
The Voluntaryist

Whole Number 105

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

August 2000

Is Taxation Theft?: An Exchange of Letters

[Editor's Note: J. Budziszewski is Associate Professor, Departments of Government and Philosophy, Burdine Hall #536, University of Texas, Austin, TX 78712]

October 30, 1999

Dear Dr. Budziszewski:

I first learned of your new book, *THE REVENGE OF CONSCIENCE*, when it was featured by the Conservative Book Club.

You made a powerful point about "Expropriationism" at pp. 92-93: "expropriation [stealing] would be wrong even if each of its causes were good." In other words, the end does not justify the means. The pertinent passages from your book are as follows:

But expropriation would be wrong even if each of its causes were good. Consider the following progression:

1. On a dark street, a man draws a knife and demands my money for drugs.
2. Instead of demanding my money for drugs, he demands it for the Church.
3. Instead of being alone, he is with a bishop of the Church who acts as bagman.
4. Instead of drawing a knife, he produces a policeman who says I must do as he says.
5. Instead of meeting me on the street, he mails me his demand as an official agent of the government.

If the first is theft, it is difficult to see why the other four are not also theft. Expropriation is wrong not because its causes are wrong, but because it is a violation of the Eighth Commandment: Thou shalt not steal.

But how, one may ask, can *government* steal? ... [I]s it wrong for the government to tax ... ? No, government may certainly collect taxes for the support of its proper work; that work, however, is not the support of all good causes, but merely punishing wrongdoers and commending rightdoers (1 Pet. 2:13-14). ...

If government were to end its subsidy of good causes, wouldn't these good causes suffer? Not necessarily; they might even thrive. Marvin Olasky has shown in *THE TRAGEDY OF AMERICAN COMPASSION* that govern-

ment subsidy itself can make good causes suffer, for in taking money by force one weakens both the means and the motive for people to give freely. ... But what if the causes did depend on the proceeds of theft? Should we do evil, that good may come?

I do not understand how you apply this reasoning to government taxation.

There will always be a few people, at least, who would not willingly and voluntarily contribute their money to our government, even if that government were devoted to its proper work. They might be conscientious objectors to taxation, or pacifists, or anarchists who do not consider that government has any proper work to do. So long as such objectors remain peaceful and do not initiate any violence against other citizens, is it not "expropriation" [stealing] when the government takes their money against their wills?

It does not seem to me that you can have it both ways. Either expropriation is wrong regardless of the cause for which the money is used (therefore taxation is theft in the cases in which the taxpayer would not willingly pay the tax) or the end *does* justify the means, which is the case you argue when you say that the cause of proper government justifies the expropriation.

Doesn't the Eighth Commandment apply one standard of behavior to all - both taxpayer and government itself? It does not say, "Thou shalt not steal - *except when the government requires money for its proper work*".

This letter is offered in the spirit of constructive criticism. I wish you would reconsider your defense of coercive taxation for government's proper work. Please let me know what you think of my reasoning, even if you disagree.

Sincerely,
Carl Watner

November 4, 1999

Dear Mr. Watner:

Thank you for your letter of 30th October 1999, which I have just received. You raise a good and proper question about the bearing of the expropriation argument on taxes.

Briefly, my argument is that theft does not cease to be theft just because of who is doing the taking, nor does it cease to be theft just because the thief wants to use the money for a good cause.

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The Voluntaryist

Editor: Carl Watner

Subscription Information

Published bi-monthly by The Voluntaryists, P.O. Box 1275, Gramling, SC 29348. Yearly subscriptions (six issues) are \$20 or .07 ounce of fine gold. For overseas postage, please add \$5 or 1/3 of the regular subscription price. Single back issues are \$4 each or 1/5 of the regular subscription price. Please check the number on your mailing label to see when you should renew.

Back issues of this publication are available on microfiche from John Zube, Box 52, Berrima, NSW 2577, Australia.

