erosion of state power. Electoral politics has never succeeded in achieving a free society. So, to all of the other arguments against political action, you can add the evidence of history.

In the end, no matter how forceful, how principled or how scientific the arguments presented, you and many of your followers may say, "principle and reason be hanged, we have to do something!" You can argue that we can't just stand helplessly by and let the politicians have their way with us. Even if it is immoral, even if it is contrary to man's nature, even if in the long run it is counter-productive, and even if there is no evidence that political action has ever been productive, *we have to do something*. After all, "the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

This idea, that something must be done, is a disaster. History is replete with instances in which well-meaning people who didn't understand the nature of the thing that was hurting them, but intent on doing something, turned their discomfort into catastrophe. In past centuries, doctors, ignorant of causes of many ailments, but wanting to do something for their patients, commonly bled them, making a sick patient even sicker. Obstetricians in the mid-19th century, not understanding the cause of "puerperal fever," but eager to do something to stop the fatal disease, gave unsanitary pelvic examinations that spread death from patient to patient. In order to avoid doing nothing they were doing something: they were bringing death. When the Black Plague swept Europe in the 14th century, people didn't understand the cause, but they wanted to do something. They killed the cats. They burned the witches. The flagellants beat themselves and each other with sticks and chains to atone for their sins. Was "doing something" to fight the plague better than nothing?

The first rule of medicine, as Hippocrates said, is "...at least do no harm." Unless you know that the action you are undertaking is *right* you're much better off doing absolutely nothing.

Fortunately, doing nothing is far from the only alternative to political action. What positive steps can we take? The energy that is now expended by well-intentioned, freedom-seeking individuals on the destructive course of politics can be turned into powerful steps that will have a positive effect on the future. All are moral, right and just. None require aggressing

against your neighbor. None require you to abandon principle. Consider the following.

1. *Improve yourself*. Perhaps the single most important thing a person can do (before he sets out to improve others) is to improve himself. Become a model citizen. Don't use government to attack your neighbor, even if you don't like his dog or the color of his house or the color of his skin. If you want to stop others from aggressing through the political process, start by excising from your own life all vestiges of comfort and support for political aggression.

2. *Stop subsidizing your enemy*. Stop loaning the government money. Stop thinking you're profiting by getting a safer return. You wouldn't loan money to your local car thief to see him through a dry spell. Why would you loan it to the thugs in Washington or Sacramento? Moreover, point out to others that buying T-bills is supporting the muggers and mass murderers in Washington. Pull the drapes back and expose these criminals to the light of day.

3. *Stop doing business with your enemy*. Don't provide products to the government. Don't accept government contracts. Don't do business with government employees. Don't cash government checks—with the possible exception of tax refunds. If you're in business, don't cash them for your customers. Don't take government money. Don't take government subsidies. Don't be a willing, eager beneficiary of political theft.

4. *Stop doing business with people who support your enemy*. Boycott businesses that live on government contracts. Boycott those who lobby for protective legislation. Tell them you don't approve of them stealing from you through the state.

5. *Support private alternatives to government services*. Wherever you can use a private service instead of a government service, use it. Use faxes instead of the Post Office. Use private libraries instead of public ones. Use private schools instead of public schools.

6. *Create parallel mechanisms to replace government functions*. A positive step for society is to show that private enterprise is the correct alternative to government monopolies. By creating Federal Express, Fred Smith did more to reveal the insanity of a government mail monopoly than all of the free market politicians who have ever argued for private mail service on the floors of congress. Most individuals will never understand that all services are best provided by the free market. They do not need to understand the philosophical or intellectual basis for this truth. All they need to do is be given the opportunity to use one or the other. Most of the people who use Federal Express don't understand that it is superior to the government service because it is operated for a profit and not by coercion. They just know it works. Spend your creative energies developing products that compete with government. Put it out of business by offering consumers a better product. Think of all of the things we are told government must do. Develop better home, neighborhood and personal defense services, better consumer protection ideas, safer money, more secure retirement plans, better educational opportunities. With the government absorbing

more and more of the private sector, the opportunities for successful private competition are exploding.

7. *Expose the enemy among us.* Instead of talking your neighbors into voting, spend your energy explaining why the political process is their enemy. Talk to centers of influence. Identify the real culprit as the individual who promotes bigger government by secretly lobbying for subsidy or privilege. Expose the businessman who is lobbying for a protective tariff, the defense contractor lobbying for tax dollars, the individual seeking government handouts. Call them what they are, mooches and thieves. Embarrass them. Shame them.

8. *Master the issues.* Libertarians should master the issues and learn to communicate so they can explain and persuade others. You, Harry, are the acknowledged master. You have developed simplicity of example and persuasion to an art form. Teach others how to confront the irrational arguments of government advocates.

9. *Have the moral courage to confront others.* When somebody makes a statement like, "I'm not in favor of government medicine, but we do have to do something to help the poor," or "even if there are abuses, legalizing drugs is not a serious alternative—we have to enforce the drug laws," libertarians should never sanction such statist propaganda by silence.