Potpourri from the Editor's Desk

No. 1 "Books Received for Review"

THE REVENGE OF CONSCIENCE: Politics and the Fall of Man by J. Budziszewski (Spence Publishing Company, 111 Cole Street, Dallas, TX 75207, Tel. 1-888-773-6782, \$22.95). See the author's discussion of "Expropriationism" on pages 92-93 and your Editor's correspondence with the author about taxation and theft in this issue.

DISCOVERING AMERICA AS IT IS by Valdas Anelauskas (Clarity Press, 3277 Roswell Rd. NE #469, Atlanta GA 30305, Tel. 1-800-626-4330, \$18.95). The author, a Lithuanian and anti-Soviet dissident, came to this country with a socialist mindset. He rapidly discovered his dissatisfaction with America's mix of socialism and capitalism, which he describes as "socialism for the rich, and capitalism for the poor." His views comparing political propaganda in Lithuania and the United States are interesting:

Generally, I have found the American education system to be full of ideological indoctrination and political propagandizing. Personally, I was shocked that Americans are taught from early childhood to pledge allegiance to the flag, and to discover that my daughter, in first grade was forced by the teacher to sing patriotic songs almost daily in front of the U.S. flag. The flags are hoisted in every classroom. I grew up in a totalitarian pseudo-communist system, but when I was in first grade I didn't have to pledge allegiance to the red Soviet flag. We didn't even have those flags in our classrooms. While one couldn't say that there wasn't any ideological indoctrination of kids in the former Soviet Union, there definitely was not much more than here in America. The only difference is that the Soviet-style indoctrination was perhaps more open and straight-forward, rather than the poisonous sneaking into a child's mind which goes on in America by the excessive honoring of symbols which, in themselves, stand not for values, but simply for group identity. (p. 179)

No. 2 "Note from the Free State Constitutionists"

"Your latest [No. 101, p. 2] contains a statement that the only true solution to the problems resulting from big government is *public opinion*. It especially strikes a respondent chord with me because I have stated for a long time that the income tax issue is one that will be won politically, not in the courts because of the corruption which has permeated all three branches of the government at all levels. [I]t will be corrected only when enough people become informed of the deception that has been practiced on them by the government with the cooperation of the legal fraternity (who profits from it), and by the news media (who appear to be reluctant to take a position contrary to what is generally believed by the masses).

"The whole issue of oppressive government, not just the fraud of the income tax, is a battle for the minds of men and women.

"Socialism, the philosophy espoused by those who want government to have the power to take from those who produce, and to give the forcefully-extracted wealth to those non-producers who always increase in numbers as more and more people learn of the free ride given to the non-producers, is a system that eventually leads to economic chaos as the government 'wagon' becomes overloaded with non-producers."

- John Sasscer, 47 Delrey Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21228

No. 3 "Jesus' Third Way"

"When the court translators working in the hire of King James chose to translate *antisthenai* as 'Resist not evil,' they were doing something more than rendering Greek into English. They were [purposefully] translating nonviolent resistance into docility. ... The Greek word is made up of two parts: *anti*, a word still used in English for 'against,' and *histemi*, a verb which in its noun form (stasis) means violent rebellion, armed revolt, sharp dissention. ... The term generally refers to a potentially lethal disturbance or armed revolution.

"A proper translation of Jesus' teaching would then be, 'Do not strike back at evil (or, one who has done you evil) in kind. Do not give blow for blow. Do not retaliate against violence with violence.' Jesus was no less committed to opposing evil than the anti-Roman resistance fighters. The only difference was over the means to be used: how one should fight evil.

"There are three general responses to evil: 1) passivity, 2) violent opposition, and 3) the third way of militant nonviolence articulated by Jesus. ...

"Now we are in a better position to see why King James' faithful servants translated *antisthenai* as 'resist not.' The king would not want people concluding that they had any recourse against his or any other sovereign's unjust policies."

-Walter Wink in Angie O'Gorman, **THE UNIVERSE BENDS TOWARD JUSTICE** (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1990, pp. 254-255). ▣

Is Taxation Theft?

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But my argument does *not* suppose that *all* taking of wealth without consent is theft, nor does it suppose that just because a “good cause” alone is insufficient warrant for the taking of wealth without consent, therefore no warrant could be sufficient for the taking of wealth without consent.

So the possibility is open that there could sometimes be a sufficient warrant for the taking of wealth without consent. Where a sufficient warrant existed, the taking would not count as theft.

According to the classical, natural-law definition, the wrong of theft lies not in the fact that wealth is taken against a party’s actual will but in the fact that it is taken against his “rational will” — against what he ought to will. There is some taking that he ought, rationally, to approve.

We are not here concerned with the question of when a person ought to approve the taking of something he owns by a *private* person (for example, whether a starving man may pick one of his apples). The question before us is when a person ought to approve the taking of something he owns by the *government*.

I don’t think we can say that he ought to approve the taking of his wealth for any good cause. After all, the number of good causes is unlimited, so in this case nothing would be left to him at all. That cannot be right, because his domestic affairs are a good cause too.

But I do think that we can say that he ought to approve the taking of his wealth for the support of the *proper* work of government (which does not include every good cause).

In a nutshell, that’s it. Of course, the foregoing argument concerns only the *purposes* for which people may be taxed; I am not here considering other important questions, such as the level at which they may be taxed.

Best wishes,
J. Budziszewski

November 12, 1999

Dear Professor Budziszewski:

Thanks for responding to my letter about expropriations, taxes, and the stealing commandment. I know it is difficult to envision proper government in the absence of coercive taxes, but I wish you would give it some more thought.

You emasculate the meaning of both theft and the stealing commandment when you argue that “there could sometimes be a sufficient warrant for the taking of wealth without consent.” One person’s good cause might be charity; another’s (such as your’s) might be having a proper government. But in neither case is the end a justification for using wrong means. To say that “he [a man] ought to approve the taking of his wealth for the support of the *proper*

work of government” is the same as saying that the “good” cause of proper government justifies the taking of another’s wealth without consent (or at least the result is the same).

You affirm that stealing would be wrong even if its causes were good. [“Expropriation is wrong not because its causes are wrong, but because it is a violation of the Eighth Commandment: Thou shalt not steal.” p. 92]. Then, however, you contradict yourself by asserting that the “good” end of proper government justifies taxation. The question then becomes: *Why do you make an exception for proper government? Is there some necessity about having a proper government which requires us to make an exception to the stealing commandment?*

The Christian way of honoring the commandment would be 1) to persuade and educate those who refuse to contribute to proper government about why they ought to contribute to its support (in other words, convince them why they ought to contribute rather than permitting the government to steal from them), and/or 2) to contribute enough of their own money to make proper government possible. Instead, most Christians readily approve the placing of men in jail and/or confiscating their property against their will when they refuse to contribute. This initiation of violence is un-Christian and a violation of the stealing commandment.

At the very least you ought to concede that there is a valid justification for *not* paying *all* the taxes demanded of us because you admit that our existing government goes far beyond its proper bounds. Even under your own theory, the most that government has the right to demand from us and that we ought to rationally approve are the expenses necessary to operate a proper government. Therefore those who refuse to contribute their full share of taxes *are* justified in their partial tax refusal. Thus a person who pays enough of his taxes to cover his share of the expenses of a proper government is justified in *not* paying any more than this. Of course, no government I know of is willing to allow this.

Religious dissenters of the 18th and 19th Centuries were faced with the question of contributing taxes to State churches. Many a nonconformist was placed in jail or had his property distrained for failing to pay church rates. At first many people believed that State churches were just as much a necessity as proper government. However, after a great deal of struggle, most people in this country eventually came to the conclusion that churches ought to be voluntarily supported. We haven’t reached that point yet with respect to proper government, but the analogy between tax-supported churches and coercively supported government is very *a propos*. I am enclosing an article that I wrote a number of years ago about this parallel.