10. *Get involved in campaigns designed to enlighten and enrage the public.* Speak out against victimless crimes. Support organizations such as The National Taxpayers' Union, Amnesty International, the Fully Informed Jury Association (FIJA) and Families Against Mandatory Minimums (FAMM). Work with groups that are working against regulations. Put pressure on those who are supporting government intrusion. But don't get involved in electoral politics. Don't fight crime by becoming a criminal.

11. *Engage in civil disobedience if you are prepared for the consequences.* Henry David Thoreau went to jail for refusing to pay a small poll tax. He believed that civil disobedience was a moral obligation. His view of political action as a means of changing government was succinctly stated in his tract, *ON THE DUTY OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE*. "How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today? I answer that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it."

12. *Find ways to avoid taxes.* Cut every corner. Make life miserable for a tax collector. Consider using trusts, foundations, tax deferred investments and offshore charities. Your success will be emulated by others, and every dollar denied a thief makes him that much more likely to find another line of work.

13. *Pamphleteer.* Follow the noble lead of Thomas Paine and Lysander Spooner. Tell it like it is. Inundate the talk shows, newspapers and magazines with rational arguments against government. Let other people who are fed up with Big Brother know they are not alone. But show them there is another way than voting.

14. *Write free-market novels and produce free-market movies.* Support companies and individuals that bring a positive message to the audience. ATLAS

SHRUGGED may have had more influence on the direction of freedom today than all the libertarian political activity since it was written.

15. *Consider becoming an expatriate.* Stop falling for the ridiculous cultural blather that says, "my country, right or wrong." Just because you're born at a place controlled by a particular group of politicians doesn't mean they are right. There may be places in the world where you can live in greater freedom than in the U.S. Find them. Vote with your feet.

Basically, look for solutions that don't violate your principles. Design the system to be fully compatible with the laws of human nature. Don't think you can work around them.

Finally, Harry, I would hope that you, Doug Casey, Mark Skousen, Bill Bradford, Bob Prechter and all the other writers of our group return to the principles of free market economics as outlined in the works of such giants as Adam Smith and Ludwig von Mises. The central theme of our economic philosophy is that the "invisible hand" of the marketplace—the individual efforts of independently acting people—creates progress and plenty; and that any attempt to "organize" and "centrally-plan" economic activity subverts progress and eventually leads to tyranny.

Political action is built on exactly the same false premise as that of a centrally-planned economy: i.e., that an organized group of political activists engaged in a planned group effort can build freedom more rapidly or better than the individual efforts of independently acting people. The positive actions listed above are merely top of mind suggestions of a few thinkers. They are only the obvious steps. But if all of the energies now being expended on political action by libertarians around the world were focused instead on finding individual solutions, we would marvel at the ideas and mechanisms that would be bound to evolve.

Harry, I am acutely aware that you understood all of the arguments against government that I have brought up in this letter long before I had heard of them. It was your teaching that helped lead me to many of these conclusions. I laud you, our mutual friends, and all of those libertarians who are willing to go to the political barricades in defense of freedom. I understand your motive, recognize your sincerity and respect your integrity. However, I implore you all to reconsider. Let us all gather around the single, unifying principle set down so clearly by the founding fathers of Austrian economics. Let us have the courage to leave the design and construction of freedom to the invisible hand.

Sincerely and in friendship,
John

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"When it comes to [governmental] power,
there are no good men."

—Robert LeFevre

Correspondence To And From The Editor

A subscriber's letter reads in part:

Assume, for argument sake, that there is a constitutional amendment prohibiting the national government from levying any taxes. Assume further that in the absence of your vote, the amendment will fail. You have three choices: vote in favor of the amendment; vote against the amendment (on the ground that it doesn't include the states); or abstain (on the same ground). What would you do in this case?

Another question to you. Suppose there is a constitutional amendment that says this: "The national government shall have the power to levy any and all types of taxes, including an income tax, but under no circumstances shall the total tax revenue exceed 2% of a person's gross income."

It is a certainty, let us assume, that your vote is the determining vote. Do you vote in favor, against, or abstain?

Finally, assume a society with government having a monopoly of force but in which there is only one law passed: anyone convicted of murdering someone else will be punished by confinement from 5 years to life. Would you consider yourself unfree in this society?

My response:

I am a complete voluntarist and desire to have

nothing to do with any monopolistic political government. Therefore, even in life-boat situations I would refuse to vote. I am responsible for my actions; other people who choose to vote are responsible for their actions and the consequences. I will not set a precedent by voting - thereby sanctioning and legitimizing some institution which could just as easily have its scope expanded by majority vote, as have its scope lessened.

While I believe that standards of dispute resolution, justice, and restitution are necessary, I do not think it is proper or essential that they be generated by a monopolistic agency.

The power of making laws, - even if there is only one law - whether by majority rule or by dictatorship, is arbitrary. Majority rule or unilateral assertion does not make things right or in accord with reality. Natural laws, yes! Political laws, no! As the ancient Roman stoics put it: "If the government directed them to do something that their reason opposed, they were to defy the government. If it told them to do what their reason would have told them to do anyway, they did not need a government." We do not need a government to tell us murder is wrong and that the perpetrator should suffer consequences. Historically and theoretically there is no proof that such a government would remain "limited." All the evidence suggests that over the course of several generations it would attempt to expand its coercive and monopolistic powers. ▣

The Voluntarist

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