I would welcome your further comments.

Sincerely,
Carl Watner

November 16, 1999

Dear Mr. Watner:

Briefly, I do not see the question as involving exceptions to the commandment against theft, but as involving the proper meaning of theft. We also disagree in that I do not regard all governmental coercion as unethical; reliance on purely voluntary obedience to legitimate authority seems to me unrealistic.

Although my other obligations prevent me from continuing what could turn out to be a very lengthy exchange, anyone who thinks seriously about politics must turn to these matters again and again, and I will keep your arguments in mind. Thank you for writing.

With all good wishes,
J. Budziszewski

Killing one person is murder. Killing
100,000 is foreign policy.

November 20, 1999

Dear Professor Budziszewski:

Thanks for acknowledging my letter of November 12th, in which you briefly point out that the primary question involves "the proper meaning of theft," and that it is "unrealistic" to expect "voluntary obedience to proper authority" (which I interpret to mean that you wouldn't expect people to voluntarily pay their taxes). I understand that you are busy with other obligations and that a lengthy correspondence may be futile (I've had a few of those in my time!).

Nevertheless, I'd like to give you some more food for thought - without any expectation of a reply.

First - as regards the definition of theft: I am sure that you would agree that the actions of a criminal gang in extorting money may be classed as a form of theft (the taking of rightful property without the voluntary consent of the owner). And the actions of a legitimate government involve extorting money from the taxpayers (pay your taxes or have the money confiscated and/or go to jail!). Now the same actions cannot be a form of theft in one case and not a form of theft in the other, unless 1) you allege the taxpayer does not rightfully own the portion of his property the government is taking; 2) you allege the government has a prior claim to part of the taxpayer's property; or 3) you change the definition of theft (when the government does something that would ordinarily be described as theft, you define it as taxation - therefore it is not theft). Unless you see all property rights as stemming from the State (therefore the State does not need the taxpayer's consent to take its property back; [on the contrary, I see property rights as flowing from the self-ownership each person has in his or her self]), there is no basis for saying the taxpayer does not "own" all his property or that the State has a rightful claim to part of it. If the citizen "owns" all his property (which means he must

voluntarily consent to yielding it up), then we are faced with the *pons asinorum* of political philosophy: "What distinguishes the edicts of the State from the commands of a bandit gang?" and "How can you define taxation in a way which makes it different from robbery?" As to the third case, I don't think maintaining a double standard (having one standard for the individual and another for the State) is an honest way to solve the problem. The stealing commandment leaves no room for relativistic definitions.

Second - regarding the morality and practicality of taxation versus voluntary payment for services: Your discussion of expropriationism (pp. 91-92) in *THE REVENGE OF CONSCIENCE* led me to believe that you thought the moral arguments for obeying the stealing commandment were superior to any practical justifications. In other words, just because we cannot visualize how a thief or a government might survive if they were forced to honor the stealing commandment, there is no warrant for them to steal or to continue to steal. It is my belief that the moral and the practical normally go hand in hand. We can all live the best life possible if we do not steal, but the justification for not stealing is not that we can live a better life, but rather that we are honoring the stealing commandment and respecting other people's property rights (property rights in themselves and in the things around them that they have come to own). Therefore, there is no justification for allowing the government to steal (tax) from us because we cannot see how the government would survive without the power of coercion to collect the tax. Historically, every service ever provided by government has been produced on the open market. Just because we need essential services, like schools, religious institutions, protection from criminals, food, and shelter, is no reason that the government must monopolistically and coercively provide them for us. I don't see why it is unrealistic to expect government to survive by voluntarily collecting fees in return for the services it provides us - if we want them. That is how each and every non-criminal in society survives. Why should the institution of government be any different?

Enough said! I hope this discussion sticks with you as you think about and teach political philosophy. If you ever would like to re-open our correspondence, please do so. The article that I sent you about Church-State taxation was from a small bi-monthly newsletter that I have been editing for the last decade and a half. It is titled *THE VOLUNTARYIST*. I'd be happy to furnish you with a complimentary subscription at any time.

Sincerely,
Carl Watner ☐

"What's wrong for the robber is wrong for the state."

-Fulton Huxtable

“Nobody Cares About Hoiles; Everybody Cares About Freedom”

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ported, compulsory education, social security, and child labor laws. He opposed taxes and all tax-supported public services, such as the police, post office, public libraries, the Army, Navy, and Air Force. He was hostile to the United Nations and to labor unions. He was quoted by THE NEW YORK TIMES as saying, “It doesn’t make much difference who is President. What is important is the attitude of the American people.” He was one of the few people who spoke out against the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. He was against FDR and all the New Deal stood for, strongly believing that the federal government should have nothing to do with money or credit, because he had personally suffered a loss of some \$240,000 during the New Deal era when the dollar was devalued and the Supreme Court nullified the gold clause.

Clearly R.C. was more concerned with the rightness of his thinking and his actions than what other people thought of him. It was once said that it was a good thing that Mr. Hoiles owned some newspapers, because no independent publisher would have ever accepted anything he had written. Was he really just a negative backslider and curmudgeon or did he actually stand for anything positive? Why did R.C. think the way he did? What was behind his criticisms of our American government? Why did he contend for over thirty years, through conversation and the written word, “that human beings can enjoy happier, more prosperous lives in a voluntary society where force or threats of force are absent from human relationships?” How did he come to believe that a single standard governed all our activities: that neither the lone individual nor any group of people (even if it were a majority and called itself the government) had any right to initiate force against other peaceful individuals?

The closest R. C. ever came to an autobiographical sketch of his life was a three-part series he wrote for his “Better Jobs” column which appeared in the GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH during December 1955. R. C. explained that he had grown up in the country across from a “little red school house.” Both his parents had attended government schools themselves, so it was natural for them to want to send him to a government school. His father, a prominent citizen, was usually a member of the local school board. R.C. thought that the handicap he had received from his public education was the belief that the State, or a majority of citizens, had the right to use taxation to support the public school system.

I never once read in any book or heard any professor in the high school explain the

basic principle that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the individual; that the government had no right to do anything that each and every individual did not have the right to do. Instead, they had to teach that the government or the local school district, if the majority so willed, had a right to force a Catholic parent, or a childless person, or an old maid, or an old bachelor to help pay for government schools. ...

The textbooks did explain the error in the belief in the divine right of kings. But they never explained the error in the divine right of the majority. It simply substituted the divine right of the majority for the divine right of the kings.

Of course, I never found any textbook or teacher that believed taxation was a violation of justice and of moral law, as set forth in the Commandments “Thou shalt not steal” and “Thou shalt not covet.” In other words, the government school I attended made no attempt to be consistent and teach me to recognize contradictions. [Dec. 16, 1955, p. 26]

R.C.’s experiences in high school were repeated in college. Never once was he exposed to a person who thought government taxation was immoral or improper. Finally, after he graduated college he came across the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, which aroused his interest in liberty and limited government. The essays on “Compensation,” “Politics,” and “The Uses of Great Men,” stimulated Hoiles’ desire for a better understanding of the political and economic world around him. After Emerson, some of the works of Herbert Spencer whetted his curiosity, particularly the ones that questioned “the morality of the government schools and the myths that existed in most of the organized religions.”

“Then a Socialist told me that Frederic Bastiat made the best explanation of the disadvantages that come from the protective tariff. That interested me. I got his SOPHISMS and was so fascinated that I bought his HARMONIES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY, and even had some of his essays translated that had not been translated into English. He [Bastiat] was the first man who awakened me to the errors, taught in government schools and most Protestant colleges, that the state doing things that were immoral if done by an individual made these acts become moral. In other words, he was the first man that pointed out [to me] that there was only one standard of right and wrong - the same standard for the state [and the same] standard for the individual. [December 18, 1955, p. 2]

Besides Bastiat, some of the authors that Hoiles described as having influenced his thinking were Henry Link and John Rustgard, but the most important was Rose Wilder Lane, whose “GIVE ME LIBERTY” (1936) fascinated R.C. because it explained

that government schools were the "primary tyranny." It was Lane who suggested that he read Isabel Paterson's *THE GOD OF THE MACHINE* (1943), and of course R.C. read Lane's book *DISCOVERY OF FREEDOM* that appeared around the same time. Though he was fond of quoting her statement that "freedom is self-control, no more, no less," R.C. penned a devastating critique of Lane's book. He pointed out that she assumed it was government protection of private property which made private property possible. R.C. claimed that this couldn't be true, because the State was the major violator of property rights.

Neither Lane nor Paterson had been exposed to much public schooling (Lane for six months, and Paterson for two years when she was a young girl). Hoiles believed that it was the absence of exposure to government indoctrination and propaganda that made it possible for them to arrive at an unbiased opinion of government. R.C. was so impressed with the view that government-controlled schooling was one of the major causes of statism that he had an outstanding offer of \$ 500 to any school superintendent or official who was willing to stand up (as in a court of law) and defend the "gun-run" public school system as being consistent with the Golden Rule. He never had any serious takers.

R.C. once related that Isabel Paterson had personally confided to him "that she did not write a chapter on taxation because she had not thought it through." Neither had he. Then one day during the late 1940s or early 1950s, he had a discussion with Frank Chodorov, who later wrote *THE INCOME TAX: ROOT OF ALL EVIL* (1954).

"Taxes are all right," Hoiles used to say before his conversation with Chodorov, "as long as people pay them voluntarily; I believe in voluntary taxes."

"That's a contradiction in terms," Chodorov replied. "The one thing that distinguishes taxes from voluntary contributions is the element of force. There's no such thing as voluntary taxes." [sic] [*THE FREEMAN*, May 1955, p. 483]

That's how R.C. came to disbelieve in taxation as a means of paying for government services.

What R.C. really believed in, he called voluntaryism. In the later part of 1958 and the early part of 1959, he gave several public talks to such groups as the Unitarian Fellowship of Orange County and the Exchange Club of Santa Ana. The subject of these presentations was "voluntaryism." He chose this theme because he sincerely thought that to the degree that more and more people believed in and practiced voluntaryism "the more they will increase their happiness, their physical and spiritual health, their peace of mind, and their prosperity." He preached "the superiority of voluntary, competitive human endeavor over compulsory activity." He really woke people up when he stated that he had no more right to vote for

the members of a local school board than he would have the right to vote for the trustees of a city-owned brothel. Most Americans, he admitted, could not comprehend a nation without tax-supported schools, but he always pointed out that Americans have no tax-supported churches. Isn't education just as important as religion? Why should Americans embrace voluntaryism in one and not the other? Americans don't conscript their policemen and firemen, so why should they draft men into the military? Why is there any difference, he demanded to know?

According to R.C., there were no exceptions to the rule that all goods and services must be furnished on a competitive and voluntary basis. This meant that free enterprise associations or voluntary defensive associations would sell protection of life and property, much like an insurance company. Once he challenged Ludwig von Mises, a well-known free market economist, on Mises' contention "that we have to have monopolistic, local, state, and federal governments to protect our lives and property." In 1962, R.C. directed a letter to von Mises, asking him to reconsider his rejection of voluntary defense agencies. R.C. said that he saw von Mises doing so much good on behalf of free enterprise and free market economics, that he hated to see von Mises "continue to advocate any form of socialism, or any form of tyranny." R.C. argued

I would buy from a protective association protection for my life and property ... that would give me the most for the money, just as I buy life and fire insurance from an association that I believe is the soundest. ...

I must have the right to discontinue buying from one agency and buy from one I think will give me the most for my money. In other words, there must be competition or the threat of competition in order to have a true value of the worth of the service. When there is no competition there is no true value, as in the case when the government has the right to arbitrarily confiscate a man's property and call it a tax. ...

Competition would be the protection as to the agency overcharging me. I hear the objection that the protective agencies would come in conflict. I do not believe there would be nearly as much conflict when the insured had the right to dismiss an agency and the agency had the right to refuse the individual who was too great a risk ...

We have conflicts between competitive arbitrary monopoly governments now. [We call them wars.] [*GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH*, October 30, 1956, p. 21]

R.C. believed that the heart of a newspaper was its editorial page and that its purpose was to get people to think. "The editorial page of a newspaper, which is kept open for contrary points of view, and

which is well prepared and thoughtfully assembled [is] a daily school room made available to its subscribers," whether "rich or poor, young or old, and without the duress of taxes nor the compulsion of forced attendance." During the mid-1950s, R.C., his son, Harry, the publisher of the GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH, and Robert LeFevre, its chief editorial writer and founder of Freedom School, strove to make all the Freedom newspapers one consistent voice for human liberty and human freedom. Before R.C. died in 1970, THE REGISTER of Santa Ana, California published a policy statement entitled "Here Are the Convictions That Led To Our Belief in a Universal Standard of Right," which said in part:

The Register believes in a system of universal natural law. ...

[W]e believe that moral facts are no less concrete and timeless than physical facts. The law of gravity does not change with seasons; atomic behavior is not subject to the good intentions of man. For physical facts are not capable of change; else they would not be facts.

And so we believe it is with moral facts, which stem from the same source as physical laws.

Let's take two facts, one physical and one moral.

1. Water seeks its level.
2. Stealing is wrong.

It is commonly accepted that the first fact is not subject to amendment. A change in political administration, a vote of the people, a petition of the Society of Learned Mathematicians of the World cannot change it. It exists as a fact.

The second law, we believe, is no more subject to amendment than the first. The majority might wink at it, try to reconcile it with some base or unsound conviction. But that does not affect the law - only the people who must live by it. Jumping out of a five-story building to flout the law of gravity will hardly bring about a suspension of that law. Neither will disregarding moral law bring about its abolition. ...

Thus we believe:

1. That every man is born with equal unalienable rights to take moral action to make more secure his property which includes first his life, then his liberty and all he produces.
2. That these rights are the endowment of the Creator and not the gift of any government.

Since we believe these facts are expressed in this guide of human conduct, we do not believe any man has the moral right to curtail the rights of his brother. That is, no man has the right to initiate force against his brother. Every man, to be sure, has the right

to resist the initiation of force, but should not initiate it. ...

These moral laws do not make exceptions for groups. They do not say, "Thou shalt not steal except at the desire of the majority." They say,

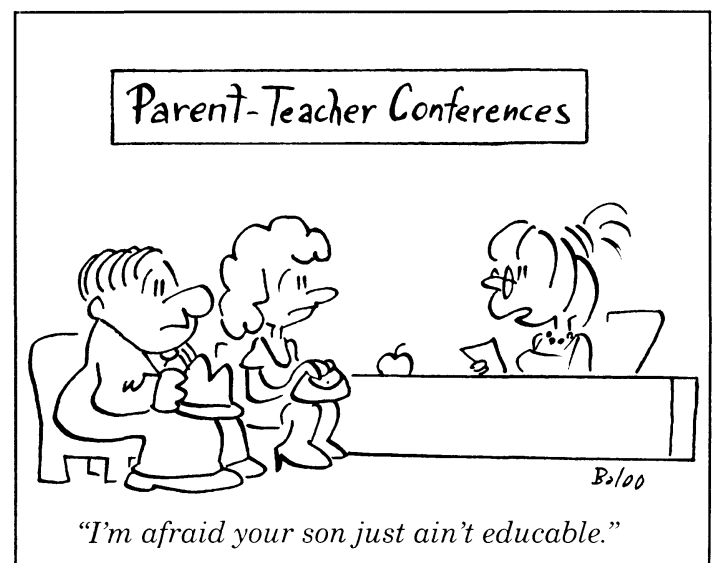
"Thou shalt not steal" Period. And a man's association with a group does not relieve him of the burden of these laws.

We believe, therefore, in a single standard of conduct.* ...

*Regrettably, we do not always follow this principle [to its logical conclusions]. We fall into error. Our humility [and intellectual consistency], perhaps, is not sufficient to the effort. But it is our belief to the degree a universal single standard of right is followed you will have a deeper understanding of your religion, greater freedom and security and more happiness and a higher standard of living. This belief will also benefit every person in the community, the state, the nation and the world. That is the reason it is our belief.

R.C. devoted his life and his newspapers to developing these ideas. "His passion was freedom. While the Hearsts, Scripps, Knights, Gannetts, and others named their newspaper groups after themselves, R.C. Hoiles named his business Freedom Newspapers because, as he explained it, nobody cares about Hoiles, but everybody cares about Freedom."

[Editor's Note: A slightly different version of this article appeared as "How R.C. Hoiles found his way," in FREEDOM FAMILY (October/November 1999) magazine published by Freedom Communications, Inc. 17666 Fitch, Irvine, CA 92514. Both articles are based on an earlier and lengthier essay "To Thine Own Self Be True: The Story of Raymond Cyrus Hoiles and His Freedom Newspapers," THE VOLUNTARYIST, No. 18, May 1986, and reprinted in I MUST SPEAK OUT: The Best of THE VOLUNTARYIST 1982-1999.] ▽



“Nobody Cares About Hoiles; Everybody Cares About Freedom”

By Carl Watner

R.C. Hoiles didn't start out his newspaper career with the goal of putting together one of the greatest devices ever conceived in support of human liberty and human dignity. In fact, it took him nearly sixty years to hone his philosophy and come to the realization that he was a libertarian, more exactly - a voluntaryist - which was the term he was to prefer in his later years.

For the first half of his life, the business of newspapering dominated his activities. The success of his business enterprises, not his philosophy, was what consumed him. R.C. Hoiles (1878-1970) wasn't born into a family of libertarians or even raised around people of particularly independent thought. He grew up like much of the rest of his generation, attending government schools, getting a high school diploma, and then graduating from Mt. Union, a Methodist college in Ohio. He began as a printer's devil, working for his brother, looking for a way to support himself and his family.

During the 1920s, when his newspaper career began in earnest, he started questioning the effects of government intervention in his own life. He and his brother had been co-owners of several Ohio news-

papers until his brother refused to criticize the local labor unions. R.C. thought that the government gave the unions special privileges which allowed them to engage in violent strike activity. The two brothers separated their business interests so R.C. would be free to take an editorial stance against the unions, something he was to maintain the rest of his life.

In 1930, R.C. sold his two Ohio newspapers and took a five year sabbatical from business during which "he began reading books on history, government, morals, and economics," according to his son Harry Hoiles. One of the last things he did during this interlude was to take a stab at politics. According to the Mansfield (Ohio) NEWS of June 9, 1934, Hoiles sought the Republican nomination for congressman from the 17th Ohio district. Hoiles based his candidacy on "a new tax plan" which he called the "graduated consumers' tax" which combined elements of both a sales and luxury tax. After he lost the nomination, R.C. saw an opportunity to purchase the Santa Ana REGISTER in California and did so in 1935.

R.C. continued his intellectual evolution in Orange County. Whether he and his newspaper made the county "conservative" might be subject to debate, but by the late 1940s, TIME Magazine reported that one of his critics said that Hoiles had "a Stone-Age philosophy," and then added, "That [wa]s an injustice to the Stone Age ..." Hoiles was against tax-sup-

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The Voluntaryist

P.O. Box 1275 • Gramling, South Carolina 29348



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